

From Vienna to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz: Alfred Bergel – Sketches of a forgotten life

The life story of Alfred Bergel (1902–1944) as an artist and art teacher in Vienna was nearly erased by the Holocaust. His youthful friendship with Karl König—who was to become a doctor and the founder of the worldwide Camphill Movement of curative educational therapeutic communities—caused his name to appear frequently in Dr. König's diaries. An astute archivist dug deeply to learn what happened to „Fredi“. König was able to flee Vienna and go to Britain but his best friend could not leave Austria. Like an archeological riddle, through years of research and by fitting many puzzle pieces together, a precious life story began to unfold. This story is now a book that has just been published in Germany:

ALFRED BERGEL

Skizzen aus einem vergessenen Leben. Wien Theresienstadt Auschwitz. 2014.

After the annexation of Austria, Alfred Bergel was deported by the Nazis to Theresienstadt. While imprisoned he worked as an artist, creating many drawings of fellow inmates and life there. He taught drawing to the children; he also taught art history and art appreciation. In fact, he was one of the main figures of cultural life at Theresienstadt until he was deported to Auschwitz and murdered in 1944.



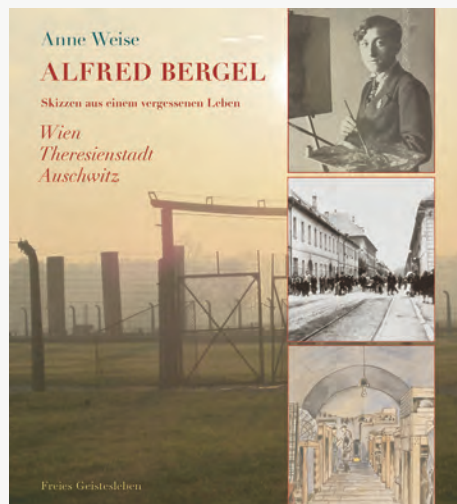
Alfred Bergel 1924

ALFRED BERGEL **Sketches of a Forgotten Life**

*From Vienna to Theresienstadt
and Auschwitz*

by Anne Weise

German edition



Until now his name and his drawings were largely forgotten, even among Holocaust researchers, although some of his drawings and paintings can be found in archives* around the world. The research for this book has uncovered a little known fact: inmates at Theresienstadt were forced to copy paintings of the masters for the Nazis. Alfred Bergel and other Jewish artists were coerced to become forgers! Since the book was published, new information has emerged which will be incorporated into the English edition.

Anne Weise has written an impressive biography of this artist and his painful destiny. It is richly illustrated with documents and pictures, filled with memories of friends and contemporaries, and it eloquently demonstrates the inner forces that interned people drew upon to survive. It is a personalized view of the Holocaust but stands as a representative for the many, and it accomplishes an important deed by giving one man back his identity.

* Beit Lohamei Haghettoat (Ghetto Fighters' Museum), Israel; United States Holocaust Museum, Washington D.C.; Altonaer Museum, Hamburg; Terezín Memorial, Czech Republic; Jewish Museum, Prague; Jewish Museum, Sydney; Beit Terezin, Givat Haim Ichud, Israel; Wiesenthal Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

Support for the publication of the English translation is currently being sought:

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