



Theresienstadt: Drawn from the Inside
Works from the Jewish Museum of Australia Collection

11 April 2010 – 13 March 2011

Creativity and survival

The concentration camp at Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia was a macabre mock-up of a real society, a triumph of duplicity, designed to lull its inmates and the world at large into believing that it was a benign resettlement program, where Jews would be the beneficiaries of the Nazis' humane treatment. In fact it was a way station to the death camps.

Curated by Mera Brooks the exhibition *Theresienstadt: Drawn from the Inside* showcases the watercolours and drawings of Paul Schwarz and Leo Lowit, Theresienstadt interns who were ultimately murdered in Auschwitz. Their impressions were carried out of Theresienstadt in a battered suitcase by Paul's wife Regina, who entrusted them to the Museum. First exhibited in 1990, today the sketches and their creators remain unrepresented in any major Holocaust museum. The body of works is therefore unique, and it is timely twenty years later, to share it with the public once again. The exhibition is also unique in featuring two interpretive narratives: one for children and one for adults.

A community of creativity was formed in the mire of suffering that was Theresienstadt by the remarkable concentration of artists, intellectuals, and musicians. Some were forced by the Nazis to produce material for the Nazi propaganda machine or for the Germans' personal consumption. Some depicted the awful reality; some coped by idealising their environment. Neither defiance nor compliance prevented deportation to Auschwitz.

Paul Schwarz captured the intimate world of the housing barracks, secluded nooks, and little courtyards of the ghetto in almost idyllic watercolours. Leo Lowit's unflinching material is stark and unforgiving, and sometimes ironic, in its depiction of the horror, fear and desolation in Theresienstadt.

Of the approximately 144,000 Jews sent to Theresienstadt, 17,247 survived. Only ninety-three of the 15,000 children survived. This place of short stay, of death, had a prodigious output. Whether the inmates' art and music was about survival, or about spiritual resistance, art did not finally save lives.

The exhibition will be opened by The Honourable Peter Batchelor, MP, Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for the Arts the, at 11:30am Sunday 11 April (Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day) 2010 with keynote address by Julian Burnside AO QC.

Jewish Museum of Australia
 26 Alma Rd, St Kilda
 Tues - Thurs: 10 - 4pm
 Sunday: 10 - 5pm
 Closed Jewish holy days
www.jewishmuseum.com.au

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