

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MUSEUM'S INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE



The first of October marked the tenth anniversary of the date when the Jewish Museum in Prague ceased to operate as a state-run, state-funded institution. In 1994, it became a special-interest association of legal entities, with Czech Jewish institutions represented on its administrative and supervisory boards. It also reverted to its original name, having assumed a different title for over 50 years. Consistently the most visited museum in the Czech Republic, it has become the embodiment of the modern history of Bohemian and Moravian Jews, and its cultural and historical sites have become well sought-after by many important Czech and international figures.

In the last ten years, the Museum has achieved far more than in the previous period. By re-pairing and reconstructing five historic sites, particularly synagogues, in Prague's former Jewish Town, and by setting up new permanent exhibitions within their walls, the Museum has created an absorbing picture of the Jewish past in Bohemia and Moravia from the 10th century onwards and has highlighted Jewish traditions and customs.

"In the last ten years we have invested tens of millions of Czech crowns into opening new permanent exhibitions in renovated spaces," the Museum Director, Dr. Leo Pavlát said. "In addition to repairing and reconstructing historic buildings, we have ensured the restoration of hundreds of tombstones in the famous Old Jewish Cemetery and are devoting great care to the restoration and evaluation of our exhibits. Our success is borne out by the fact that our exhibitions attract over half a million visitors each year. As well as museum and exhibition work, we are also developing the activities of our Education and Cultural Centre," Dr. Pavlát added.

In operation since 1996, the main function of the Museum's Education and Culture Centre is to prepare educational programmes for school pupils and university students, in particular lectures and interactive art and drama-based educational programmes. One of the many activities of the Centre is the Neighbours who Disappeared project, which has been running since 1999. Its objective is to make young people (aged 12-18) aware of the fate of Jewish

families from their neighbourhoods who perished during the Second World War. The students gather information from school and district archives, interviews, documents and personal meetings with Shoah survivors, and then write up a literary-documentary report. As of the summer of 2004, the project has involved the participation of more than one hundred individuals and groups from elementary and high schools.

The Museum prepared a number of cultural and social events for its anniversary celebrations. On 5 October, the Spanish Synagogue hosted a concert by the cellist Jiří Bárta and harpist Jana Boušková. This was attended by major political and cultural representatives, including Petr Pithart, President of the Czech Senate, and Cyril Svoboda, Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as a number of Prague-based ambassadors. After an opening speech by Museum Director Leo Pavlát, in which he welcomed the guests, the Minister of Foreign Affairs praised the importance and international prestige of the Jewish Museum in Prague. For its anniversary, the Museum issued a Czech-English commemorative publication, entitled *Ten Years of the Jewish Museum in Prague*, which details the events of the last decade and features a broad range of illustrated documentation. This publication also contains detailed information on Museum attendance since 1994, repairs and reconstructions of Museum sites, temporary exhibitions hosted by the Museum since 1994, Museum publications, prominent visits and awards, plus an overview of programmes and projects held by the Museum's Education and Culture Centre. Also featured in the publication are excerpts from letters of congratulation from important figures from the Czech Republic and across the world, who praise the extraordinarily successes achieved by the Museum in the last decade in all areas of its activity.

ALEXANDR BRANDEIS AND ADOLF WIESNER – THE ART PATRON AND HIS SON-IN-LAW



On 14 October, the Museum opened an exhibition in the Robert Guttman Gallery which brings together two important figures: the patron of Czech artists of the National Theatre generation Alexandr Brandeis and his son-in-law, the painter Adolf Wiesner, whose paintings, drawings, graphic art and documents are featured here.

This exhibition recalls the distinguished Brandeis-Wiesner family of Prague and looks back at the lives and works of several of its members across several

generations – from 1848, when Alexander Brandeis was born, to the beginning of the 20th century, when Adolf Wiesner's most interesting artworks were made, through to the Second World War, during which several family members perished in the concentration camps and others escaped by emigrating. The family story continues in the post-war generation.

The main focus of the exhibition is on Alexandr Brandeis, who made his mark on the history of Czech art, and his son-in-law, the Prague artist and Art-Nouveau portraitist Adolf Wiesner. Wiesner's work, which is substantially represented in the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague, is on display for the first time in almost 70 years.

The exhibition opening on 13 October was attended by the grandchildren of three of Alexandr Brandeis's daughters, Helena, Otilie and Irma, who came here from the UK, Netherlands and USA. A number of Brandeis's great grandchildren have contributed to the organization of this exhibition. Among them is Jan V. White of New York, to whom most of the credit goes for preserving the family history. He supported the exhibition by loaning hand-written family chronicles and other family documents. Other materials and all-round assistance was provided by Helena Wiesner, Ian R. Wiesner and Joanna Powell from the UK, Michal Kubin from Florida and Eva Kosáková, Eva Fantová, Adriana Skálová and Nina Žižkovská from Prague. We would like to thank them all for their help, without which the exhibition could not have been held.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue in Czech and English which contains a detailed biography of Alexandr Brandeis and Adolf Wiesner and features more than 200 reproductions of his works, as well as period photographs. The exhibition curator and author of the catalogue is art historian Dr. Arno Pařík. The exhibition runs until 9 January 2005.

JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE AMONG THE TEN MOST INTERESTING JEWISH MUSEUMS IN THE WORLD

In the 23 September issue of US Today, the Jewish Museum in Prague was included in a list of the ten most interesting Jewish museums in the world – alongside the ones in Berlin, Jerusalem, New York, Vienna, Paris, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Amsterdam and St. Kilda (Victoria, Australia).

TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM 'CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS' AND 'HISTORY OF THE JEWS' IN TURNOV AND LOUNY



The travelling exhibitions Jewish Customs and Traditions and History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia (see Newsletter 1/2004) are continuing on their successful tour across the Czech Republic. Between 6 October and 8 November, they were on view at the Antonín Marek Municipal Library in Turnov, Northern Bohemia. The opening show was launched by the exhibition curator A. Pařík, who recalled the history and fate of the Turnov Jewish community. At the opening, the Vice Mayor of Turnov and Director of the Český Ráj Museum in Turnov, Dr. Hana Maierová, talked about the town's efforts to renovate its Jewish sites, with current focus on the Turnov synagogue, which was recently acquired by the town. The Jewish Museum exhibition was accompanied by a number of lectures, film screenings and other cultural programmes which were attended by student groups from across the region.

After Turnov, the exhibition Jewish Customs and Traditions moved to Louny, where it was installed in the Gothic hall of the regional museum. Exhibition panels were accompanied by a large group of ritual objects and early printed books from the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague. Speaking at the opening show on 15 November, the director of the Louny museum, Bedřich Štauber, pointed out that it was the museum's first ever event commemorating the life and religion of the former Jewish community. The exhibition has attracted a great deal of local interest and will be on display in Louny until 16 January 2005.

LONG-LOST FACES IN DĚČÍN AND TEPLICE

Following the extraordinary success of the exhibition Long-lost Faces - Recollections of Holocaust victims in documents and photographs in Prague at the end of 2003 and beginning of 2004 (see Newsletter 4/2003), the exhibition is now travelling around various venues in the Czech Republic. In association with the Jewish community in Děčín, the exhibition was presented at the local synagogue between 8 September and 31 October 2004. Visitors to the opening show were addressed by the Museum director Leo Pavlát and the exhibition curator and head of the Museum's Holocaust Department Jana Šplíchalová, who spoke about the tragic fate of Jews during the Second World War. The exhibition was seen by many school groups from Děčín and surrounding areas.

The exhibition Long-lost Faces then moved to Teplice where it will be on display at the local high school between 18 November 2004 and 15 January 2005. The opening show was attended by the exhibition curator Jana Šplíchalová and representatives of the Teplice Jewish community, whose chairman Oldřich Látal is largely credited for installing the exhibition in a student environment.

NEW ACQUISITIONS



Visiting Prague this autumn, the major US artist and illustrator Mark Podwal donated 13 of his artworks (mostly drawings and graphic prints) to the Museum. Among the donated works are two seder plates with reproductions of paintings by Podwal. Among the major new acquisitions is a portrait of art historian Dr. Josef Polák, a member of a team of specialists at the Central Jewish Museum in Prague during the war until his arrest in August 1944. This portrait, by Jewish painter Alžběta Groszová, will be presented as part of an exhibition on the life and work of Dr. Josef Polák in 2006. We would like to thank Vladimír Pech of Prague for this gift.

The Holocaust Department has purchased the diary of Renáta Reimanová for its archive collection Documentation of Persecution. Written during 1943-1944 by a thirteen-year-old girl from Pilsen, it describes her personal experiences and her school and home environment, and also contains interesting passages that recount the bombing of Pilsen. From the diary it follows that the girl's parents lived in a mixed marriage - her mother was Austrian, her father a Czech Jew. Thanks to the basic information on her family that is provided in the diary, we have managed to identify the girl's father Egon Reiman in the Museum's database of Shoah survivors, and to find out what became of him. The diary of Renáta Reimanová is a major addition to the collection of literary works from the wartime period, which are kept in the Museum's Holocaust Department Archive.

JEWISH MOTIFS IN CZECH FILM

In October the Museum's Education and Culture Centre launched a new series of evening lectures and video screenings entitled Jewish Motifs in Czech Film. The lectures are given by scriptwriter and film dramaturg, Alice Aronová. Among the topics covered are the image of Jewish assimilation in film, the Golem legend in film, Chassidism in film, Anti-Semitism in film – the Holocaust, the Holocaust in film – the so-called ghetto without walls, the Holocaust in film – transport, the Holocaust in film – collaborators and rescuers and the Holocaust in film – survival guilt. Among the famous Czech films that have been shown are Načeradec, král kibiců (King Kibbutz), Marijka nevěrnice (The Unfaithful Marika), Romeo, Julie a tma (Romeo, Julie and Darkness), A pátý jezdec je Strach (The Fifth Horseman Is Fear), Transport z ráje (Transport from Paradise), Déman-ty noci (Diamonds of the Night), Obchod na korze (The Shop on Main Street) and Dita Saxová.

JEWISH MOTIFS IN ILLUSTRATED WORKS

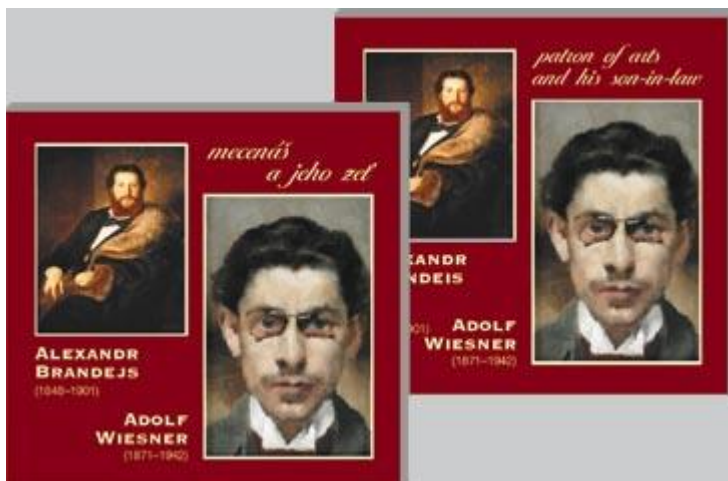
On 8 November the Museum's Education and Culture Centre opened an exhibition of illustrations by the painter Jiří Běhounek – Jewish Motifs in Illustrated Works. Among the works on view are illustrations for Leo Pavlát's books *Eight Lights* and *The Revenge of Simah the Sorceress* and Isaac Singer's *Rabbi and the Sorceress*. The exhibition runs until 30 December 2004.

CONCERT OF WORKS BY TEREZÍN COMPOSERS

As part of the 12th Else Lasker-Schüler Forum, entitled 'Sometimes I Miss Prague', the Spanish Synagogue in Prague hosted a concert of works by the Terezín composers Hans Krása, Gideon Klein, Karel Reiner, Pavel Haas and Viktor Ullmann. This was held in association with the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic.



NEW PUBLICATIONS



ALEXANDR BRANDEIS (1848-1901) AND ADOLF WIESNER (1871-1942) THE ART PATRON AND HIS SON-IN-LAW

The catalogue published for the Museum's exhibition of the same name is actually a small monograph on the artist and his time. Written by Dr. Arno Pařík,

it contains 120 pages and 201 full-colour illustrations, and is available in separate Czech and English editions. To order a copy of the catalogue, contact the mailing address of the Jewish Museum in Prague, email: ✉ sales@jewishmuseum.cz or visit our website at www.jewishmuseum.cz/shop/ashop.htm.

PROMINENT VISITS

October 2004

- Her Excellency Miss Silvia Cartwright, Governor General of New Zealand and Mr. Petr Cartwright
- A group of 70 US Jewish representatives of the individual sections of the United Jewish Communities

December 2004

- Michael G. Hahn, Counsellor for Public Affairs, The Embassy of the United States of America in Prague

