



## **THE AUSCHWITZ ALBUM**

### **Prague City Gallery**

**House of Photography, Revoluční 1006/5, Prague 1**

**19 May–20 September 2015, Tue–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m.**

**Curator: Martin Jelínek, the Jewish Museum in Prague**

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 also describes how the album was created, how it was found by the Auschwitz survivor Lili Jacob and what happened to it after the war. A major role in its post-war fate was played by the Czech capital city and the Jewish Museum in Prague, where in 1947 copies were made of the photographs in the album. The original album was donated to Yad Vashem in 1980. Thanks to the Jewish Museum, other copies of the photographs were sent to several other European museums during the 1950s and 1960s.

The exhibition also presents new findings – previously unpublished – about the album and about Lily Jacob. Above all, it draws attention to the fact that although the album is usually talked about in connection with the transports of Hungarian Jews, the photographs actually depict citizens of pre-war Czechoslovakia. Lily Jacob herself – who found the album in the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp after the liberation – was a Czechoslovak citizen, spoke Czech fluently and lived in what was then Czechoslovakia for three years after the war. The money that Lily Jacob received in 1947 from the then State Jewish Museum – for allowing it to make copies of images from the album – enabled her to move with her husband and first-born daughter to the United States in 1948, where they began a new life. The actual photographs were first published in two Czechoslovak books from 1949 and 1956 (*The Tragedy of the Jews of Slovakia* and *The Death Factory*). The Auschwitz Album also played an important role as supporting evidence in war crime trials in Germany and Israel.

The exhibition is being held to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It is intended for local visitors and tourists, but also for secondary school students. At a time when anti-Israeli sentiment is growing in Europe and when the Auschwitz Album itself is being questioned by revisionists, it is important to remind people in the Czech Republic and abroad of the fate of their fellow citizens.

The Prague City Gallery – the second largest gallery in the Czech Republic after the National Gallery – was founded on 1 May 1963 with the task of collecting, protecting, studying and managing Czech art of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The Prague City Gallery currently oversees eight buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Golden Ring House, the Municipal Library (2nd floor), the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, the Villa Bílek, the Troja Chateau and the František Bílek House in Chýnov.

**The Auschwitz Album** is a unique set of photographs that documents the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in the spring of 1944. Apart from an album that shows the camp being built in 1942–1943 and three photographs that were taken secretly by inmates, there is no other authentic pictorial document that captures life in Auschwitz.

Historians rightly consider the Auschwitz Album to be one of the most important testimonies on the fate of the millions who were murdered. Nearly everyone who has seen a television documentary about the Holocaust or has read a book on this topic will probably have come across one of the photographs from this album. Without the Auschwitz Album we would have to rely solely on the reminiscences and accounts of survivors.

The Auschwitz Album documents the arrival, selection and processing of the so-called “Hungarian Transports” that came to Auschwitz-Birkenau at the end of May or the start of June 1944. According to some sources, the photographs were taken on a single day; according to others, over a period of several weeks. Many of the trains came from Berehove, Mukachevo and Uzhhorod in Carpathian Ruthenia, a former part of Czechoslovakia that was ceded to Hungary in November 1938, just as the Sudetenland had been ceded to Germany under the Munich Agreement. The rest of Carpathian Ruthenia was annexed by Hungary on 18 March 1939, three days after the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia by the German army. As is evident from the recorded testimonies of survivors, many of the deportees in the photographs spoke Yiddish at home. Nonetheless, they considered themselves to be Czechoslovakians.

Unlike the previous deportation trains, the Hungarian transports arriving at Auschwitz went directly into the Birkenau camp – on a newly built track that was completed in May 1944. The railway track was extended in order to speed up the selection process, so that the prisoners could be quickly divided into those capable of work and those to be exterminated immediately, and to make the sorting of their belongings more effective. Most of those deemed fit to work were soon taken to forced labour camps in the German Reich, so that they could be used by the German military industry, which was at risk of air raids. The others – mostly the elderly and women with children – were immediately sent to the gas chambers upon arrival. More than a million European Jews perished at Auschwitz-Birkenau, including at least 75,000 from Carpathian Ruthenia. More than a quarter of a million Jews from the former Czechoslovakia were murdered by the Nazis.

**Martin Jelínek**

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## **The exhibition partner is the Jewish Museum in Prague**

**Curator:** Martin Jelínek (Jewish Museum in Prague)

**Co-ordinator:** Hana Larvová

**Architectural and graphic design:** Jan Šerých

**Translation:** Stephen Hattersley

**Copy editing:** Marta Nožková, Leo Pavlát

**Multimedia:** Martin Šmok, Marek Fryš

**Preparation, print and adjustment of photographs:** Karel Bulín, Ondřej Zatloukal

**Installation and production manager:** Diana Brabcová

**Promotion:** Barbora Gallová, Miroslav Kolářek, Alice Lenská, Michaela Vrchotová

**Educational programmes:** Lucie Haškovcová, Markéta Slachová Goldová

**Exhibition partner:** ČEZ Group

**Main media partners:** Týden, Instinkt

**Media partners:** A2, Art&Antiques, Artalk.cz, ArtMap, Artmix, Český rozhlas (Czech Radio) Vltava, Literární noviny, Pražský deník, Radio 1, Radio Classic, Týdeník Dotyk

**Special thanks to:** Serge and Beata Klarsfeld, Esther Kramer, Michael Kraus, Otto Dov Kulka, Harry Farkaš, Emmanuel Lulin

**Thanks to:** Etelka Baji, Milan Brát, Nina Černochová, Veronika Dudková, Tomáš Fedorovič, Kateřina Honskusová, Julie Jenšovská, Petr Joza, Vladimír Kaiser, Dita Knapp, Miroslava Kurečková, Dana Mráková, Pavla Neuner, Martina Petrásková, Wojciech Płosa, Werner Renz, Emanuel Saunders, Mahulena Svobodová, Magdalena Sedlická, Jana Šplíchalová, Jan Šýblo, Jiří Tejkal, Daniel Uziel, Ilona Wiss, Olga Zárubová

Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive), Národní archiv (National Archives), Yad Vashem, Fritz Bauer Institut, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Admission:** CZK 120 (adults) / CZK 60 (students) / CZK 30 (seniors)

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**For more information:** [www.ghmp.cz](http://www.ghmp.cz), [www.jewishmuseum.cz](http://www.jewishmuseum.cz)

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