

Traces of Jewish life in Opatow, Poland

23/4

On April 23rd 2015, the students of Bartosz Głowacki High School, working on the project took part in workshops which were organised in the conference room of the District Head Office in Opatów. After welcoming the guests by the Head of the District Mr Bogusław Włodarczyk and the Manager of the Museum of Geodesy and Cartography Mr Mirosław Roszczypała, surrounded by the big, colourful xerocopies of Kirshenblatt's paintings the participants began their work. Mrs Małgorzata Grządziel presented the biography of Mayer Kirshenblatt, a Canadian Jew coming from Opatow, who in his elderly years started painting Apt (Opatow) – the town of his childhood.

Then, the participants saw a documentary film directed by Sławomir Grunberg and titled „Paint what you remember,” which was a report of Kirshenblatt's arrival to Opatów after 60 years of absence. The most moving was his thought that he shared with his daughter Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett “After 500 years of Jews' settlement in Apt, there was no sign that the Jews had ever lived there”. Fortunately, he painted memories from his childhood – people, traditions, events, scenes from everyday life of the inhabitants of this town – colourful world existing before the Holocaust. After that the students and teachers equipped with cameras went for a walk across Opatów following Mayer's traces.

In the afternoon the participants took part in the workshops “The reactivation of Mayer Kirshenblatt's memories” prepared by our Art teacher Mrs Teodora Pawełko-Kwiatkowska. The first task was to create mandalas, which helped the participants to boost their imagination and focus on the next task.

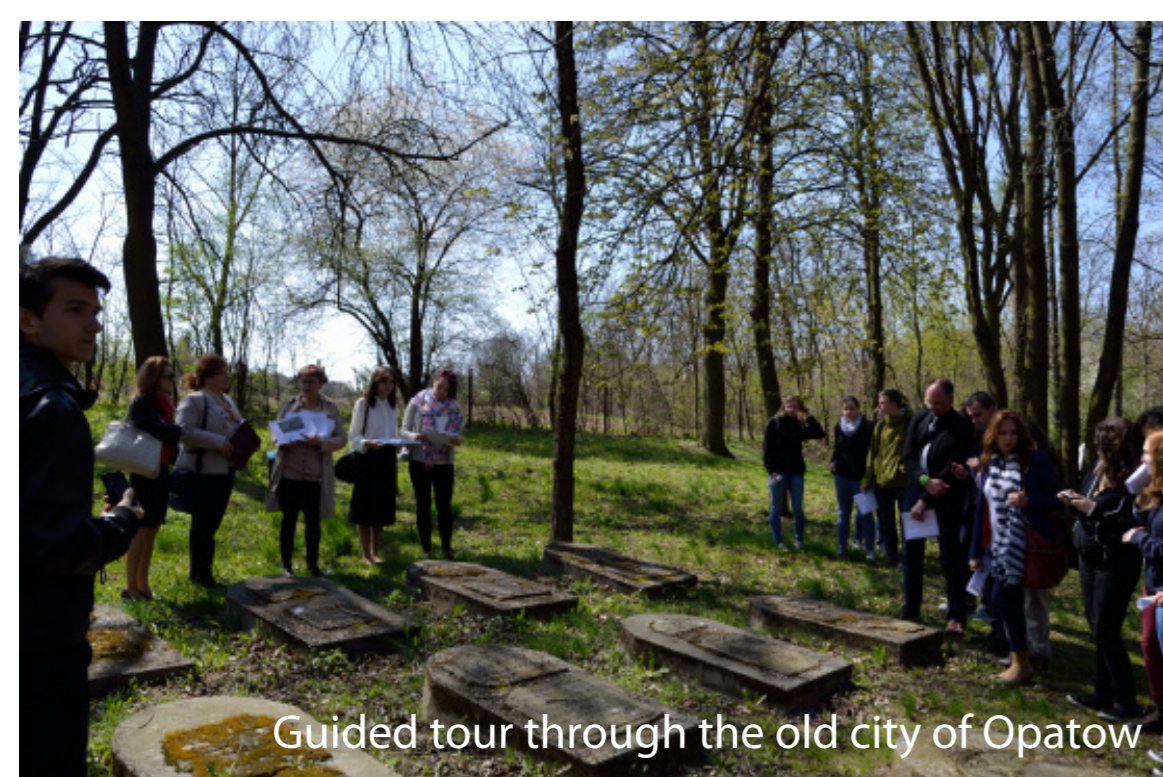
Having on their disposal pictures taken during the walk, black and white copies of Mayer's paintings presenting the life of pre-war Apt, glue and scissors, the students and teachers created photocollages, where the past mixed with the present reality. As the final point of the workshops there was an exhibition of the collages. Everybody admitted that the day with Mayer Kirshenblatt was very emotional and creative. The whole event was recorded by TVP Kielce (regional Polish TV).



The day, dedicated to Mayer Kirshenblatt



Introducing of the Workshop



Guided tour through the old city of Opatow



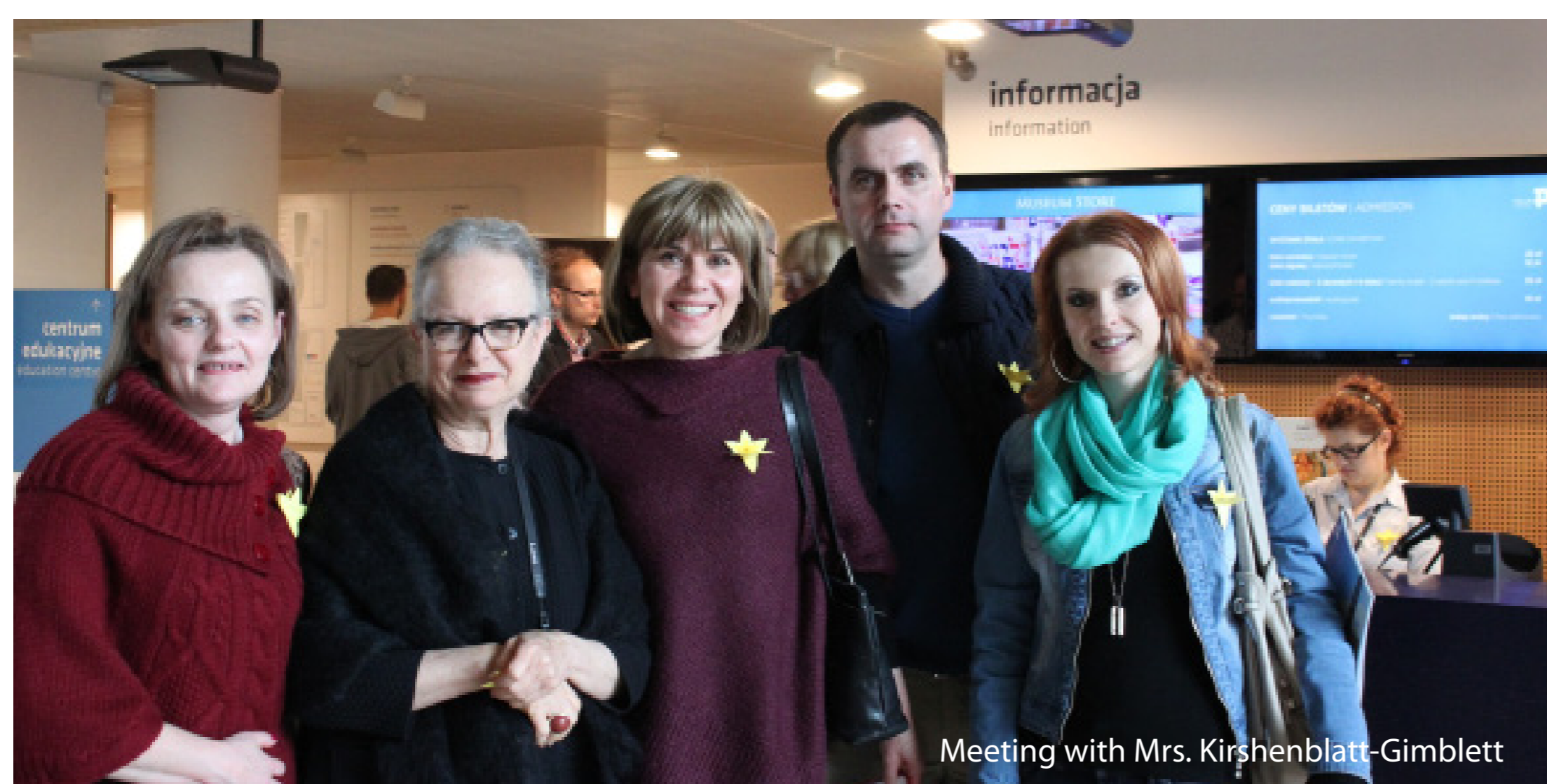
In the footsteps of Mayer Kirshenblatt



Creative working



The old and the new Opatow



Meeting with Mrs. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett



Workshop

24/4

24th April 2015 - the students and their teachers spent their last day of the visit at school where they prepared the presentations about their stay in Poland and also participated in lessons of English. In the afternoon, Polish students showed their guests attractions in the neighbourhood. The visitors were invited to Ujazd and Sandomierz. The students finally spent the farewell evening all together round a campfire.



Workshop participants