

Erich Lichtblau-Leskly was born June 6, 1911 in Hruschau, Czechoslovakia. After completing his education, he worked as an apprentice at electrical appliance shops before attending the Hamburg Decoration School. He found a passion for designing window displays at shops, as well as illustration. He married his wife, Else Silbiger, in 1937.

He would continue to design window displays up until the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, when Erich and Else moved to Prague. Erich worked as a laborer until and after they were **deported** to the Theresienstadt **ghetto**. While in Theresienstadt, Erich illustrated dozens of art pieces using a **caricatured**, cartoon style, depicting everyday life as a prisoner in the ghetto. Due to the political nature of his art, and the fact that other artists were being seized and deported to **Auschwitz**, Erich cut up and destroyed large parts of his work. Else hid the fragments in her **barrack** and retrieved the pieces after **liberation**.

Erich Lichtblau-Leskly was **liberated** May 30, 1945 at 34 years of age. He and his wife went back to Prague before emigrating to Israel with their children in 1949. While in Israel, he would continue to design storefronts. In the 1970s and 1980s, Erich recreated his artwork from scratch, restoring them to their intended form. His art was first displayed in an exhibit at the Beit Theresienstadt Museum and today belongs to Holocaust Museum LA as a collection, "To Paint is to Live." On October 2, 2004, Erich Lichtblau-Lesly passed away at 93.¹

Theresienstadt Ghetto:

Theresienstadt Ghetto (Terezín in Czech) was open from November 1941 to May 1945 in Northern Czechoslovakia. Originally a military fortress, the Nazis converted it into a ghetto for elderly Jews, persons of "special merit" to the Reich such as war veterans, and a few thousand Jews from the Netherlands and Denmark. It also served as a transit camp for Jews on their way to extermination camps in Eastern Europe.

Theresienstadt was also an important tool of **propaganda** and **deception**. The Nazis claimed Theresienstadt was a "model Jewish settlement" or "spa town" for sick and elderly German Jews to "retire." In reality, Theresienstadt was much like any other ghetto, with limited access to basic necessities like food and medicine.

After Danish Jews were deported to Theresienstadt, the Danish Red Cross became interested in the fate of Jewish people in Germany and their occupied lands, and pressured the Nazis to allow them

¹ For more information on Erich Lichtblau-Leskly and Theresienstadt, check out these sources:

<https://www.holocaustmuseumla.org/erich-leskly-collection>

<http://www.makarovainit.com/leskly/index.htm>

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/series/theresienstadt>

to visit the ghetto. The Nazis relented and allowed them to visit in June 1944. In order to prepare for the visit, the prisoners of the ghetto were forced to "beautify" the ghetto and build fake shops and businesses, creating the appearance of a real town. To remove the appearance of overcrowding, many inmates were deported. The Nazis also planned events and activities, like concerts and sports events, to take place during the visit.

After the Red Cross visit, the conditions in Theresienstadt reverted to starvation and overcrowding. Despite deprivations, there was an active culture of creativity in the ghetto, which Erich Lichtblau-Leskly depicts in his art. There were many other artists, musicians, actors, and writers who are studied by historians today to get a better understanding of what life was like in the ghetto. These creators of art, music, entertainment, and education were engaging in spiritual **resistance**.

There were an estimated 140,000 Jews deported to Theresienstadt, and about 33,000 died in the ghetto. The International Red Cross took over the ghetto in May 1945. By August, most of the prisoners had left the camp to continue living their lives.

Glossary:²

Auschwitz: A concentration camp established by the Nazis in 1940, in Oswiecim, Poland, with three camps for imprisonment and extermination and over 40 sub-camps for forced labor.

Barracks: a building or group of buildings to house many people, such as prisoners, in poor conditions. This contributed to the spread of disease in concentration camps and ghettos.

Caricature: A picture or description of a person that relies on exaggerated features to create a comical or unpleasant effect.

Deception: A way of misleading people, giving false or exaggerated information.

Deportation: Removal of people from their areas of residency for purposes of resettlement elsewhere. For Jews, this meant removal to another city, ghetto, concentration camp, or extermination center.

Ghetto: A section of a city or town, primarily in Eastern Europe, where German occupiers and their collaborators would overcrowd, starve, and steal from Jews. There were limited resources such as food, water, and medicine, and rampant diseases.

Liberation: The process of one army driving an occupying army out of an occupied territory. Holocaust survivors and citizens of occupied Europe used the word "liberation" to refer to the moment they were freed from Nazi control.

Propaganda: False or partly false information intended to shape people's opinion and action that fulfills the propagandist's goals. Propaganda can exist in many kinds of media.

Resistance: Generally, action of an individual, nation or group in opposition to those in power. More specifically, efforts by Jews and others to oppose persecution at the hands of the Nazis and their partners.

² Definitions courtesy of [Echoes and Reflections](#) (a project of Yad Vashem, USC Shoah Foundation, & the Anti-Defamation League) and the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Encyclopedia](#).

Analyzing Erich Lichtblau-Leskly's Art in *To Paint is to Live*

In this section, you will consider Erich Lichtblau-Leskly's artwork. Digital pictures of pieces from Erich Lichtblau-Leskly's *To Paint is to Live* collection can be found on our [website](#).

Go through these pieces, and pick one that speaks to you. In the space below, reflect on the following questions:

- Why are you drawn to Erich Lichtblau-Leskly, and this particular piece?
- How does this piece make you feel?
- What do you notice about the art style? The colors? The facial expressions?
- Compare the original piece to Erich's recreation. How do the pieces differ?



Art as Resistance in *To Paint is to Live*

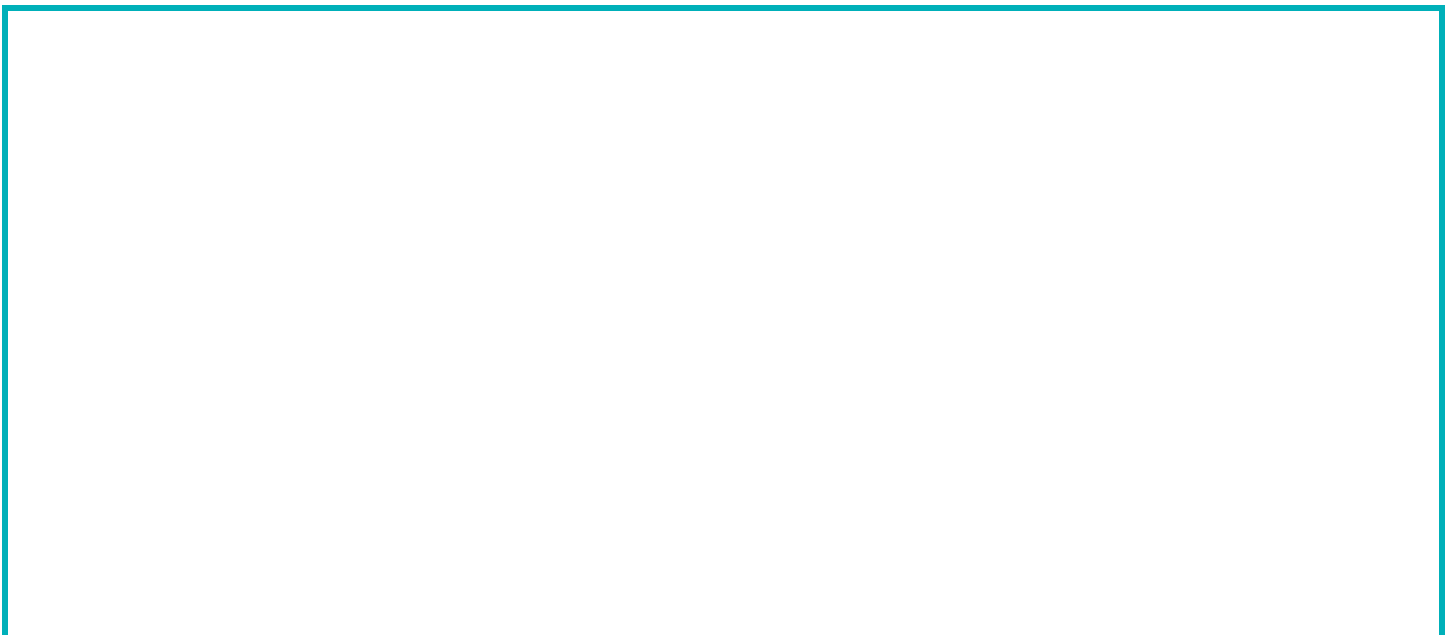
Think about the piece you selected on the previous page:

- What story does Erich's artwork tell about life for Jews in the Theresienstadt ghetto?
- Why do you think he chose to tell that story?
- Why might the Nazis punish Erich for telling that story?



This Competition explores the theme of resistance in art and writing:

- What does resistance mean to you?
- How can art be a form of resistance? What does "To Paint is to Live" mean to you?
- Why was this story important to tell? How can art serve as a record of past events?



Submission Requirement: Statement of Purpose

As you construct your Competition submission, you will choose to respond to one or more sources of inspiration: Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and/or Erich Lichtblau-Leskly.

Consider your own thoughts on Erich Lichtblau-Leskly. How can your submission serve as a response to his work? Will you write, or will you make art?

To complete your submission, you will compose a **statement of purpose**. This statement will aid the Competition judges in understanding your reasons for creating your submission, as well as how it connects to the source(s) of inspiration.

In your submission and statement of purpose, please respond to the following questions:

- What does “art as resistance” mean to you? How do art and writing provide opportunities for cultural resistance?
- What messages of resistance and lessons of the Holocaust will you convey in your art and writing?
- How is your piece inspired by the works of Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and/or Erich Lichtblau-Leskly?

In the box below, outline your ideas for your statement of purpose. Your statement of purpose must be 250 words or less, and it must respond to all three of the above questions.