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Art and Diary Excerpts of Petr Ginz

Adapted from "Interdisciplinary: Creative Expression in the Ghetto in Petr Ginz's Diary,"
Facinghistory.com

Petr Ginz was born on February 1, 1928, and his young sister, Eva Ginzová, on February 21, 1930, in Prague. Although Petr and Eva's mother, Maria, had been raised in a Catholic family, she and her husband, Otto, kept a liberal but traditional Jewish home. Four months after Germany annexed Czechoslovakia, anti-Jewish measures modelled after the Nuremberg Race Laws were implemented. Petr and Eva were both classified as "Mischlinge" of the first degree—children of a "mixed marriage" in which two grandparents were Jewish.

By December 1941, deportations from Prague to the Theresienstadt ghetto had begun, and the Ginz family was gradually broken up. In the ghetto, Petr kept a diary and produced numerous works of art, and participated in the ghetto's rich cultural life, which included clubs and organizations, book sharing, and a magazine.

Petr was deported to Theresienstadt in October, 1942, at the age of 14, and Eva in April 1944, also at the age of 14. Petr was deported to Auschwitz in September 1944 and was murdered in the gas chambers. Eva survived and was reunited with her parents in Prague after the Theresienstadt ghetto was liberated by Soviet forces on May 8, 1945.

For November [1943]

Finish Ceylon [a novel Petr was writing]

Get to know perfectly a brief history of humankind.

To write my contributions (the better ones) from the magazine [Vedem] +

5 pictures-

Instead of the history of humankind: Plato +

November [1943]:

Continued to work on Ceylon (all together 136 pages of manuscript already)

Bookbinding

Picture: (From the Feast)

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Lino-cut: A Medieval Mythological Ship

Have written down the best contributions from the magazine [Vedem]

New contributions [to Vedem].

Have read: Plato's Euthyphro, Crito, Apology of Socrates, part of Phaedo.

I couldn't do more because of unsettled conditions at the end of the month. (German visits, calls-ups to do labor, Strassenreinigung [street sweeping])

9.2 [February 9] 1944. Wednesday (evening, in bed)

Nothing special. At lunchtime we had gebäck [bread], soup (a good one, with meat, I would accept no other), and porridge in the Magdeburg [barrack]. There are no potatoes in the ghetto. I cleaned the cooks' shoes for the first time. I do not intend to write here any rambling essays like I saw in Wolker's diary, but only little things [that are] to the point, which I will be able to use as points of reference that will help me remember and reproduce the events as they happened with appropriate colorfulness. At eight o'clock we had a Chinese poetry evening organized by Jelínek. The most important idea of his introduction: People are the same everywhere. Chinese poetry is poetry of the people.



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*"Prague at Night," 1943,
by Peter Ginz. Pencil on
paper. Petr references this
piece in a diary entry
from December, 1943:
"Have read Plato's
Phaedo, Crito. Continued
working on Ceylon
Picture. Prague at Night.
Bookbinding at the
beginning of the month,
transports to Birkenau,
great chaos, I couldn't do
more."*



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"Night Blossoms," by Petr Ginz, linoleum-cut on paper.

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"Map of Asia," by Petr Ginz, 1944. Watercolor and India ink on tracing paper. Petr wrote in his diary in June, 1944: "I'm working in the Lithography (Department). I made a geographical map of Asia and started a map of the world according to Mercator's projection..."



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"Purple Flower," by Peter Ginz. Petr references this piece in his diary in August, 1944: "...I work in the Lithography Department for half a day and the other half I attend the program. I have a lot of catching up to do in Latin and math. I do stenography and I also do a bit of English and zoology every so often. I have spent most of my time on drawing and lino-cuts: two flowers..."