

THE FACES OF THE VICTIMS OF THE SHOAH

The tragic fate of victims of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” symbolically commemorated by the Jewish Museum in Prague

Prague, 12 October 2017

On the evening of the anniversary of the first Nazi transport of Jews from the Czech lands, the Jewish Museum in Prague will be launching a projection of photographs of Holocaust victims.

From 16 October 2017 onwards, people walking along Široká Street from the Charles University Philosophy Faculty in the evening hours will be able to see a projection of photographs onto the gable wall of the mikveh building on the grounds of the Pinkas Synagogue. The photographs show victims of Nazi persecution from the Czech lands. This projection is part of the ongoing modernization of the permanent exhibition in the Pinkas Synagogue memorial, which is a symbolic gravestone for the more than 78,000 Jewish victims from Bohemia and Moravia.

The aim of this project is to give a face to at least some of the victims whose names are written on the walls inside the Pinkas Synagogue. Through the help of the general public and, above all, Shoah survivors and witnesses, the Jewish Museum in Prague has acquired photographs of family members, friends and acquaintances who perished or were murdered in the ghettos, concentration camps and death camps.

The selected photographs document the stories of people who, before their persecution began, had lived normal family lives and experienced friendship, love and joy, as well as the usual daily worries. They studied, worked, and had fun... Their everyday lives changed for ever on 16 October 1941, when the Nazis began to implement their hideous plan to wipe out the Jewish population in the Czech lands; the systematic deportations of Czech Jews began on that day. The first of five transports heading for the Lodz ghetto in Poland was dispatched from Prague on that day. The deportees were to suffer there from hunger, hard labour and poor hygienic conditions, which led to a high death rate. Other prisoners were sent to the death camps of Chelmno or Auschwitz. Only a few of them lived to see the liberation.

The first projection of photographs onto the gable wall of the mikveh building on the Pinkas Synagogue grounds will begin at 7 p.m. on 16 October. The projection will take place every evening, apart from Fridays and Jewish holidays. It will last 2.5 hours in the winter months, but will be shortened to 45 minutes in the summer (due to later sunset times).

Use of the outdoor space as part of the exhibition area is central to the museum's new approach to the exhibition in the Pinkas Synagogue, which will open to visitors in 2018. There will be material on display in the front courtyard of the synagogue and in Pinkas Street. Digital elements will also be incorporated into the new exhibition, which will provide access to the museum's database of Shoah victims and give additional information. Visitors will be able to access exhibit-related information at an interactive kiosk or via their own mobile devices.

Pinkas Synagogue, Jewish Museum in Prague, Široká 3, Prague 1

Information about the synagogue: <https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/explore/sites/pinkas-synagogue/>

Photographs to download:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-XAXScL8rQfQ3pQNzZycljSjg> or
<http://www.uschovna.cz/zasilka/QQ5IAZGSV79SXUM8-DZT/>

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Notes for editors on the Jewish Museum in Prague

1. The Jewish Museum in Prague is the largest museum of its kind in Europe and has one of the most extensive collections of Judaica in the world, with as many as 40,000 unique items and 100,000 books, photographs and archival documents. The museum oversees four historic synagogues, the Ceremonial Hall, the world-famous Old Jewish Cemetery, a gallery, several depositories, an archive, a library with multimedia centre, restoration workshops and an educational/cultural centre.
2. The Jewish Museum in Prague is consistently among the top three most visited museums in the Czech Republic. In 2016 it attracted nearly 660,000 visitors.
3. The original aim of the Association for the Founding and Maintaining of a Jewish Museum in Prague, in 1906, was to preserve valuable artefacts from Prague synagogues that were earmarked for demolition as part of the redevelopment of the area of Prague's Jewish Town at the turn of the nineteenth century.
The museum remained open to the public even after the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia on 15 March 1939, although the museum association was disbanded after the outbreak of the Second World War. After lengthy negotiations in 1942, the Nazi authorities approved the founding of the Central Jewish Museum in Prague. Liturgical objects from all the defunct Jewish communities and synagogues throughout the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were assembled here at the same time that transports were being dispatched to the ghettos, concentration camps and death camps. The museum's collections were placed under national administration after war and forcibly taken into state ownership in 1950. Its activities were officially restricted and certain items were sold off – including more than a thousand Torah scrolls, which were shipped to the United Kingdom in 1964. The conditions for a new stage in the museum's development came about only after the fall of the Communist regime in 1989. The museum regained its independence in 1994, since when it has continued to familiarize the general public with the past, present and culture of the Jewish community in the Czech Republic.
4. The museum's Robert Guttmann Gallery is a venue for the presentation of temporary exhibitions of a thematic nature. It is named after the well-known Prague naive painter Robert Guttmann (1880-1942), whose work was featured in the first exhibition. The gallery is located on the ground floor in the north-east section of the museum's headquarters at U Staré školy 3.
5. A substantial part of the museum's work involves developing educational and cultural activities. Its educational programmes are intended for a wide variety of target groups. The youngest children can become acquainted with Jewish culture, traditions and customs in a playful way at the museum. Interactive programmes and lectures are provided for elementary and secondary school pupils. There are also regular educational seminars for teachers and evening educational programmes for the general public. Travelling exhibitions are available for schools and cultural institutions.

www.jewishmuseum.cz

