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***The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz Opens at the Davis Museum January 7***

**Wellesley MA**– *The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz*, is a comprehensive exhibition of more than 200 works of art created by victims of the Holocaust while incarcerated in camps, ghettos and hiding places of World War II. The exhibition opens January 7 at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, Mass. and will be on view through February 14, 2003.

*The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz* displays the relatively unknown art of victims whose work was created under the most trying of circumstances. The exhibition is comprised of art made by prisoners at Auschwitz between 1941 and 1945 during its operation as a concentration camp and killing center, and art made by artists who were incarcerated there, but who produced art elsewhere during the war in other camps such as Buchenwald, Gurs, Drancy, and ghettos such as Lodz and Theresienstadt. Drawn from collections in Poland, Israel, the United States, Germany and France, the artwork contains genres ranging from self-portraits and landscapes to illustrated letters, political cartoons, caricatures and images of camp existence. The works were made by both amateur and trained artists working clandestinely and on the command of the SS. Some were by artists trying to supply evidence to the resistance while others sought to create works designed to placate the SS.

Some artists sought to give expression to suffering while others used art to repress it. The function of art in the Holocaust, the role that art plays as documentation, as resistance, as catharsis and as a means of control for the benefit of the perpetrator is the subject of this unique exhibition.

“There has been little attention paid to the art produced by those in the maelstrom of the Holocaust,” explains David Mickenberg, curator of the exhibition and the *Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37 Director* of the Davis Museum and Cultural Center. “Recent discussions in museums and in the press have primarily dealt with contemporary art that refers to the -

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## **The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center –p.2**

Holocaust or appropriates images from it. There has been little discussion among art historians of the works created between 1939 and 1945, yet there may have been as many as 20,000 works created for a variety of reasons and under a variety of circumstances, by victims, many of whom survived the war.

“These works speak about the complex function of art during the Holocaust. It may be painful to think that art can be used for immoral as well as moral purposes, but in addition to art that was made for documentation, catharsis, and dissent, many works were created on command for the benefit of the SS for personal reasons—to decorate their barracks or to illustrate the very training manuals that were used to control and abuse those who created them. *The Last Expression* presents a broad range of work created by victim artists and provides insight into the diversity of art created during times of political, social and cultural duress.”

An accompanying catalog, co-published by the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art and Northwestern University Press, will present another forum for exploring the exhibition’s themes. The exhibition began as a research project at Northwestern University’s Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art by David Mickenberg, who was formerly director of the Block Museum before coming to Wellesley to head the Davis. Along with Block Museum Assistant Curator Corinne Granof, the two have worked on the exhibition since the late 1990’s.

Mickenberg also curated the exhibition’s permanent web site which explores aesthetic, philosophical and moral issues relating to art produced in the Holocaust. Viewed by several million visitors to-date, the site features a database of digital photographs from collections in Poland and Israel, artist biographies, interviews with surviving artists, scholarly essays on art and the Holocaust, and a glossary and bibliography, among other features. The site can be seen at <http://lastingexpression.northwestern.edu>.

*Related Public Programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.*

### **Gallery Talk**

#### **Evening for Educators with Facing History and Ourselves**

Thursday 9 January, 4– 6pm, Chandler Gallery

David Mickenberg, *Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37* Director of the Davis Museum and organizer of *The Last Expression* project, followed by a discussion of ways in which teachers may use this exhibition in teaching.

Please register by calling Debbie Squires at Facing History and Ourselves at 617.735-1618 or by email at [Debbie\\_Squires@Facing.org](mailto:Debbie_Squires@Facing.org).

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## **The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center –p3**

### **Multi-media Presentation\*\* open only to member organizations:**

Monday, January 27, 7pm

Collins Cinema

David Mickenberg, *Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37 Director* and Peter Hayes, Professor of Holocaust Studies at Northwestern University.

Arrive at 6pm for reception and guided tour of the exhibition. \*\*Open only to Wellesley College Friends of Art, Friends of Wellesley College Hillel and Northwestern University. For information call 781.283-2081.

### **Panel Discussion:**

Artists of Auschwitz

Tuesday 4 February, 7pm, Collins Cinema

Panel of three survivors who were artists in the camp: Yehuda Bacon, visual artist; Max Garcia, emcee and vocalist for the jazz combos and Jozef Szajna, visual artist.

### **Concert:**

“Musik Macht Frei, Saturday, February 8, 7pm, Towne Gallery

Wellesley College Chamber Singers perform vocal music from Terezin. Commentary by Lisa Graham, *Evelyn Barry Director* of the Choral Program, Wellesley College.

### **Open Class Session:**

Organizing *The Last Expression: An Analytical Study*, Thursday, February 13, 2pm

David Mickenberg, exhibition organizer; Stanley Tigerman, Tigerman and McCurray, architect and designer of the exhibition; additional speakers to be announced. (ARTH 346 Seminar: Art and Auschwitz, and ARTH344 Seminar: Exhibiting Cultures: Representation and Display in the Twentieth-Century Museum).

*The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz* project has been organized by the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University. It includes a traveling exhibition, web site and publication. Generous support for *The Last Expression* has been provided in part by the Offices of the President and Provost of Northwestern University with support from the Federal Republic of Germany and Ellen Philips Katz and Howard C. Katz.

The Wellesley presentation is made possible by funding from the Wellesley College Friends of Art, the Office of the President, the Office of the Dean, Friends of Wellesley College Hillel, Carl and Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37, The David and Sandra Cohen Bakalar '55 Fund for Art, The E. Franklin Robbins Art Museum Fund, The Judith Blough Wentz Fund, The Constance Rhind '81 Fund for Museum Exhibitions, and the Massachusetts Council for the Arts.

This exhibition is sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of New England, Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, Facing History and Ourselves, Generations After, Hillel Council of New England, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston.

Please visit the Davis Museum web site at: [www.Wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum/davismenu.html](http://www.Wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum/davismenu.html) for updated information on programs or telephone 781.283-2051 for more information.

## **The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center –p4**

### **Davis Museum and Cultural Center Hours**

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11am to 5pm and Sunday 1-5. From January 29 through June 5, the museum will be open Wednesday and Thursday evenings until 8pm. Admission and parking are free. Recorded information about museum exhibitions, events, and driving directions is available at 781-283-2051 or on our web site at <http://www.wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum/davismenu.html>. For tour information, please call 781-283-3382. The Collins Café, adjacent to the museum, recognized for its fresh and innovative cuisine, offers a new menu daily and is open weekdays until 3:30pm.

The Davis Museum welcomes visitors with disabilities. The Museum, Collins Café and Collins Cinema are wheelchair accessible and wheelchairs are available for use in the Museum without charge. Special needs may be accommodated by contacting the Director of Disability Services, Jim Wice at 781-283-2434 or at [jwice@wellesley.edu](mailto:jwice@wellesley.edu).

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