

“Of Shtetls and Cities”

A Museum of Czechoslovakian Jewry and Its Place in an Evolving Europe

The country formerly known as Czechoslovakia was a unique and vital Jewish center. No other country in Europe was home to a westernized modern Jewry (in the Prague – Bohemia area), an Eastern European-style “shtetl” community (in the Munkacs – Subcarpathian region), and a combination of the two (in the Slovakia territory). Czechoslovakia is thus perfectly situated to tell a range of Jewish stories providing a myriad of answers to the questions “what does it mean to me to be Jewish?” and “how as a Jew do I relate to the world in which I live?”

These are the questions with which we grapple at Gann Academy and I could think of no better project for our senior class than staging this exhibit on Czechoslovakian Jewry. The students (all 74 of them!) have built supporting exhibits that tell the story and context of the ethnic quilt that was Czechoslovakia (as well as the Austrian Empire from which it was born), what happened to those Czechoslovakian Jews after the Holocaust, and what those communities are like today. And of course at the heart of the museum are those 70 “personal story” panels courtesy of Centropa. The museum narrative is powerful and the experience of conceptualizing, building, and ultimately staging this exhibit has been a unique experience for our students.

We hope you find this exhibit as inspiring and illuminating as we have.

- **From Yoni Kadden’s Address at the Opening Gala
December 13, 2009**

Museum Map Page

Building a Museum: Process and Procedure

September-December 2009

Excerpts of Handouts Given Students:

Vision and Goals:

The End Product:

- A full museum exhibit dedicated to exploring the lives of Czechoslovakian Jews between World War One and World War Two
- The museum will contain panels dedicated to individual Czech Jews exploring one aspect of their lives; video of individual Czech Jews; historical context of both Jewish life in Czechoslovakia and of the country itself; an exhibit on personal family histories, ambience exhibits
- The museum will be staged in the Beit Midrash and will run for about two weeks in mid-December (exact dates TBD)
- The exhibit will be open to the public, invitations will be sent out, and a special gala evening will be held.

Overview:

Your work on your (and your group's) exhibit piece (or whatever your end product is) will have several project components along the way. You will be completing:

- Checkpoints (2 of them)
- Final construction
- Installation

Grading:

You will **not** be graded in the classical A, B, C, etc. sense. The standard for each of your projects will be much higher.

___ Good enough for the museum.

___ Not good enough for the museum. Keep working on it (or do it again as the case may be).

The Four Stages:

Checkpoints (2)

Description:

A checkpoint is a detailed **blueprint/storyboard/mock-up** of your particular project. It will include a visual sketch (hand drawn or computer generated) with a typed description of everything in the sketch.

- 1) What is the overall goal of your individual exhibit? What do you want visitors to walk away knowing?
- 2) Which texts will you be using? (Put the actual text in your storyboard)
- 3) Which images are you using (include the actual images in your storyboard)
- 4) What captions will you put under/around your images? (include the actual captions)
 - a. For each of the above descriptions please include a sentence as to how your exhibit components further the vision and goals of the overall museum
- 5) What will the background of your exhibit be? What will it include (color, fabric, etc.)
- 6) How big will your exhibit be?
- 7) What materials will you need to construct your exhibit (think as specifically as you can – down to frame, casing, fabrics, etc.)

Note: For all artistic vision, ideas, and practical matters, please consult with members of the Gann art department.

Curators: Your checkpoints include other elements included in your overall job description.

Due Dates:

Checkpoint #1 – **Monday October 19**

Checkpoint #2 – **Friday October 30**

Curators – you will need to return checkpoints (with notes and comments) to the groups by:

Checkpoint #1 returned: **Monday October 26**

Checkpoint #2 returned: **Wednesday November 4**

Final Construction (1)

You will have built your exhibit. It will be complete and ready for installation.

Due Date: Friday December 4

Installation (1)

This will be done in the Beit Midrash the week of December 7 (exact dates TBD). Once installed, docents will rehearse.

Czech Museum Project

Roles and Jobs Descriptions

<p>Curators To oversee and manage all phases of the creation of the entire museum. You will provide an overarching vision for the exhibit. You will communicate with and coordinate all the various groups and personnel. You will write the mission statement to be placed at the start of the exhibit. This job comes with more responsibility – but also more reward.</p>	<p>Layout and Design Coordinators You will oversee the layout and design of the entire museum. You will need to explore other museums to gain insight into possible designs choices of this exhibit. You will need to consider the flow of the entire exhibit and ambience of the room (what will fill open/blank spaces). You will work closely with the all the other groups to ensure that the layout and space design meets the needs of all the individual exhibits as well as the entire museum.</p>
<p>Tech Coordinators Your group will create a vision for, locate appropriate content for, and manage all of the sound, video, and lighting of the exhibit. You will oversee the use of the two existing documentary videos, as well as locating your own. You will consider sound and music background possibilities and ensure that all of the exhibits are appropriately lit. You will work closely with the all the other groups to ensure that your tech vision and design meets the needs of all the individual exhibits as well as the entire museum.</p>	<p>Centropa Panel Coordinators Your team will be determining which of the panels we will use in the exhibit, how they will be used, and with what messages, questions, and ideas you wish visitors to leave. The panels are the impetus for and the centerpiece of the entire museum.</p>
<p>Exhibit Developers You and your team will be creating one exhibit piece that will further the goal of the entire museum, provide context for other pieces, pique the curiosity of the visitor, and provide overall beauty to the whole museum. Your exhibit piece will contain text (not too much – just the relevant, salient, and thought-provoking points), images, possible sound and/or other multi-media presentations. Be creative.</p> <p>The topics are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of Austrian Empire • Jewish life in Austrian Empire up to WWI • History of Czechoslovakia (with focus on Thomas Masaryk) • Jewish life in Czechoslovakia up to WWII (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Czech, Slovak, Ruthenian • Czechoslovakia in the Communist Years • Czechoslovakia Today • Personal heritage (an exhibit with snapshots of our own family stories) 	<p>Docents (tour guides/historical interpreters) You will guide visitors through the museum and assist them in interpreting the exhibit. You will beforehand (during our planning phases) compose a script for your tour. Each script will contain some common elements but will also be specific to you and your own style. You will also create the brochure that visitors will take with them as they experience the museum. You will work closely with the all the other groups to ensure that you understand the essence of each exhibit individually and how they all fit together as a unit.</p>

Initiative Continuum	Vision continuum	Attention to Detail
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<p>I did not complete all assignments that I was assigned and took little responsibility for my team's completion of its project.</p> <p>When given a specific assignment, I followed directions given to me carefully and executed the assignment in a timely fashion and precisely as delegated.</p> <p>When given a specific assignment, I went beyond the specific instructions I received and attempted to foresee difficulties and deal with them before they arose.</p> <p>I often volunteered for assignments and attempted to foresee and resolve ensuing difficulties, as well as incorporating my own ideas in order to improve the final product.</p> <p>I generated assignments that I thought would need to be completed and took responsibility for completing them myself or delegating them to another team member.</p>	<p>I find it difficult to imagine what my team's project will look like when it is finally assembled.</p> <p>I can imagine what my team's project will look like, but I find it difficult to imagine what the museum as a whole will look like.</p> <p>At first, I could not imagine what the museum would look like. However, over the course of the trimester, I gained a clearer impression of what the final product will be. However, I didn't understand the process of creating the final product, i.e., I didn't understand how we would get from point A to point B.</p> <p>I had a good idea of what the museum would look like, but I didn't understand the process of creating the final product i.e., I didn't understand how we would get from point A to point B.</p> <p>From the moment that the project was introduced, I had a clear vision of what I wanted the museum to be, and I immediately began brainstorming how I would bring my vision about.</p>	<p>Continuum</p> <p>I did little or no work.</p> <p>I completed my assignments as quickly as possible in order to "just get something in."</p> <p>I wanted my assignments to be as close to perfect as possible, but some assignments required a great deal of further work in which I did not participate.</p> <p>I created a checklist (mental or physical) of all the pieces of my team's project as to ensure that no detail was forgotten.</p> <p>I took care of details of my team's project and/or the museum as a whole.</p>
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<p>Teamwork Continuum</p> <p>I did not feel like the assignments I completed were clearly connected to the assignments of my teammates or to the project as a whole.</p> <p>Although all the assignments my team completed were connected, we tended to divide them up and complete them individually.</p> <p>I worked collaboratively with members of my team inside of class, but I met with them rarely or never outside of class.</p> <p>I worked collaboratively with some members of team both during class time and outside of class. We generated tasks together, completed them together, and provided feedback to each other on our performance.</p> <p>The majority of the time my team worked on our project was outside of class. We generated tasks together, thought about who would be the best person to complete them, and evaluated each other's performances.</p>	<p>Content Understanding Continuum</p> <p>If I were assigned to write a paper, "What I know about the history of Czechoslovakian Jews," it would be less than one page.</p> <p>If I were assigned to write a paper, "What I know about the history of Czechoslovakian Jews," it would be less than 3 pages.</p> <p>If I were assigned to write a paper, "What I know about the history of Czechoslovakian Jews," it would be a 3-5 page essay.</p> <p>It would be easy for me to sit down and write a great deal about the history of Czechoslovakian Jews. It would be a relatively comprehensive paper, but I wouldn't need to edit out much content.</p> <p>Before I could even begin writing about the history of Czechoslovakian Jews, I would need a significant amount of time to organize my notes, think carefully about the most important details to include (and which are less relevant). I have learned that when I really understand a topic, writing a paper about it is much more about deciding what to leave out than what to put in.</p>
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