



VILNA GAON STATE JEWISH MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER 15

Dear Friends of the Jewish Museum in Vilnius/Vilne,

5772 Shana Tova! Mazl Tov!

We are happy to have the opportunity to talk to You today, at the eve of Rosh ha Shana and congratulate You with this Holy day.

Word from the editor



Kamilė Rupeikaitė
Deputy Director for Research
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The New Year again... because of interesting and dynamic projects every year for the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum becomes new. For implementing serious ideas, we seek to invoke human resources as effectively as possible, therefore this year we realized some administrative changes – separated the departments of the museum from the exhibition branches. Hence the research work is being done by the History Department and Righteous Gentiles Department, exhibits collected and preserved by the Inventory and Conservation of Holdings Department, exhibiting possibilities are being taken care of the Exhibitions Department, and exhibitions are being introduced to visitors by the branches of the Museum: the Green House, dedicated to the Holocaust history in Lithuania, Paneriai mass murder site memorial and the Tolerance Centre, which attracts visitors not only with its

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exhibitions, but with its other dynamic activities (lectures, movie screenings, concerts).

This year significant change took place in the administration of the museum: the Head of the Exhibitions Department Jūratė Razumienė became the Deputy Director for administration and projects. Immediately, she started working with important and large-scale tasks, such as the concept of renovation of the memorial museum of Jacques Lipchitz in Druskininkai. Another very important development is that this year we established the post of the head of educational programs and organized the first thematic sessions for school children and grown ups.

This time the heads of the departments and exhibition branches share with You the highlights of their activities and achievements. The highlights of the year are mentioned in the Newsletter more than once – this testify to the fact that we are one museum, that we work as a team striving for the same goals, even though we are scattered in different buildings. I am happy that we have what to share with You, and that the activities of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum are expanding continually, becoming more and more professional, gaining more life.

Wishing You all a happy and successful year,
Kamilė Rupeikaitė

Letter to Museum's friends and visitors

Vladimiras Ulevičius photo



Markas Zingeris
Director
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The current year, which by the Government of Lithuania is dedicated to the Commemoration of the Holocaust in Lithuania, was really different for our museum. Amid many interesting encounters, movies and exhibitions, which meant for us also hard work and accomplishments, we organized the International Conference at the Tolerance Centre of the Museum "Ashes of Ponary: Ideas for the Memorial Reconstruction". As it is known among historians, Ponary (Paneriai) is the site of the biggest Nazi crime to the East of the Bug and the Nemunas. There, 100 000 people were massacred, mostly civilians and absolute majority of them were the Jews of Vilna and the vicinity.

The heads of the Polish, Israeli and Jewish institutions which came on our invitation shared their experience with the Lithuanian audience and showed the perfect understanding that a memorial and institution, probably an



Adviser to the Minister of Culture Rolandas Kvietkauskas (Lithuania), Associate Director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum Jacek Nowakowski (US), Chairman of the Yad Vashem Museum Avner Shalev (Israel), Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim Piotr M.A. Cywiński (Poland), Director of the Stutthof Museum Piotr Tarnowsky (Poland)

international one, dealing with the Memorial of Ponary (Paneriai) should be established in Lithuania, which will be able to tell the world and contribute to education. This site deserves a memorial on a European scale.

The Conference was supported by the Embassies of Israel, Poland, the USA and the Czech Republic, the patron was Lithuanian Government. Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius and the Minister of Culture, Arūnas Gelūnas, were among the speakers, who included the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate Avner Shalev, the Deputy Director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington Jacek Nowakowski, directors of Auschwitz and Stutthof museums

Piotr M. A. Cywiński and Piotr Tarnowsky.

We also feel the obligation to fill the blank spots left by the totalitarian regimes, to catch up on the political and cultural achievements of the western world, which escaped our society while Lithuania was in isolation or struggling with her existential problems.

The Museum of Art and History of Judaism in Paris mounted an exhibition about Captain Dreyfuss Affair at our museum. The visitors also liked, judging by the opinions shared, the US movie screenings at the Tolerance Centre where among other features, they saw the famous musical "The Producers".

We have opened our the fall season on September 20, 2011 with the exhibition, based mainly on our collections but also on the items from the deposits of international archives of Israel and US (e. g. New York's YIVO collections). This was "The Signs and Symbols of the Lost Civilization" arranged and curated by our Chief Curator Dr. Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė. Her impressive catalog-monograph on the subject was presented together with the exhibition and this



was her fruit of labour of many years. The decorative and religious art of the Lithuanian Jewry is one of the many layers of the culture destroyed through the twentieth century, that's why it is our mission to make it available, though only by iconography and historical records now, to the present and future generations.



Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Museum (Israel)



Violinist B. Kirzner during the spectacular concert "Shining of the Souls"

September 23 is National Holocaust Commemoration Day on Lithuanian calendars. The museum marked (at the Tolerance Centre) with a full house of art and music fans, who came to see the "Shining of the Souls", the musical and theatrical performance directed by the composer, contracted for this occasion, Anatolijus Šenderovas. The well-known saxophonist Petras Vyšniauskas and the violinist Boris Kirzner played for the beginning from the second floor balcony of the Tolerance Centre facing the crossing of two Old Town streets, and children in traditional Jewish outfits welcomed the visitors on the steps of the museum, offering homemade

sweets. Later, in the first floor theatre hall, the show included a Klezmer ensemble, Šenderovas' songs on traditional Jewish texts sung by young tenor Rafailas Karpis, accompanied by the piano trio and percussionists, video installations blown up on the movie screen. The poems of A.Sutzkever, written in the Vilna Ghetto and read by the actors in Yiddish and Lithuanian, were an expressive part of this show. Lithuanian State TV provided a full-time broadcast.

We are also proud of our publications. For the first time in Lithuania, we have published an illustrated Guide for the Jewish Vilna (655 pages). The first edition was in Russian and all the published copies had been already sold. We are planning to put out the second print, and to publish Lithuanian and English translations next year. For the researchers and students of WWII history we have published, I believe, a helpful book (in Lithuanian) "The Stocks of the Lithuanian Central Archive: The Research Source of the Holocaust in Lithuania". This book too is first in this field. Also, during the opening of the exhibition "The Signs and Symbols of the Lost Civilization" academicians praised the voluminous book by the same title we have published as a significant contribution to the Judaic studies in Lithuania.



Spectacular concert "Shining of the Souls"

However, the modern museum is a busy laboratory where we search for a golden formula of communicating the history to the present day society. Casting a look at the past we need to find the features of the future. We work on our education programs, which include student competitions, and we prepare for the opening of the exhibition of thirty paintings of Samuel Bak, an artist and Holocaust survivor, who works and resides in Boston, Mass. He has promised to donate his life work from 1945 to 2010 to the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. This exhibition will be the result of our collaboration with the Pucker Gallery in



Boston and Samuel Bak himself, and this event at the museum will conclude the Year of Commemoration of the Holocaust in Lithuania. As a head of this museum and leading it into the future, I want to share a dream with the friends of the Jewish Museum of Lithuania. We are planning to turn one of our branches into a modern Litvak Culture and Art Center which will host conferences, exhibitions, movies and our collections of the Litvak heritage. We hope to find a full approval in Lithuania and Internationally. The Litvaks are going to live on.

But for this we surely need Your attention and Your support,
Markas Zingeris

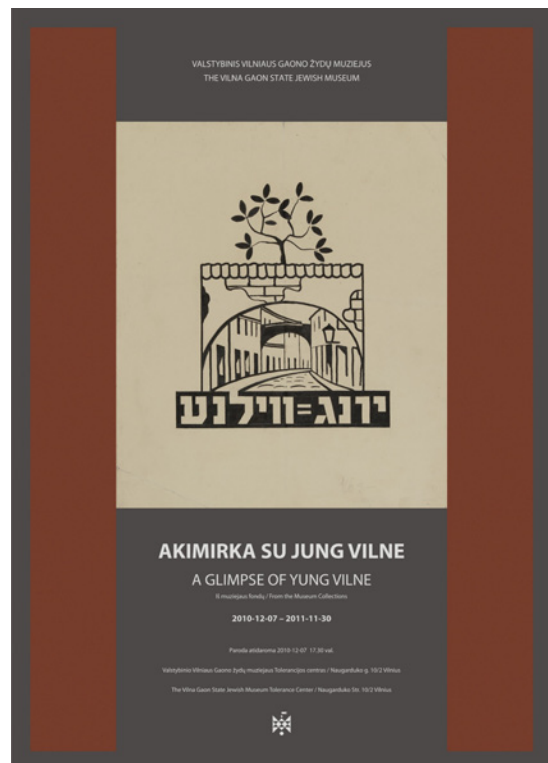
Departments of the Museum



Ilona Murauskaitė
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The Inventory and Conservation of Holdings Department is the heart of the museum. The exhibits kept at the department serve as an inspiration for the museum workers and exhibition curators to put on new shows and to provide the necessary information to project managers in Lithuania and abroad. This year the department workers continued the collection and stock taking of historical and cultural artefacts of the Lithuanian Jews.

On the initiative of Gajane Leonenko, curator of the Jacques Lipchitz collection, several graphic works by the artist have been acquired. They will be displayed at the new exhibition about the artist's life and work that is being arranged in Druskininkai. This year Leonenko and





Aušra Rožankevičiūtė, cultural historian, contributed to the July issue of the culture magazine *Kultūros barai* a comprehensive illustrated article entitled "Jacques Lipchitz for his Countrymen, devoted to the 120th birth anniversary" about the famous Litvak artist.

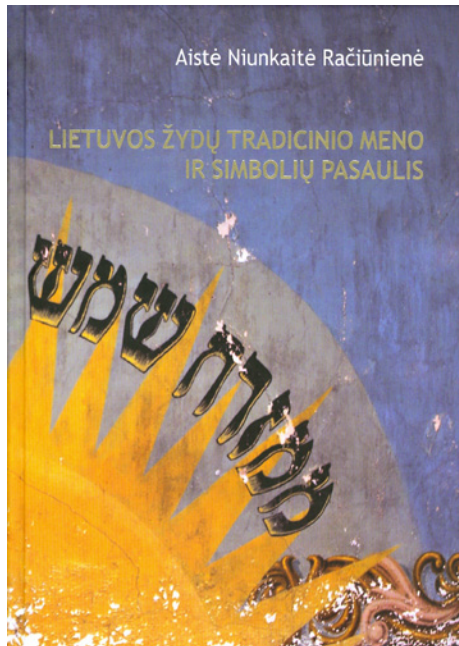
Mira Traubienė, curator of the photography and postcards collection, and Mirjam Abelovičienė, curator of the ancillary stocks, are working hard creating of an electronic card index of the exhibits for which they are responsible. Last year they made more than 800 of cards with pictures of the exhibits.

Irina Nikitina, curator of the art collections, chose the restoration of the artefacts her priority last year. On her initiative, about forty graphic works by Bentzien Michtom, a member of Yung Vilne Group, were restored last year. Part of them is on display at the audio and video exhibition "A Glimpse of Yung Vilne" that was opened on 7 December 2010.

The exhibition was organised by Ilona Murauskaitė, the curator of the Writing and Document collection and the head of the Inventory and Conservation of Holdings Department. On display are the exhibits belonging to the collections of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. The exhibition covers partly the development and creation of Yung Vilne, a group of the Jewish avant-gardes writers and artists (1929–1943). In the exhibition and the catalogue the works of Yung Vilne artists' were represented by the graphics and watercolours of Bentzion Michtom, as well as the works of Raphael Chvoles, Sheyna Efron and Rachel Sutzkever. Displayed are fragments of verses by Abraham Sutzkever, Chaim Grade and other men of letters of the group, for the first time translated from Yiddish to Lithuanian. Recordings of extracts of verses by the Yung Vilne Group poets Abraham Sutzkever and Peretz Miransky are read in Yiddish, Lithuanian and English.

As the activities of the Yung Vilne artists are in the field of Murauskaitė's research interests, she read the paper "Tanach reminiscences in Chaim Grade poem *Ezechiel*" at the international conference *Vilnius Cultural Life: Polilogue of Nations (1900–1945)* organised by the Institute of Lithuanian Folklore and Literature held on 7 October 2010. Murauskaitė's article "Leyzer Volf's *Shwartzepel*: The Symbiosis of Genres and Colours" was published in the materials of the 17th international academic conference on Judaica "Sefer" held in Moscow early in 2011.

Dr. Vilma Gradinskaitė, the curator of Josif Shapiro's collections (out of which the collection of bookplates is the largest), has published four research articles in Lithuania and abroad. The following articles by Gradinskaitė should be mentioned: "Six Stories: the Jewish Museums in Lithuania" in the sixth volume of *Caitshrift* (Minsk – Vilnius), "Attitudes of Interwar Lithuanian Art Critics towards Jewish Art" in *Jewish Artists and Central-Eastern Europe*, "Reflection of Lite Jewish Self-awareness in Jewish Art" in the ninth volume of *East–West: Comparative Studies*.



Dr. Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė, an art critic and a senior curator of the stocks, besides the usual work with the expansion of the collections and the coordination of the work connected with it, worked hard at the monograph-catalogue "The World of the Traditional Art and Symbols of the Lithuanian Jews" as well as the exhibition "Signs of the Lost Civilisation: Lita Synagogues and Traditional Art Symbols". The exhibition and the presentation of the monograph-catalogue took place on 20 September 2011.

The Inventory and Conservation of Holdings Department would not be able to exist without the work of a conservationist that is done in our museum by the restorer Jurgita Blažytė. This year, her priority is to put in order the main exhibits of the Writing Collection – the scrolls of Torahs and Megilot – employing the latest conservation methods.

With Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, approaching, the Inventory and Conservation of Holdings Department is ready to foster and safeguard the artefact collections of the Lithuanian Jews' history and culture.

Ilona Murauskaitė

History Research Department



Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė
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The History Research Department of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum is one of the largest museum's departments. Currently, six people work for it: historian Milda Jakulytė-Vasil, long-serving museum workers Irina Guzenberg, Galina Žirikova, Jevgenija Sedova and Olga Movšovič and the department head, Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, a historian.

The department researches into the history of the Lithuanian Jews from the fourteenth until the twenty-first century as an inseparable part of Lithuania's history in the historical context of society, culture, politics, ideology, and the economy. The research encompasses historical processes and phenomena from the time of the Grand



Duchy of Lithuania, the appearance and strengthening of Jewish communities, their influence and development as well as their social and political role in the process of the development of the state. The stereotypes, anti-semitism, and the destruction of the mid-twentieth-century National Socialism and the effect of the local people's hatred on the destruction of the Jewish communities, the stereotype "one of our people—a stranger" and a Soviet-time phenomenon: the destruction of traditions and obstacles to repatriation are also being researched.

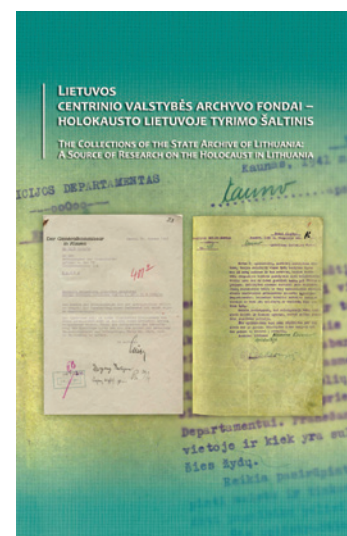
One of the most important achievements of the department is the renewed Holocaust exposition that was supplemented with new exhibits, photographs and documents and mounted together with the Holocaust Department in October 2010.



Another important achievement is the Russian language guide to Vilnius historic places prepared by the museum workers Irina Guzenberg and the former museum worker, Genrich Agranovski, which was published in June 2011. The guide "Vilnius: In Search of Traces of the Jerusalem of Lithuania" took twenty years in the making, includes the memorial sites in Vilnius. The guide offers twenty-three routes along Vilnius streets, in the Old Town, the former Jewish quarter, the Large Ghetto and the Jewish cemeteries. It also carries the biographies of the people who had made great contribution to the city. The book is supplemented with a photography section, which includes new and old photographs from the last century and postcards. It also carries statistical data and a glossary.

The third quarter of 2011 was the most productive period for the department. During the 23 September commemoration events Galina Žirikova, one of the museum workers, introduced the book "The Stocks of the Lithuanian Central Archive: The Research Source of the Holocaust in Lithuania", a collection of archival documents that will guide researchers into the Holocaust at the archive.

In October, a catalogue of the renewed Holocaust exposition will come out. It will remind the visitors who may have missed some exhibits about the tragedy of the destroyed Lithuanian Jewish communities, their strong will to survive, to tell and take efforts so that it is never repeated again.





In November, the "Atlas of the Holocaust in Lithuania" will be published. It is the project of the museum historian Milda Jakulytė-Vasil and the volunteers of the *Gedenkdienst*, the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service that started at the end of 2009 and was carried out in 2010 and 2011, the first of its kind in Lithuania. The idea was to link the historical event to the geographical sites. To this goal, a map of the sites of the killings of the Jews is being drawn, historical facts about every site are being gathered and systemised. The volume will come out at the beginning of November, while it is already possible to visit the site www.holocaustatlas.lt.

In December, the book "The Holocaust in Ukmergė" about the destruction of the Jewish community in the town by Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė will come out.

The department workers are carrying out the project on the naming of the Holocaust victims. At present, over 60 000 names have been gathered. There are plans to expand this project integrating the material that has been gathered by the department workers about Lithuanian towns in the future that would transform the two projects into one comprehensive research called "The Project on the Immortalisation of the Lithuanian Jewish Communities". The research of the subject that started in Soviet times but did not receive due attention is gaining momentum.

The department workers supply information to all who are interested in the Jewish history, those who are looking for their roots or would like to know more or specify their knowledge about the subject. They also participate in seminars and conferences.

The department's plans are linked directly with the research of the Jewish history, with the hope of educating the public, not only to gather but also to supply the visitors with information. As well as to search for ways of collaborating with other organisations that are researching into the subject and to encourage people, particularly young ones, to get acquainted with the museum's exhibitions.

Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė



Righteous Gentiles Department



Danutė Selčinskaja
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Last year was especially successful for the Righteous Gentiles Department: the work of several years resulted in publishing the DVD containing the exhibition materials

“Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About Shoah” and especially by launching an internet version of the exhibition: <http://www.rescuedchild.lt>

This unique exhibition became accessible for a large international auditorium, including survivors, participants of the exhibition themselves, their relatives, children and grandchildren living in different countries. Now they all can see and study this information.



Danutė Selčinskaja, the head of the Department, made presentations of the “Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About the Shoah” DVD at the seminar *Experience and prospects of preservation of oral history* held by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, at the XIV conference of Lithuanian Museums Association “*Modern museum communication: Traditions and Innovations*” as well as at the seminar “*Museological Approaches to the Perpetuation of Remembrance for the victims of Stalinism and Nazism*” that took place at the Multicultural Centre of the Kėdainiai Regional Museum. The latter seminar was a part of the project “*Letters for Future Generations*” within the framework of the European Union programme “*Europe for Citizens*” – “*Alive Memory of Europe*”.

A very important fact is that the “Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About the Shoah” DVD is increasingly being used by Lithuanian secondary schools for educational purposes at the history and ethics lessons.



A seminar for history teachers organized in cooperation with a non-governmental organization "House of Memory" – the center for the studies of Holocaust and the Jewish culture in Lithuania – contributed to this success. The seminar participants discussed the potential of use of the DVD for education of secondary school students.

The last year department workers conducted tours for the secondary schools students visiting from various regions of Lithuania. The department initiated a competition of students' compositions and another competition of students' activities, everything entitled: "They Lived Nearby".

Every September, according to the suggestion of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum, on Day of the Remembrance of the Genocide Victims of Lithuanian Jews, the President of the Republic of Lithuania awards the rescuers of Jews the Life Saving Crosses. The information required for the 2011 year Award ceremony was presented to the Presidential office for the Awards and the text for the booklet "The Hearts That Granted Life" was prepared.

The Righteous Gentiles Department in association with the Embassy of Israel to Latvia and Lithuania and the Jewish Community of Lithuania on 2 May 2011 held the Righteous Among the Nations Award Ceremony at the museum's Tolerance Centre. Honourable guests from Lithuania and abroad participated in the ceremony: Naphtali Tamir, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the State of Israel; Daniel Ayalon, Israeli Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; Janusz Skolimowski, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland. The ceremony is reported on the museum's web site <http://www.jmuseum.lt>.



D. Selčinskaja with Sisters of the Divina Providencia Congregation and members of the Jewish Community in Panevėžys



J. Sochot with his wife and grandchildren next to the Sochot's stand in the exhibition "Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells about Shoah"



Danutė Pomerancaitė visit



Exhibitions Department



Viktorija Sideraitė Alon
Head of the Exhibitions Department

As the Head of the Exhibitions Department Jūratė Razumienė became the deputy director for administration and projects, Viktorija Sideraitė Alon started to work as the new head from 1 June 2011. She is a professional architect with considerable international experience in architectural planning and design; she has taken part in many different architectural projects in Israel and Lithuania.

The album, revealing the future vision of "Litvak Culture and Art Center" planned in the reconstructed museum building at Pylimo g. 4, was presented at the end of June. During the visit to USA the director of the museum Markas Zingeris presented the album to the famous Boston-based Litvak artist Samuel Bak, whose creative heritage is going to become the basis for Vilnius' Litvak Culture and Art Center, together with the collections of other famous Litvak artist R. Chwoles.

We took an active part in correspondence with the Bak and Pucker galleries, his art agent in the USA, concerning the S. Bak exhibition in Vilnius in December 2011, discussing transporting of the pictures, gallery spaces, catalogue etc. The exhibition in December will be the starting point for the mentioned Vilnius Litvak Culture and Art Center.

In July and August together with the head of the Paneriai Memorial Algis Karosas we took an active part in the discussions at the Municipality of Vilnius concerning the conservation works at the Paneriai Memorial. Our ideas



The fragment of the exhibition "Signs of the Lost Civilisation: Synagogues and Traditional Art Symbols of Lithuania"

and proposals helped to correct the original project in order to save the Paneriai monument in the best possible way.

In August we took part in a very useful trip to Druskininkai, to the Jacques Lipchitz Memorial Museum (the branch of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum), that should be reconstructed soon. The future exhibition will present the history of the resort town of Druskininkai, the life of



The opening of the exhibition "Lasar Segall: from Vilnius to Sao Paulo"



the Lipchitz family and the retrospective of the artistic life of this famous Litvak artist in a modern way, using all possible digital technologies and other modern means used in today's museums in Europe. The concept of a new exhibition started to be worked out in our department.

Viktorija Sideraitė Alon

Branches of the Museum

The Tolerance Center



Ieva Šadzevičienė
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Last year was fruitful for the Tolerance Center as never before. The employees were working extremely productively in order to implement all the projects, to open international exhibitions, to organize seminars. It was worth all the efforts, because the results delighted. We have found many benevolent foreign partners, who are willing to cooperate with us in the future.

In September, we opened the exhibition "Lasar Segall: from Vilnius to San Paulo" of the graphic art works of the expressionist artist Lasar Segall (1891–1957), which was on display for three months. The exhibition came from the Museum of Judaism History and Art in Paris (Musée d'art et histoire du Judaïsme) with the help of the Embassy of the Lithuanian Republic in France. The booklet of the exhibition was published in Lithuanian, French and English in cooperation with the French Cultural Center in Vilnius. At the end of the year, we invited our visitors to the opening of the exhibition "A Glimpse of Young Vilne", prepared by Ilona Murauskaitė, head of The Inventory and Conservation of Holdings Department. In spring 2011,



Participants of the opening of the exhibition "Alfred Dreyfus: the Fight for Justice"



The lecture of Dreyfus biographer, a historian V. Duclert

we continued our cooperation with the Museum of Judaism History and Art and this April the exhibition "Alfred Dreyfus. The Fight for Justice" was opened. Based on the exhibition the educator Ana Bogatyriova prepared the program for the higher grades students "Dreyfus case: the old story or the actuality of today?"

In summer together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and the Embassy of Austria in Vilnius we presented the exhibition "The Jewish World of Yesterday, The Hope of Today: Pictures and Stories of Lithuanian Jewish Families".

On 23 September we commemorate the Day of the Victims of the Lithuanian Jews Genocide. Last year (in 2010) year we devoted three events to commemorate the day: in cooperation with the International Historical Commission we screened the movie *Uncle Chackel* (as the part of the educational program for the students), in collaboration with the Pax et Bonum and the non-profit organisation Académie Lyrique (France) we presented the concert *The Silenced Voices*, and with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway – Bente Kahan's performance *The Songs from the Ghetto*.



On the 16 November we commemorated International Day for Tolerance. Cooperating with the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, the Viltis society for the support of the mentally challenged people in Lithuania and the Human Rights Committee at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania we organized the international conference "People with Disabilities in the Social and Cultural Context". The letter written by the President D.Grybauskaitė was read at the opening of the conference. According to the president, "tolerance is not a motto but a call to society to act, to respect and to harmonise better the interests of all its members. It is tolerance and respect of an individual that is necessary for an all-round development of society, the fostering and promoting of diversity."

In the last days of November, together with the USA Embassy in Vilnius and the Holocaust Museum in Washington we started a three-year cycle of educational seminars for the teacher trainers, which got off the mark with the



Welcoming remarks by Ambassador A. E. Derse (U.S. Embassy), Ambassador D. Davidson (Office of Holocaust Issues), Director of the VGSJM M. Zingeris, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania A. Skaisgirytė-Liauškienė at the opening of international seminar "Training teacher-trainers: European Holocaust History, Human Rights, and Tolerance Today"

announced the year 2011 as the Holocaust Remembrance year. In the late spring the international seminar "Ashes of Ponary: Tribute to the Holocaust Victims. The Ideas for the Reconstruction of the Memorial" took place at the Tolerance Center. Experts on heritage protection, museologists, historians and politicians participated in the seminar. The chairman of the Yad Vashem Museum, Avner Shalev, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum deputy director, Jacek Nowakowski, directors of the State Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in Oswiecim & Stutthof, Piotr M. A. Cywiński and Piotr Tarnowsky as well as the advisor to the minister of culture of the Republic of Lithuania, Rolandas Kvietkauskas, spoke about the idea of the reconstruction of the Paneriai Memorial.

seminar "European Holocaust History, Human Rights and Tolerance Today". At the first seminar, around twenty lecturers from Vilnius universities participated in order to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust related issues. (The second seminar was held in Kaunas in June 2011.)

On 27 January, for the commemoration of the International Holocaust Day, we screened the nine-hour documentary cycle of Claude Lanzmann *Shoah* (1985).



Presentation by, Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Poland

In May, in accordance with the American Culture week we started to screen thematic Jewish American movies. The cycle started with the comedy's of *Three Stoodges* team, created by the US Litvak comedians in the beginning of the 20th century and ended in July with the movie *The Producers* (2005), providing the viewers with a good dose of the good mood for the rest of the summer.

Ieva Šadzevičienė



Education



The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum education came into existence in 2011 with establishing of a position of the educational officer. The museum's educational programmes aim to provide context for visits to the museum by bringing visitors into contact with the cultural heritage and history of Jews. The subjects of the programmes correspond to the museum's permanent and temporary exhibitions.

The first educational efforts in 2011 included programmes "Jewish Languages", "Shabbat", "Dreyfus: the Fight for Justice". A series of programmes called "Traditional Festivals" is starting in the fall of 2011.

The museum's education will span the issues of identity, traditional festivals, milestones of life, Jewish religion and practices, the Holocaust, prejudice and discrimination, place of the Jewish community in Lithuanian history. The education is addressed to school youth as well as to adults. The programmes vary according to the age and previous knowledge of each group. We aim to tailor our educational meetings to suit visitors' needs using alternative methods such as crafts, drama, discussions.

Each programme is self-contained, making it possible for participants to visit the museum repeatedly.

Ana Bogatyriova
Chief of educational programs



The Holocaust Exhibition



Head of the Holocaust Exhibit R. Kostanian with the visitors

Rachilė Kostanian
Exhibition curator
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The first Holocaust exhibition in Lithuania was opened in 1991, the year of rebirth of Lithuanian Independence, in the Jewish Museum, recreated two years before, in 1989. Philologist Emanuelis Zingeris was appointed museum director, and rallied together a team of enthusiasts.

Of utmost importance for their task was the impact of the Holocaust survivors' participation. The team consisted mostly of Jews whose families had been directly or indirectly affected by the Holocaust. Therefore, their main goal was to restore for the society the Historical Memory of the Lithuanian Jewry, through its flourishing culture and its destruction. The team was collecting material and spiritual evidence of the Jewish heritage in Lithuania. They were proud to have among them Vilnius University Assistant Professor, survivor of the Vilnius Ghetto and member of the FPO Resistance, Rachel Margolis. Dimitrijus Gelpernas, one of the leaders of the Kaunas Ghetto Resistance, was also very helpful. These and other survivors were our Teachers and moral authorities.



The exhibition reflects the important flashbacks of the history of Lithuanian Jewry and the reasons for Vilna being known as *the Jerusalem of Lithuania*. It acquaints the visitor with the Jewish personalities who made Lithuania worldwide famous: Jascha Heifetz, Mark Antokolski, Romain Gary, Zalman Reisen, Abraham Sutzkever, and many others.

The most important attention is given to the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania. The exhibition is dedicated to all Jews and non-Jews interested in this tragic theme. It has been visited by several generations of worldwide living *Litvaks* and



their families. These contacts have enriched the museum stocks with various rare items and photographs. Throughout all these twenty years, the museum staff has continued working on the exhibition contents, collecting new historical material. In order to update its presentation, the exhibition was renovated in 2009–2010. Enlarged with new photographs, documents and exhibits, the project concept remained as it was: revealing the Holocaust and its main victims, witnesses and participants.

The exhibition serves as an interactive educational tool for schoolchildren and students of various countries. It was furnished by the melodies of Ghetto songs and video material on the topic.



R. Kostanian with the volunteer from Austria A. Wagner

Rachel Kostanian

About the Paneriai Memorial Museum



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The monument at Paneriai with inscriptions in Yiddish and Russian was erected by Holocaust survivors in June 1945. It disappeared in 1952.

The museum was opened in 1960 at the mass murder site (at that time it was a branch of the Vilnius Regional Museum). In 1985, a new museum building was built and the exhibition overhauled. The territory was also renovated under architect Jaunutis Makariūnas – the

small roads were asphalted, the burial pits were renovated and commemorative stones with Russian and Lithuanian inscriptions were erected. In July 1991, the Jewish community together with Vilnius committee in Israel erected the first memorial stone with inscriptions in Hebrew, Yiddish, Lithuanian and Russian.

In 1991, the Paneriai Museum was transferred to the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum.



In 2009, for the fiftieth anniversary of the museum, parts of its exhibition were renovated. The exhibition at the Paneriai Memorial Museum shows documents and reports issued by the Nazi occupiers, personal belongings of killed victims found in the area of the massacres, belongings of killed children found in the



pits, the sieve used to sift the ashes of burnt corpses for gold, a hook used to drag the corpses out of the pits, chains used on prisoners who burnt corpses, also the clothes of the escape leader Yuri Farber, archaeological objects found at Paneriai in 1964, 1973, 2004. A very special exhibit is the ladder-ramp, which was used from the end of 1943 by the brigade burning corpses.

In 2011, the new conception for a renovation of the Paneriai Memorial was started.

Being *Gedenkdiener* in Vilnius



M. Jakulytė-Vasil and volunteer from Austria S. Pammer

The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and the *Gedenkdiener* organisation have had a strong connection throughout over fourteen years already. In the year 1996, the first volunteer from Austria was sent to the Jewish Museum in Vilnius and since then every year one young Austrian was doing his *Gedenkdiener* in Vilnius. *Gedenkdiener* ("memorial service" in English) is an alternative to military service, which is compulsory for every male Austrian. It means serving for one year at a Holocaust related institution somewhere outside of Austria. The *Gedenkdiener* organisation has been sending young Austrians abroad already for nineteen years to over twenty places in the world. In recent years, also young women were given the chance to do *Gedenkdiener*, under the same conditions as the young men, except they do it solely voluntarily.

My *Gedenkdiener* started in August 2010. As every *Gedenkdiener* in Vilnius, I worked at the Green House. There, I gave guided tours to visitors of the museum in the Holocaust exhibition and the territory of the Vilna Ghetto, I was



dealing with the English correspondence of the Green House, I contributed to different publications such as the “Lithuanian Holocaust Atlas” or the catalogue of the renovated Holocaust exhibition, and I gave talks, little lectures at schools. I also organised some smaller projects like the concert “Entartete Musik” at the Tolerance Center, in which two Austrian musicians performed.

My main project during last year was the compilation of the “Lithuanian Holocaust Atlas”. This atlas documents all mass execution sites in Lithuania, in total over 240, with the exact geographical coordinates, the description of the best way how to get there, current and historical photos of the site and detailed information about the historical background of the massacre and the memorial. My colleague Milda Jakulytė and me collected and organised all this material and we visited every single execution site in the course of last year. The work on this project was very intense and exhausting, it pushed us to our limits more than once, but now I am very grateful of this project and have great memories of it. The website of the “Lithuanian Holocaust Atlas” where nearly all of the material is published, can be accessed at www.holocaustatlas.lt and later this autumn the book publication will be released.

Before I came to Vilnius I could not imagine the intensity and the extent of the topic I was about to work in. On the one hand the incredibly rich and beautiful heritage of Litvak culture and society, which evolved over hundreds of years, but on the other hand the unbelievable horrors of the Holocaust, the suffering of thousands and millions of people, the destruction of this most beautiful culture and vibrant community that I was confronted with from the very first day.

It made me sad and angry to see the degree of ignorance of the Lithuanian people towards these topics. The Lithuanian Jewish culture, which influenced and shaped this country over so many years, is very much unknown. Anti-Semitism, racism and ultra-nationalism is very strong in Lithuanian society and the debate dealing with the Holocaust is concerning, to say the least.

Still, I enjoyed my year in Vilnius very much. I learned a lot during my work at the museum and experienced many great adventures. I met many wonderful people and have been to many beautiful places.

I would like to thank all my colleagues, especially from the Green House, for this exciting and interesting year, but also for the great work they are doing.

I wish you all a healthy and successful new year 5772!

Shana Tova, Mazel Tov!

Sebastian Pammer



Statistics

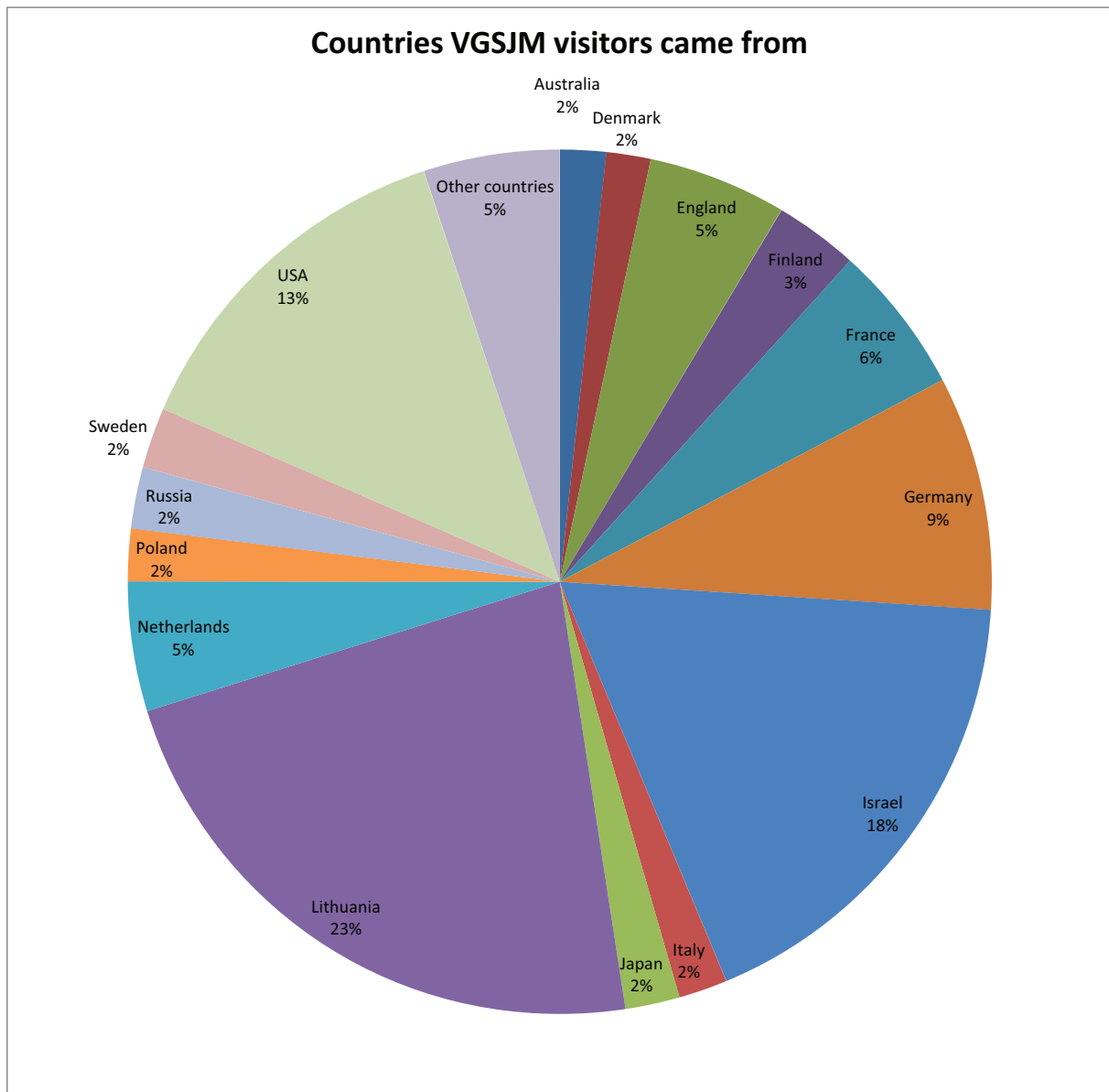
In 2010-2011 (5771) more than **27 000** visitors from 46 different countries visited the main branches of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. The statistics is based on the register at the branches of the museum in Paneriai (Ponar, Agrastų st. 17) – **19 000**, the Tolerance Centre (Naugarduko st. 10/2, Vilnius) – **4341**, the Holocaust exhibit (The Green House, Pamėnkainio g.12, Vilnius) – **3690**. More than 1000 people have participated in the events organized by the Tolerance centre of the VGSJM.

The Jacques Lipchitz Memorial Museum (St. Jokūbo st. 15, Druskininkai) remained closed for renovation and the History exhibitions with the Gallery of the Righteous (Pylimo st. 4, Vilnius) were closed for renovation in the middle of the summer.

The data in the charts where you can see the distribution of visitors over the year and where they came from is based on the information from the Tolerance centre and Holocaust exhibit.



According to the statistics of 46 countries, the visitors from only three countries - Lithuania, Israel and the USA – accounted the largest group of visitors (54%). Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Netherlands comprise another quarter of the general statistics (25%).



We are happy that for the first time Lithuanians have made up the largest group of the visitors, this is especially due to the prepared educational programmes for school classes in the museum. Also, the number of people coming from Israel has increased nearly threefold.

We are grateful to all the visitors, travel agencies and the guides for being with us.



Friends & Supporters

In 2010–2011 (5771) the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum cooperated with many local and international organizations, foundations, museums, foreign representatives, cultural institutes and educational institutions.

We express our sincere gratitude to the supporters, contributors and old friends:

Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education,
Remembrance, and Research

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Rothschild Foundation

American Fund for Lithuanian-Latvian Jews

Tides Foundation

The Lithuanian Jewish Communities

Sheila Hoffman Bialek Foundation

David & Barbara Hirschhorn Foundation

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Embassy of France in Lithuania

French Institute in Lithuania

Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vilnius

Polish Institute in Vilnius

Embassy of the Czech Republic in Vilnius

Embassy of Austria in Lithuania

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Malborough Gallery (particularly to Michael Prete)

Yad Vashem (particularly to Avner Shalev, Alex Avraham,
Haim Genter, Katya Gusarov, Masha Yonin, Bella Noham, Boris Maftsir)

Icchokas Meras, Israel

Maya Rosenblum, Israel



The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington
Beit Hatfutsot the Museum of the Jewish People (particularly to Gila Cohen)
Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, France

Jüdisches Museum der Schweiz (particularly to Anna Rabin)
Zydowski Instytut Historyczny, Poland
Druskininkai Town Museum, Lithuania
Druskininkai City Municipality, Lithuania

Milij Chvoles, France
Israel Mey-Tal, Israel
Anna Maria Pammer, Austria
Chief Rabbi of Vilnius and Lithuania Chaim Burshtein
Narod knigi v mire knig, Russia (particularly to Aleksandar Frenkel)
Galina Afanasjeva, Lithuania
The Jewish Renaissance

Jonathan Beare, South African Republic; Ella Lidsky, USA;
Gordon Schochet, USA; Anna Kremer, Canada;
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Telesforas Laucevičius, Lithuania; Gladys Mayers, Canada;
Ruth and Martin Levit, Australia; Gudrun Schroeter, Germany;
Kees Paradies, the Netherlands; Anne and Max Tanenbaum, Canada;
Hanni Skrobliès and Ch. Jetter, Germany.

We'd like to thank all the persons mentioned above and other dear friends who have supported the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum so generously this year with finances, donated drawings, books, movies, photographs and other materials. Thanks to you, we are able to continue our work.

Since the New Year 5772 will be full of new and long-lasting projects for the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum – the renovation of the building of the former Tarbut Gymnasium (Pylimo st. 4, Vilnius) and the development of the conception of the Litvak Culture and Art Center, initiating a new vision of the Paneriai Memorial Museum (Ponar, Agrastų st. 15, Vilnius), further work in the J. Lipchitz Memorial Museum in Druskininkai, the generosity of the future supporters would enable us to achieve these goals.



Halo kems to patri'ot's -

Tas' panaka, hi di jant.
kahu tapi i nepukunijane
yare zanyane gzyngfi.

Tai un js sngat vitale,
depaent iseri is aptiuly bi

2009.10.02.

Dale Gymbarske

Thank you for the tour of this impressive,
moving exhibition.

Susan Kachael
Joak Nowakowski
Sara Blomfeldt
U.S. Hist. Mem. Museum
Washington, D.C.
November 17, 2010

Thankyou for preserving our
history in this amazing museum
I've learned so much about my
own ancestry here
Jesse Kasowitz
3110

Dijotekusias ispanis! Pui kiai sutonkyte!
Niels neuzimostas! Ateja visicms uz rinas
is sipe le jstas ir uzimstus, uz rinas Gilbertas
K. Girkas

Labai gaila raiku, kuria miri.

Very, very touched, very
impressed...

Dear friends

We came here from Israel
and we are very impressed
with your work.

AM ISRAEL CHAI!

Zeev Bielski

Gideon Avra

members of Knesset

Israel

7.6.10

Sunday 6th October 2010
bez žydai jai upoly me bednie talae soumo!

16.08.2010

P.Štėpėlis, (Pozsuta)

23/5/11 Avner Salev Yad-Vashe m
Jerusalem
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Lankausi čia pirmą kartą, esu sujaudintas išgirstų istorijų apie žuvusius vaikus ir
tuos,
kurie buvo išgelbėti. Istorijų, liudijančių žmogiškumo grūtį ir didvyriškumą
bandant jį gelbėti. Ačiū ir daug Jums stiprybės Jūsų pasiaukojančiame darbe.

Avner Salev, „Jad Vašem“ direktorius
Jeruzalė, Izraelis

MAN LABIAI PATIKO PARODOJE. EIDVILÉ1C.



Yair shanda, had tai fihovi...
Bet labai aščiū, kad ir būna labai tai informacija,
už ją

Adomas
2009 09 29

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, I cannot tell you how moved I am by this beautiful museum. It is profoundly important for all Lithuanians to see and read and feel.
Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Hanna B. Popowicz
U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism.

April 26, 2010

Как мы от времени тесейко завишем!
Впрочем, и время завишем от нас.
Ретро из судеб, портретов и писем,
из не успевающих состариться глаз...
гладко обкатанной камешек горный
Снова и снова выносив на свет
Лица, что в землю ушли, как зерна,
горькие пики некропитных лет.
Судьбы, что стлаи землей и травой,
Семьи, что ветви не дали плода...
Горейка спаленных и горейка героев
Разом друг с другом, как было тогда.

05.10.09

Сорис Шерем (Белорусия)

Thank you for your great work
in remembrance!

June June
U.S. Ambassador

Please continue
and expand your work. Thank you.
Kane White 04/01/11
Tiler Mary
Member of Parliament United Kingdom

Labai aščiū už liudijimą, kuris suknečia
ir priimčia galvoti apie žuvusiųjų. Ačiū, kad
už ją reikia kovoti kiekvieną dieną. Aščiū Jums.

Pažadavau,
kau. A. Piskovis OFM
Vilnius Bernardinus bažnyčios
klebonas.

Dėkui per šias reikiąs už
sėkmingą ir jėgą palaikymą ir veikimą
ir pasiekimus padėdama toliau plėsti
ir išplėsti visumą esančių reikiąs.
Lietuviai skatinami tolesniai darbai
25.09.09 Most Hlcast

12/07/2010 what can I say? Words fail me...
your friend from the Netherlands, Dera Boom

Once again: Shana Tova!

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The Newsletter 15 was compiled by Deputy Director for Research Kamilė Rupeikaitė, Head of Exhibitions Department Viktorija Sideraitė Alon, Designer Giedrė Sperskaitė, Coordinator of Museum Activities Irina Pocienė.