

Newsletter

2 2015

REFURBISHED MAISEL SYNAGOGUE WITH NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION NOW OPEN

The Maisel Synagogue in Prague – one of the dominant buildings in the former Jewish Town of Prague – reopened to the public on 1 July 2015, after being closed for more than a year. The Jewish Museum in Prague – which includes the synagogue in its tour route – has carried out preservation and restoration work on the synagogue in the last few months and has prepared a new permanent exhibition for its many visitors.



Maisel Synagogue, as seen from Maiselova Street

About the exhibition

The Jewish Museum's new exhibition **JEWS IN THE BOHEMIAN LANDS, 10TH–18TH CENTURY** is based on the previous, thematically similar exhibition at the Maisel Synagogue, but draws on the latest research findings and makes the topic more attractive as a result of its new arrangement, its selection of exhibits and, above all, the inclusion of audio-visual and interactive elements. Particularly worthy of note is the several-minute "Flight Over the Prague Jewish Town" in its pre-redevelopment form, as based on Langweil's famous model of Prague.



View of the new permanent exhibition in the Maisel Synagogue

This unique virtual tour is projected onto a large screen in the main nave of the synagogue. It has been put together as a result of a collaboration by the Jewish Museum in Prague, the City of Prague Museum and the Czech Technical University in Prague (ČVUT). The exhibition also has touch screens that feature a rich variety of pictorial materials, which enable visitors to search the museum's database for information about prominent Jewish communities and personages. Visitors will also be able to "browse" a selection of rare Hebrew manuscripts and printed books, as well as historical maps of Jewish settlements. There is also an opportunity to have a detailed look at the Prague Jewish procession of 1741 (24th of April), which was held in celebration of the birth of Emperor Joseph II. In addition, there is an eye-catching projection of photographic images of historic synagogues in Bohemia and Moravia.

In the evening hours, the synagogue will be used as an auditorium for concerts, recitals and solo theatre performances. This is why, unlike the layout of the previous exhibition, the central part of the synagogue will remain an open space, so that it can be turned into an auditorium. This new cultural space seeks to attract mostly Czech visitors.

Following last year's opening of a new Information and Reservation Centre at Maiselova 15, the reopening of the Maisel Synagogue is the latest achievement in the gradual transformation of the Jewish Museum into a more attractive, visitor-friendly cultural institution.



The festive opening of the exhibition on 30 June was attended by about 200 guests

EXHIBITIONS

Shattered Hopes. Postwar Czechoslovakia as a Crossroads of Jewish Life (25 February – 23 August 2015)

The defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of WWII in Europe put an end to the genocide of persons who, based on legislature effective in the territories controlled by Nazi Germany and its allies, were labelled as Jews or members of a “mixed race”. Those of the survivors who originally came from the Czech lands gradually returned home to begin a new life.

The new exhibition reveals lesser-known aspects of the history of the Czech lands after WWII related to the repatriation of the survivors of the death camps and the transfer of dozens of thousands of Jewish refugees via Czechoslovakia. The theme of the exhibition thus builds on the museum’s previous project, *Orient in Bohemia? Jewish Refugees during the First World War*.

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

Invitation

We would like to invite you to a guided tour of the exhibition *Shattered Hopes: Postwar Czechoslovakia as a Crossroads of Jewish Life* with the curator and documentary film-maker Martin Šmok on Sunday 23 August, at 4 p.m. Regular admission: CZK 40.



The so-called Maisel Children in front of the Robert Guttman Gallery.
Photo: Martin Šmok

The Auschwitz Album (18 May – 20 September 2015)

This exhibition features copies of all of the almost 200 photographs from the Auschwitz Album, a unique document from 1944 that depicts the systematic liquidation of Europe’s Jews. Although most of the people in the photographs are citizens of pre-war Czechoslovakia from Carpathian Ruthenia, this album has not previously been shown in the Czech Republic. The exhibition is a collaboration between the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Prague City Gallery and is on view at the House of Photography (a specialized gallery that is part of the Prague City Gallery).

House of Photography, Revoluční 5, Prague 1
Open Tue-Wed, Fri-Sun: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Thu: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m., Mon: closed

Invitation

We would like to invite you to a guided tour of the exhibition *The Auschwitz Album* with the curator Martin Jelínek (Jewish Museum in Prague) on Thursday 3 September at 6 p.m. and on Sunday 20 September at 5 p.m. Details about the entrance fee and any updates on the precise time will be posted nearer the date of the event on the websites www.jewishmuseum.cz and www.ghmp.cz.



Opening of the exhibition *The Auschwitz Album* on 18 May 2015



Photograph from the Auschwitz Album

Under preparation

Lost Images: Eugeen van Mieghem and the Jewish Emigrants to the New World
(10 September 2015 – 10 April 2016)

The Jewish Museum's third exhibition on the refugee phenomenon is being prepared in collaboration with the Eugeen van Mieghem Foundation and the Red Star Line Museum in Antwerp. Its focus is on the emigration of millions of people from Eastern Europe to America at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th. One of the main focal points of this emigration was the port of Antwerp and the Belgian shipping company Red Star Line, which transported up to three million European emigrants to the New World between 1880 and 1934. Among them were hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews who were fleeing poverty, permanent oppression and recurring waves of pogroms. This exodus of emigrants in the port of Antwerp was depicted by the local artist Eugeen van Mieghem (1875–1930). In addition to 50 works by Eugeen van Mieghem, the exhibition will also feature posters of the Red Star Line and period photographs of the port of Antwerp.

Robert Guttmann Gallery, U Staré školy 3, Prague 1



Drawing by Eugeen van Mieghem

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

More than 20 evening events have been held over the last three months at the Department for Education and Culture, including lectures, discussions and themed evenings. In April there was an opportunity to meet the prominent Prague-born Israeli photographer Zeev Hertz (b. 1922), who made it to the Israeli coast in November 1940 after the sinking of the SS Patria. Zeev Hertz's contribution to Israeli photography was the topic of a lecture by Bruria Pasternak, the curator of a retrospective exhibition on Zeev Hertz. The development of Israeli music against the background of Hertz's photography was discussed by Prof. Uri Sharvit.



Israeli photographer Zeev Hertz and Jewish Museum director Leo Pavlát

In June, Jacob Ari Labendz gave a lecture on the role of Jewish property in the relations between Communist Czechoslovakia and the Jews. This marked the end of a two-year lecture series that was held within the framework of a seminar on modern Jewish history, sponsored by the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Institute of Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. During this series, we have had the opportunity to meet leading experts in this field from the Czech Republic and abroad. On behalf of the participants, we would particularly like to thank the co-ordinator of the series, Kateřina Čapková (Institute of Contemporary History).

In mid-June, Pavel Štingl – the founder of the not-for-profit organization Memorial Shoah Prague – talked about current plans concerning the transformation of Bubny railway station into a contemporary Shoah memorial. In addition to the permanent exhibition of the future Memorial of Silence, he also referred to seasonal projects that we can look forward to in the near future.

Also in June, a discussion with Jana Dubá and Věra Štinglová marked the end of the first year of the "Our Twentieth Century" series. Most of the discussions from this series have been filmed and are available on the Jewish Museum's [YouTube Channel](#).



From the cycle *Our Twentieth Century*

In addition to its lectures and Q&A sessions, the Brno office of the Department for Education and Culture now also provides guided tours for the public. Its guided tour of the Brno Jewish Cemetery is particularly popular. In May of this year, its "Memory in Streets" tour charted the Jewish stories that are associated with several of the streets of Brno.

Notice

There will be no evening events for the public in July and August.

Invitation

We would like to invite you to a performance of "Shalom – Songs of Love and Peace" by the Vienna Jewish Choir, led by Roman Grinberg. The concert will be held in the Spanish Synagogue (Věžeňská 1, Prague 1) on 17 August, 7.30 p.m. Free entry.



Under preparation

Cinegogue 2015

(12/13 October 2015, Spanish Synagogue, Věžeňská 1, Prague 1)

CINEGOGUE is a unique series that combines silent cinema, live music and historic architecture. Its aim is to uncover little-known works of world cinematography and, in so doing, to present different perspectives of Jewish culture and the artists of the post-emancipation period – a time that saw not only the inception of the international Zionist movement and the large waves of immigration from Central and Eastern Europe to the New world, but also the frenetic growth of avant-garde art and cinematography.

This year's CINEGOGUE is entitled The Poetic Avant-garde: Between Walt Whitman and Robert Desnos. It will feature a series of five short films made by Jewish American artists Paul Strand (1890–1976), Ralph Steiner (1899–1986), and Man Ray (1890–1976). All three were established photographers with an interest in cinematic experiment. The five films form a multi-genre collage that ranges from the (proto)documentary of Paul Strand to the abstract cinematic montages of Ralph Steiner to the Surrealist games and dreams of Man Ray. What connects the three is a distinct affinity for the poetry of images and words. Indeed, the first and last films incorporate specific works of poetry: in "Manhatta" Strand borrows from Walt Whitman, and Ray's fantasy "L'étoile de mer" (The Starfish) is based on an automatic text by Robert Desnos, who is one of the protagonists in the film. Restored and digitized versions of the films will be shown and accompanied by new music from young Czech composers produced and performed by BERG Orchestra, conducted by Petr Vrábel, the ensemble's artistic director.

Lost Torah mantle from 1901 back in the Jewish Museum's collections

In 2014 we managed to bring about the successful restitution and repatriation of a Torah curtain, originally from the South Bohemian town of Mladá Vožice. The curtain was identified by our experts in a Sotheby's New York sale in April 2013 and brought back to Prague a year later. Since then, we have had another success in our search for missing objects from our collections.

We have retrieved a Torah mantle from 1901, which came to the Jewish Museum in a shipment of ritual objects from the Jewish religious community of Holešov during the Second World War and disappeared under unclear circumstances after the war. The mantle is made of red velvet and cream silk atlas, is adorned with paillettes and embellished with embroidery in gold metal thread. The dedicatory inscription bears the names Hindl and Hayyim Beer, who donated the mantle to a synagogue or prayer house in or near Holešov in 1901.

Israeli police secure a fragment of a missing Hebrew manuscript

A manuscript missing for several years and listed in Interpol's database of stolen artworks was found in the online catalogue of the Israeli auction house Asufa on 4 January 2015 – a discovery made by experts at the Jewish Museum in Prague. After verifying all the necessary details and making sure that it was the actual manuscript in question, we immediately asked the auction house to withdraw the item from sale and to return it promptly. We did so having proven our claim of ownership and shown that it was the missing item in question, the theft of which was recorded in Interpol's database. At the same time, we informed the Czech Police of our discovery and requested that it notify Interpol of this fact and contact their Israeli colleagues for co-operation in securing the manuscript.

Out of fear of delay, we entered into parallel negotiations with the Asufa House of Auction and with the vendor's legal representative. In connection with this, it became apparent that only part of the stolen manuscript was on offer at the auction. The thieves had evidently removed the manuscript from its original leather binding. There are various reasons for handling such a rare volume in this way – for example, in expectation of getting more money from selling it in parts, or as an attempt to make it more difficult to identify the item when put to auction.

From the outset, the vendor of the manuscript was unwilling to accept our request to return the item in question, repeatedly arguing that the item in question was not the one that had been stolen. As a consequence, experts at the Jewish Museum in Prague had to prove that it was in fact a fragment of the stolen volume. As there is a complete copy of the manuscript at the museum and as there is a complete microfilm copy of the manuscript at the Hebrew National Library in Jerusalem, it was possible to clearly show that the folios of the Prague manuscript and the folios of the fragment on offer at the Asufa auction are identical in the smallest of details, including the lettering anomalies, irregularities, extent of damage, and earlier restoration measures.

Items on loan from the Jewish Museum at interesting exhibitions in the Czech Republic and abroad

During the first half of 2015 we loaned several objects from our collections for attractive exhibitions projects in the Czech Republic and abroad. For the exhibition *Snip it! Stances on Ritual Circumcision* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, we provided a circumcision curtain from 1794 and a baby's garment that had been worn by the later composer and pianist Karel Reiner during his circumcision in Žatec Synagogue. The Berlin-based



German Historical Museum is currently marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War with the exhibition *1945 – Defeat. Liberation. New Beginning*. Featuring individual biographies and various topics, this exhibition focuses on the immediate post-war situation in twelve European countries and explores the consequences and importance of this milestone in the following decades. Selected themes from the life of the Czech Jewish community are represented by, among things, the story of a Torah scroll from our collections that is traditionally used in the prayer room of the Jewish community in Teplice. Two keys works by Friedl Dicker-Brandeis from our visual arts collection (Interrogation I and Interrogation II) were on view in the *Das ist Österreich* exhibition at the Vorarlberg Museum in the Austria city of Bregenz. Both of these works are among our most frequently loaned items and have previously been on display in the USA, Israel, Sweden and Japan.

Among the Jewish Museum's loans for exhibitions in the Czech Republic were two works by Friedrich Feigl for an Oskar Kokoschka retrospective in the Prague-based National Gallery (*Kokoschka and Prague*), works by Emil Orlik, Eugen von Kahler and Jiří Kars for an exhibition organized by the Pilsen-based Gallery of West Bohemia (*Munich – Shining Metropolis of Art*) and a painting of the Cement Works in Braník by Bohumír Kubišta for the National Technical Museum in Prague (*150 Years of Prague Steam Navigation – a not entirely usual context for this work*). Our largest and most important loan of items in the Czech Republic, however, is a set of 16 collection objects



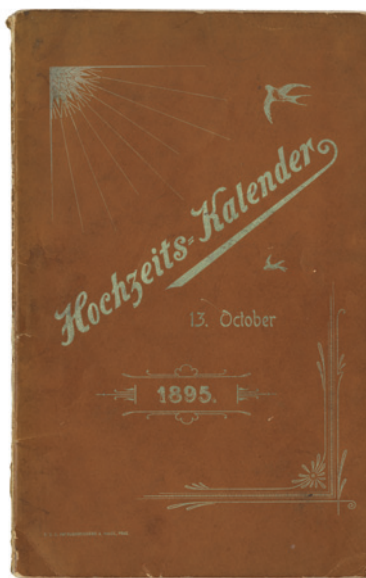
Leo Pavlát (director of the Jewish Museum in Prague, pictured on the right) and Luděk Beneš (director of the Museum of the Mladá Boleslav Region, pictured on the left) signing a co-operation agreement

for the exhibition *Jewish Traditions and Customs in the Mladá Boleslav Region*. The silver artefacts on loan at exhibitions include liturgical appurtenances of the Torah scroll and a gilt cup made in Jihlava in 1623, which was originally intended as a prize in a shooting competition and was later used as a Kiddush cup in the Mladá Boleslav Synagogue. Most of the synagogue textiles on loan at exhibitions date from the 18th century; particularly noteworthy is a Torah binder from 1726, which has an embroidered inscription and numerous iconographic and symbolic motifs.

Important gift for the Jewish Museum's library

In April, the Jewish Museum's library collection was enriched by a gift of important books that had been kindly facilitated by John Moore (Milton, Massachusetts). These books come from the estate of Mary Ellen Baker Salus (1920-2013), the wife of Wolfgang Salus (1909-1953) who was the son of the prominent Prague-based German-language writer and physician, Dr. Hugo Salus (1866-1929). Some of these works have never before been represented in the library's collections. They were originally part of Hugo Salus's private library, as evidenced by the ex libris included in many of them and also by the valuable dedication notes from prominent 20th-century authors, such as the writer and critic Max Brod and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Many of the dedications were also made to Hugo's wife Olga, née Engel (1874-1926). The gift also

included Hugo and Olga's Hochzeits-Kalender (wedding calendar) from 13 October 1895. Thanks to this gift we have been able to put together an almost complete material record of Salus's literary work and, at the same time, to enrich not only the library's collection but also some of our other collections – particularly the visual arts collection (which received portraits of Hugo and Wolfgang Salus, among other things) and the archives (which obtained a range of interesting personal data). The books are now available for reference study in the library's reading room.



High praise on TripAdvisor

The Jewish Museum in Prague has received the prestigious TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for the Pinkas and Spanish synagogues. Founded in 2010, the Certificate of Excellence award honours tourist attractions and destinations that consistently achieve outstanding reviews on TripAdvisor from travellers around the world.

The TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence can be applied for by any organization that has been listed on TripAdvisor for at least 12 months and has maintained a rating of at least 4 out of 5 points. The Jewish Museum in Prague scored 4 out of 5; the Spanish

and Pinkas synagogues had an overall rating of 4.5. The profiles of the Jewish Museum and the Spanish Synagogue also received a Travelers' Choice award, making the list of the world's most popular destinations.



BRIEF NEWS

The Library and Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague will be closed to the public in July and August 2015.

Digitization

The Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, in collaboration with the National Archives, have recently digitized 19 *Books of Jewish Familiants* from its collections. These books (from the archival funds of the Jewish religious communities of Prague, Třešť, Prostějov and Velké Meziříčí, etc.) are now available to researchers on the online portal <http://www.badatelna.eu>.

JUDA FEST

On 21 June, the Jewish Museum took part in JUDA FEST, an annual Czech Jewish festival at Náměstí Míru (Peace Square) in Prague.

Kaddish

On 11–12 June, a stage adaptation of Imre Kertész's famous novel *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* was put on by Archa Theatre with the support of the Jewish Museum in Prague. This play, entitled *Kaddish*, is an exploration of ritual, loss, and inner conflict in which the protagonist mourns the absence of the child he never fathered during his failed marriage, having refused to bring a child into a world where horrors like the Shoah can occur.



Financial gift for the Jewish Museum

Helen Satter (née Kleinová), who was born in Prague and is currently living in Tinton Falls, New Jersey, has provided the Jewish Museum in Prague with a financial gift in memory of her parents Oskar and Annie Klein, who perished in the Terezín ghetto in 1943. We would very much like to thank her for this donation.

Gifts received by the Jewish Museum in Prague

We received several gifts of paintings in May. *Portrait of the Architect Max Gerstl in Military Uniform* (oil on canvas, Budapest, 1915, painted by František Sokol) was donated by Bronja Gerstl Rayman from New Rochelle, New York. *Portrait of Milena Steindlerová* (oil on canvas, Prague, 1932, painted by Maurice Mendjizky/Maurycy Medrzycki) was donated by Hana Anděřová from Prague.



Prague Museum Night

As usual, we took part in Prague's annual Museum Night, now in its 12th year. It was held in the late hours of Saturday 13 June. Free access was provided to the exhibitions in the Klausen and Spanish synagogues. Guided tours were offered in the Klausen Synagogue and a children's programme was provided in the Spanish Synagogue. There was also a special tour for the profoundly deaf. In total, about 2,500 people visited the two synagogues.



Sign language interpreter during the tour for the profoundly deaf

Liberation concert

On Monday 29 June, a gala concert was held in the Spanish Synagogue for the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Terezín ghetto and the end of the Second World War. The concert featured music by the composer and former Terezín inmate Gideon Klein and the world premieres of works by Elaine Agnew, Sivan Eldar and David Post as performed by Mark Ludwig (a violist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and the Boston Children's Chorus.



Are we able to teach well about the war?

Seventy years on, the Second World War is still a lively social topic, as illustrated by current debates about the end of the war and its consequences. Do schools prepare us for encounters with people who perceive the war in a different light? Do history lessons prepare us for the period "after school" when we will need to comprehend the new findings of historians? How should history be read and understood? On 6 May, at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, these questions were addressed by representatives of eight educational organizations, including the Jewish Museum in Prague, in a panel discussion entitled "Are we able to teach well about the war?"

Co-operation with the Museum of the Mladá Boleslav Region

The exhibition *Jewish Traditions and Customs in the Mladá Boleslav Region* opened at Mladá Boleslav Castle on 23 June. A number of unique objects of Judaica from the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague are on view here. The exhibition was prepared by the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Museum of the Mladá Boleslav Region.



New videos showing the exhibitions of the Jewish Museum in Prague

On our new [YouTube channel](#) you can see the first five of a planned ten promotional videos about the Jewish Museum's exhibitions and activities. It features virtual tours of the Pinkas, Spanish and Klausen synagogues, the Ceremonial Hall and the Old Jewish Cemetery. Later on, there will be a Maisel Synagogue tour and information about our publishing activities, the work of our conservators/restorers and the Robert Guttman Gallery and, last but not least, a video recording about the museum and its activities as a whole.

PROMINENT VISITS

April

On 19 April, the Jewish Museum was visited by a delegation from the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), who came to Prague in connection with *Culture Against Antisemitism* project.

May

On 28 May, the Jewish Museum was visited by the Czech Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Ivo Schwarz.

June

On 11 June, the exhibition *The Auschwitz Album* – a collaboration between the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Prague City Gallery – was visited by the French "Nazi hunters" Beate and Serge Klarsfeld. They took part in a public debate with the exhibition curator Martin Jelínek and other guests and, on 12 June, appeared in the Czech Television programme [Hyde Park Speciál](#).



Beate and Serge Klarsfeld at the exhibition *The Auschwitz Album*

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