

# DRAWINGS AND WRITINGS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM WARTIME IN EUROPE. INCLUSION IN THE UNESCO WORLD DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE REGISTER 2025 AND THE IRAND RESEARCH NETWORK

*Dibujos y escritos de niños y jóvenes de la guerra en Europa.  
Inclusión en el registro del Patrimonio Documental Mundial  
de la UNESCO 2025 y en la red de investigación IRAND*

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## Keywords

Children's and youth drawings  
Wars of the 20th century  
Holocaust  
UNESCO Memory  
of the World

**ABSTRACT:** The 20th century is considered the heyday of European children's and youth drawing culture. The dramatic events of the years 1914-1950 form the framework for the proposed selection of 19 exceptional European collections: drawings, paintings, writings and two youth diaries. These drawings are documents of serious events and provide deep insight into biographies, private lives and social changes.

In 2025, the collection of drawings, compiled by Jutta Ströter-Bender and Kunibert Bering in collaboration with Kristell Gilbert (Musée de l'Education Rouen), was included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

## Palabras clave

Dibujos infantiles y juveniles  
Guerras del siglo xx  
Holocausto  
Memoria del Mundo  
de la UNESCO

**RESUMEN:** El siglo xx se considera el apogeo de la cultura del dibujo infantil y juvenil en Europa. Los dramáticos acontecimientos de los años 1914-1950 constituyen el marco de la selección propuesta de 19 colecciones europeas excepcionales: dibujos, pinturas, escritos y dos diarios juveniles. Estos dibujos son documentos de acontecimientos graves y proporcionan una visión profunda de las biografías, las vidas privadas y los cambios sociales.

En 2025, la colección de dibujos, recopilada por Jutta Ströter-Bender y Kunibert Bering en colaboración con Kristell Gilbert (Musée de l'Education Rouen), fue incluida en el Registro Memoria del Mundo de la UNESCO.

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**How to cite:** Ströter-Bender, Jutta; Bering, Kunibert (2025). «Drawings and Writings by Children and Young People from Wartime in Europe. Inclusion in the UNESCO World Documentary Heritage Register 2025 and the IRAND Research Network», *Cabás*, 34, 178-214. (<https://doi.org/10.1387/cabas.27768>).

Received: 19 august, 2025; Final version: 10 september, 2025.

ISSN 1989-5909 / © UPV/EHU Press



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The UNESCO preamble states:

“Since wars originate in the minds of men, peace must also be anchored in the minds of men. This statement and the critical examination of it have characterised the conceptual development of peace education. The concept of a culture of peace developed within this framework has become a globally recognised point of reference for peace education. With the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001 to 2010), the United Nations has also given peace education a further international frame of reference. Although the importance of individual peace skills is beyond question, given the complexity of the causes and forms of violence, peace education must always also aim to exert political influence and change social structures.”<sup>1</sup>

At its 221st session, which took place in Paris on 10 April 2025, the Executive Committee of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme added 17 important collections of drawings and writings by children and young people from European times of war and peace (1914-1950) to its register. The works come from 17 collections in Europe and Canada and represent exceptional, authentic sources on the profound events of the past century from the perspective of children and young people (Edmondson, R.; Jordan, L.; Prodan, A. C., 2019).<sup>2</sup>

The French UNESCO Commission took the lead in submitting the international application. The nomination project was initiated and coordinated by the research network IRAND (International Research and Archives Network for Historical Children's and Youth Drawings). The art educators Professor emeritus Dr Jutta Ströter-Bender and Professor emeritus Dr Kunibert Bering led the project together with Kristell Gilbert from the Musée National de l'Éducation in Rouen.

The World Documentary Heritage has been one of the pillars of UNESCO's heritage programmes since 1992, alongside the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the Intangible Cultural Heritage. A key objective of the programme is to open up documents of outstanding value worldwide through digitisation, to safeguard their existence and thus to enable access for present and future generations. The programme's preamble states:

“The Programme's vision is that the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance [...]. Documentary heritage is a legacy of humankind, through which we can look back into the past, enrich our present lives, and look into the future with the boldness forged by enduring memories.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://berghoffoundation.org/files/publications/glossar\\_2012\\_07\\_Friedenspaedagogik\\_Grundsaeetze.pdf](https://berghoffoundation.org/files/publications/glossar_2012_07_Friedenspaedagogik_Grundsaeetze.pdf), p. 1, in German (last accessed on 01-08-2025).

<sup>2</sup> This text is based on the volume Kunibert Bering - Jutta Ströter-Bender: *Blicke auf die Welt. Zeichnungen von Kindern und Jugendlichen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Krieg und Frieden (1914-1950)*, Bielefeld 2025 (Athena-Verlag im wbv) as well as on the application text written by Jutta Ströter-Bender and Kunibert Bering for the inclusion of the collection of works in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/about> (last accessed on 02-08-2025).

## 1. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DRAWINGS AS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Children and young people drew their experiences during the two world wars, the Spanish Civil War and the years of persecution and extermination of the Jews by the Nazi regime in Germany, particularly in the Terezín and Buchenwald concentration camps. The drawings and writings show facets of cultural memory that have been little researched to date and are evidence of young people's view of existential changes in their lives and society. These works are often the only remaining traces of their lives, which were often wiped out by war and mass murder (Ströter-Bender, 2021).

The collections recognised by UNESCO were mostly created under difficult conditions and are of great cultural value, transcending narrow national and social boundaries through their expressive language. Above all, it is the expressions of defenceless and defenceless adolescents in times of war that they document in a haunting way and thus enable a broader view of conflicts.

The works included in the UNESCO World Heritage List are documents of fundamental historical events and also refer to biographies, everyday life, social changes, communication with peers and adults and school contexts. The underlying element between the collections is the temporal context to which they owe their creation. The cultural heritage of boys and girls connects successive age groups as well as different social classes and different European cultural landscapes.

Many of the works only partially correspond to contemporary ideas of children's drawings in their elaboration and design. They were often made with thin pencils, faint coloured pencils or delicate-coloured glazes on simple paper and in a small format. Felt-tip pens and colour-intensive opaque paint boxes were just as unavailable as large paper formats, which could give room for other creative freedoms.

Leonhard (2021, p. 1), aptly remarks:

"Childhood and youth in their environment, also in threat and impairment: how did children themselves see their respective environments and, more precisely: how did they thus also see themselves? How did they express their experiences, their joy and hope, their sadness and fear, even their threat and fear in drawings and small paintings that they made at school, at home or in other places, including many in concentration camps, in earlier times, when they depicted their surroundings and/or themselves on paper with pencil and brush?

Children's drawings as documents of their own individual lives and suffering, but also as evidence of collective memory: they can be found in old portfolios of today's adults, as special collections in many museums, archives and libraries around the world and give us an insight into the child's view of all kinds of topics that stimulate the child's sensitivity, imagination and fantasy. These could be everyday things, but also wars and crises, hardship and death. Historical eyewitnesses and contemporaries, i.e. in a different way than we record in historical documentary channels as subsequent reflections of today's adults, but as snapshots with the senses of a child and its independent view of itself and the circumstances. In other words, not labelling as retrospective and reflective classification and assessment, but synchronous drawing in the practical sense on paper and as simultaneous imprinting in the child's eidetic memory." (translation by the authors)

The visual language of children and young people has many facets and just as many functions in the lives of adolescents: in their drawings, adolescents engage with their world, they appropriate the world and shape ways of life but also construct counter-worlds (Bering and Ströter-Bender, 2025, pp. 15-16).

The focus is on the drawings as *historical documents* that not only provide information about the developmental phases of the child or its psychological state but rather demonstrate adaptation processes in dealing with the existing world of images and innovative combinations of elements from a large, historically evolved reservoir of images. At the same time, however, it is also a matter of securing traces of the individually experienced moments and situations in which the children and young people were placed, in connection with the presentation of different national contexts.<sup>4</sup>

In European culture, wars and images have belonged together for thousands of years - images depict wars and supposed heroes, thematise farewells, death and mourning, celebrate victories, offer disinformation as a weapon and influence people's thoughts and feelings. Children and young people cannot escape these images; in fact, society's repertoire of images characterises the world view of adolescents. Their drawings therefore prove to be the result of the —consciously or unconsciously— received reservoir of images and at the same time constitutive elements of this culture that is essentially determined by images.

The considerations presented here attempt to follow the intentions of children's and young people's drawings and to see their works as documents of contexts that can be grasped in terms of the history of mentalities. Children's drawings have been part of school education since the 19th century at the latest, albeit in different forms. In 1887, Corrado Ricci's ground-breaking book *L'arte dei bambini* significantly revalued juvenile drawing. Around 1900, reform pedagogy in particular believed that it had discovered the "genius in the child" (Hartlaub) - consequently, aspects of "aesthetic behaviour" were at the forefront of the debate on children's drawings. In addition, there were research approaches that examined the drawing activities of adolescents primarily as an expression of psychological developments and inner states.

Beyond this, however, these images represent fundamental vehicles for shaping processes of socialisation, identity formation and education, which not only reflect the carefree moments of childhood, but in particular the fundamental, existential problems of their respective present. The depictions of war, genocide and expulsion are therefore of particular importance.

A variety of reception processes play a decisive role here: the orientation towards models from the current world of images is not a mere "colouring in" but proves to be a fundamental process of appropriation of pictorial formulas and the ideas they convey.

Through perception in conjunction with creative practices, processes of self-assurance and identification with socio-cultural structures are formed and at the same time open possibilities for changing them. Images thus enable reflection on fundamental questions about basic orientation in the world, but also about existential problems and metaphysical dimensions.

The world of 20th century adolescents was essentially characterised by images. Their reception is based on —conscious or unconscious— criteria, which is why images require interpretation: they must be given meaning to be used as elements for the construction of new compositions. Interpretation and reception take place within meaningful horizons determined by culture and society.

The "horizon" marks an ultimately intangible, constantly changing boundary, which Ludwig Wittgenstein described as follows: "The inexpressible (that which seems mysterious to me and which I am unable to express) perhaps provides the background on which what I have been able to express acquires meaning" (Wittgenstein, 1984, p. 472).

The perceived images often originate from heterogeneous contexts and come together in new constellations to form contexts in which the adolescent's world view is articulated. This world view often

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<sup>4</sup> For the historical context see Dávila and Naya, 2026.

also determines the hierarchies of values that characterise their lifestyles in adulthood.<sup>5</sup> This also makes it clear how porous the repeatedly postulated boundary between childhood and adulthood is.<sup>6</sup>

As historical documents and first-class sources, the drawings of adolescents refer not only to individual experiences through their motifs and design, but also to world views, indoctrination and ideas as well as the chequered history of curricula and their content in the history of education systems.

## **2. THE 17 ARCHIVES, MUSEUMS AND INSTITUTES LISTED IN THE UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER (IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORICAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE COLLECTIONS)<sup>7</sup>**

### **I. *World War I (1914-1918) and its consequences:***

- Musée de Montmartre, Paris (France).
- Museum Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg, Hamburg (Germany).
- Institute for Personal History, Bensheim (Germany).
- National Arts Education Archive | Yorkshire Sculpture Park (United Kingdom).
- School Museum Nuremberg / School History Collection of the University of Erlangen Nuremberg (Germany).

### **II. *The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939):***

- Archives of Ontario, Toronto (Canada).
- Museum on Education of the University of the Basque Country, San Sebastián (Spain).

### **III. *Children and Young People in the Holocaust:***

- Düsseldorf City Museum (Germany).
- Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris (France).
- Židovské muzeum v Praze (Jewish Museum, Prague) (Czech Republic).
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France / Maison d'Izieu (France).
- Archive for Contemporary History ETH Zurich (Switzerland).

### **IV. *World War II (1939-1945) and its consequences:***

- Musée National de l'Éducation, Rouen (France).
- Pestalozzianum Foundation, Zurich University of Teacher Education (Switzerland).
- Archiwa Państwowe, Warsaw (Poland).
- Saarbrücken City Archives (Germany).
- Pestalozzi Children's Village Foundation, Trogen (Switzerland).

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<sup>5</sup> It is particularly important to consider aspects of a culture of remembrance: Ströter-Bender: *Erinnerungskultur I*; cf. also Drygas: *Der ferne Krieg*, *ibid.* unpag.

<sup>6</sup> On the (supposed) boundary between childhood and adulthood from a general perspective, see Wittmann (2018, pp. 8-11).

<sup>7</sup> A link with the addresses of all collections by the German UNESCO Commission: <https://www.unesco.de/staette/zeichnungen-heranwachsende-in-kriegszeiten/>

### 3. PRESENTATION OF THE COLLECTIONS WITH SELECTED DRAWINGS

#### 3.1. World War I (1914-1918) and its consequences

The events of World War I had a profound impact on the lives of children and young people, who often tried to come to terms with the events in drawings. The resulting works often depict the perceptions beyond the widespread war propaganda with their repertoire of images, so that their own confrontations with the phenomenon of “war” become visible.

**Picture 1.** Hella Klauzner (14 years old):  
Farewell to her father, probably 1917/1918, linocut, 37.5 × 54 cm



**Source:** Čížek Collection, National Arts Education Archive, No. BHFCPD00085 and BHFCPD00003 (Work collected by Francesca M. Wilson for exhibition purposes. On loan by Wanda Stanley).

#### Austria / United Kingdom

The work “Abschied des Vaters” was created in the classroom of the art teacher Franz Čížek (1865-1946), who developed innovative concepts for the promotion of youthful creativity with his art school founded in Vienna in 1897 and achieved international renown with his diverse exhibition activities (Laven, 2006). “Experts around the world regard the reformer Franz Čížek as one of the pioneers of children’s education,” says Rolf Laven in his groundbreaking research and exploration of Čížek’s work.<sup>8</sup> His teaching activities had a great impact on the following generation of artists who received their first lessons and inspiration from him, including the Viennese painter and art educator Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (born 1898, murdered in Auschwitz in 1944), who initiated art education work with interned children in the Theresienstadt concentration camp over 20 years later (see below).

<sup>8</sup> Fundamental Laven 2006: 81 ff., 121 ff., 133



The works presented here from Franz Čížek's youth art class are part of a collection that was brought together by the British teacher and humanitarian aid worker Francesca Wilson (see Chapter 6) for travelling exhibitions after the end of the war to raise money for aid organisations, and which is now in the National Arts Education Archive YSP in England (Roberts, 2017).

## Germany

The following drawings were made at a school in Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg in the first two years of the First World War (Drolshagen, 2021; Kass, 2015; Kay, 2014; 2019). In 2012, they were found in the attic of the Museum Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg. There, 353 drawings by boys and girls from the surrounding working-class neighbourhood had been brought to safety from the storm surge of 1962. "The works with themes relating to the First World War were created in drawing lessons at the local primary school. They are divided into four class sets from three age groups (10 to 14 years). The series of drawings, created with simple materials, cover the themes of land warfare, air warfare, naval warfare and military hospitals. We do not know today what information these Wilhelmsburg children had, what they knew from their own experience, what they were told by their parents, siblings, friends, teachers at school and in clubs. But it can be assumed that they were exposed to the intensive war propaganda of the German Empire, because schoolchildren were also seen as a target group for national war ideologies (Drygas and Ströter-Bender, 2022).

**Picture 2.** Glöckner (12 years old):

Air war over France, 1914-1915, Coloured pencils, 269 × 362 mm



**Source:** Museum Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg.

Drawing lessons were not unaffected by the events of the war. The drawing "Air combat over France" combines various pictorial elements. The upper half of the picture is reserved for the depiction of an air battle, while in the lower part two bombs hit, one of which causes a house to go up in flames. The action is

evidently taking place in France, as the smaller airship and the aeroplanes are marked by French flags, while the imperial war flag flies at the stern of the dominant airship. The depiction of the air battle is based on popular models: the pupil may have been inspired by a depiction of the so-called Christmas raid by British air units on the airship base at Cuxhaven in 1914, as depicted on a contemporary postcard.

The mechanisation of war since the 19th century resulted in a new spatial awareness, which the pupils also reflected in their drawings during the First World War. While the wars of the past took place horizontally on the surface of the earth, the fighting in the First World War increasingly extended into the dimensions of airspace and the underwater world: Submarines, airships and aeroplanes negated the earth's surface. Great Britain, for example, built over 200 airships during the First World War, which were mainly used as submarine fighters. In this combination of airspace with the spaces below sea level combined the newly conquered dimensions of warfare. The Wilhelmsburg drawings on naval warfare deal with these developments, which were to become of fundamental importance for the 20th and 21st centuries.

The sinking of the British passenger liner “Lusitania” on 7 May 1915 off the south coast of Ireland went down as one of the most momentous events in the history of the First World War, as this action provided the reason for the United States to intervene in the war with its own troops on the European continent the following year and ultimately decide the war in favour of the Allies. The end of the “Lusitania” came with a torpedo from the German submarine U 20-1998 people lost their lives (Bering, 2024).

The naval war had a special significance for the Wilhelmsburg schoolchildren as children on the coast, especially as the Kaiser had issued the slogan “Our future lies on the water!” in 1898. The unusual drawing from the Wilhelmsburg school depicts the sinking of the “Lusitania”: the composition shows the moment immediately before the passenger liner finally sinks into the sea in the left half of the picture; only part of the stern is still protruding from the water. In the lower third of the picture, the German submarine lies parallel to the edge of the picture (Bering, 2024).

**Picture 3.** Möller (12-13 years):  
Lusitania, 1914-15. Coloured pencils, 269 × 362 mm



**Source:** Museum Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg.



As the horizon is very high in this drawing, the view falls diagonally from above onto the water surface and in particular onto the position where the passenger ship is sinking. At this point, the pupil only draws the waves that have engulfed the ship. This impression of emptiness emphasises the horror of the event - the composition thus avoids exaggerated drama and the widespread cheerful patriotism that characterises many depictions of comparable war events.

This also applies to the depiction of a military hospital scene. The sheet drawn by A. Scharweit shows a nurse striding to the left, carrying a stretcher, only half of which is visible. A wounded man with a head bandage is lying on it. A white cloth envelops the body of the wounded man. However, the depiction largely dispenses with the narrative elements that characterise the usual drawings of adolescents or pictorial propaganda. Instead, the events in the drawing take place against a monochrome ochre-coloured background. With this reduction of the formal apparatus, the depiction achieves a high degree of concentration on the central message, the visualisation of the soldier's wound and the nurse's care. Details such as the nurse's strained facial expression and the trace of blood on the wounded soldier's head emphasise the trepidation of the scene and the associated feelings of the schoolchild.

**Picture 4.** A. Scharweit (12 years old):  
Military hospital, 1914-15. Coloured pencils, 269 × 362 mm



**Source:** Museum Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg.

The eleven-year-old schoolboy Ernst Hopp from Windsbach in the district of Ansbach in Middle Franconia (southern Germany) had completely different intentions. He dedicated his drawings of wartime events to his teacher, the priest Egon Langheinrich, who was called up for military service as a field chaplain and medic in February 1916. The 15 drawings were apparently created on this occasion.

Overall, the depictions show the entire spectrum from marches, combat operations and hospital scenes to soldiers' graves in which Ernst Hopp's "heroes" lie. One unusual motif is the battle of houses that Ernst

Hopp drew, which probably took place in the town of Rethel in northern France. The burning church and the neighbouring house in flames serve as the scene of dramatic fighting in the drawing: German troops attack from the right edge of the picture and put the French to flight, who flee from the windows and doors of the house.

**Picture 5.** Ernst Hopp:  
Battle for a town (Rethel on the Aisne?), 1916



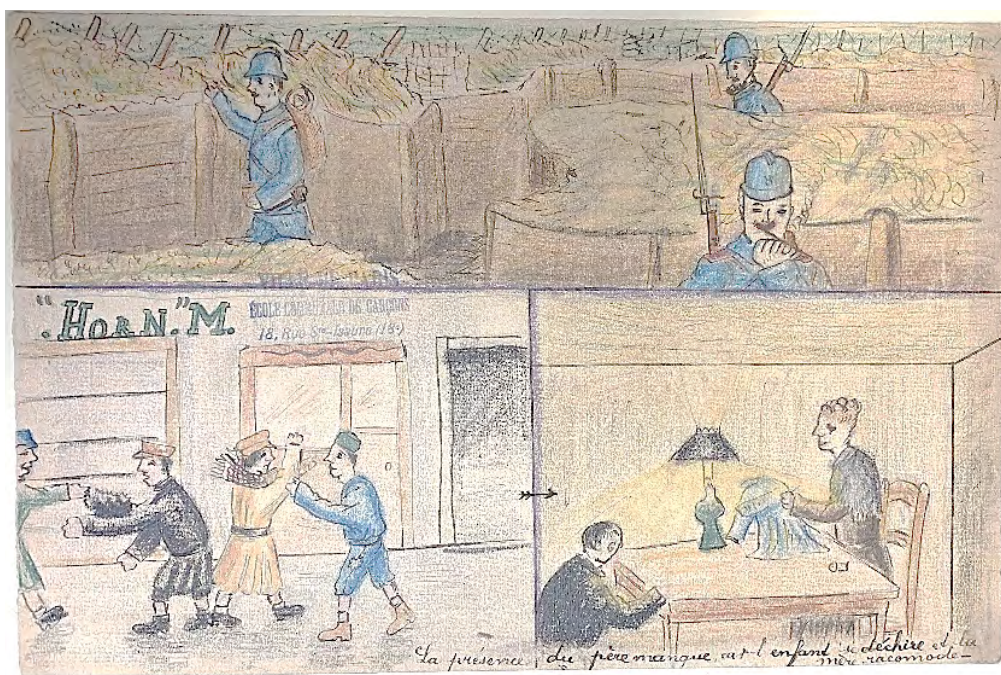
**Source:** Institut für Personengeschichte, Bensheim.



## France

The Musée du Montmartre in Paris preserves an impressive collection of drawings made by boys during the First World War (Pignot, 2004; 2024). They show everyday scenes in the Parisian neighbourhood of Montmartre between 1914 and 1918. One outstanding sheet combines the procurement of food with the thought of his father in the trenches and waiting for his father to return from the war.

**Picture 6.** The father in the trenches - Procuring food - Consolation during the father's absence - Pencil, coloured pencil



**Source:** Musée de Montmartre.

## Germany

In the period between the world wars, themes of a more peaceful world dominated the repertoire of pupils' work, despite the widespread economic hardship in those years. This is shown by the collection of the primary school teacher Wilhelm Daiber, which is kept in the School Museum of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

The director of the museum, Mathias Rösch (2023, pp. 1-2), writes about this collection:

"The holdings are entitled the 'Daiber Collection' and include over 4,500 drawings by nine to 14-year-old pupils at the primary school in the small town of Stein near Nuremberg in Germany from the years 1924 to 1929. The drawings were created in the classroom and under the guidance of primary school teacher Wilhelm Daiber, a reform and art teacher who later became renowned throughout Germany. Daiber began his consciously organised art lessons in 1924 with his then fourth class and continued these lessons with the same children in the following school years until 1929. The

collection thus includes almost all the drawings of these selected children from the fourth to the eighth grade, the year they left school. These drawings show motifs from nature, from the forest to animals and insects to bouquets of flowers as well as fairy tales and scenes from the children's everyday lives, from nativity scenes, Christmas parties and other festivities to houses and depictions of living spaces to work and play equipment. The children usually frame their drawings with floral motifs or simple coloured lines. The drawings were usually created on white paper with pencil sketches and then coloured in with watercolours. The lines of the preliminary drawing were then traced with a thin ink pen and certain details were added from time to time. All the drawings were realised with remarkable care, richness of detail and filigree strokes. The children's drawings are mostly 20 cm × 30 cm in size, portrait or landscape format. They are labelled on the back. This means that each drawing is clearly assigned to a pupil, a class, a subject and a school year. The drawings were divided by Wilhelm Daiber into thematically orientated, small bundles ("bundles"), which are held together by banderoles."

Wilhelm Daiber —influenced by his own war experiences in the years 1914-1918 in changing positions at the front— wanted to strengthen the children mentally and physically through an art therapy concept he had developed. Daiber was clearly influenced by the ideas of art theorist Gustav Britsch (1879-1923), whose approaches to education in the field of art and aesthetics were widespread at the time.

In promoting the children's drawing activities, Daiber was also concerned with conveying knowledge to them through close observation. The realisation of this intention is particularly evident in the large series on the forest, in which trees, animals and people are combined with delicate strokes to form a kind of colour fabric.

**Picture 7.** Unknown: Animals in the forest, Pencil drawing, glazed with watercolours, 1927



**Source:** Wilhelm Daiber Collection, Nuremberg School Museum - Photos: Ströter-Bender.

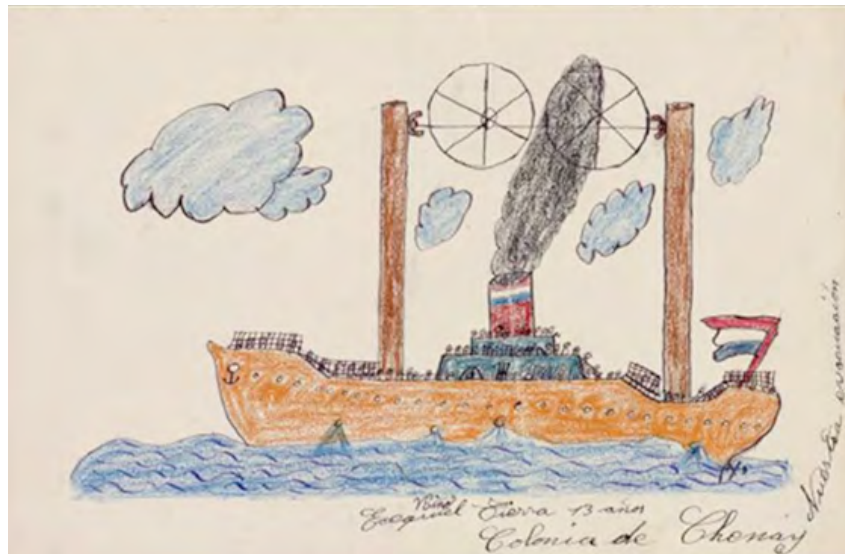


### 3.2. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

#### Canada

The new collections in the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme also include drawings from the context of the Spanish Civil War, such as works from holiday colonies of evacuated Spanish children abroad, which are now kept in the Archives of Ontario in Toronto, Canada. They were created between 1936 and 1939.

**Picture 8.** Esquirel Tierra (13 years old): Our evacuation, 1936-39



**Source:** Toronto, Archives of Ontario's (Alexander Albert MacLeod fond).

**Picture 9.** Miguel (age 10): The war at the front



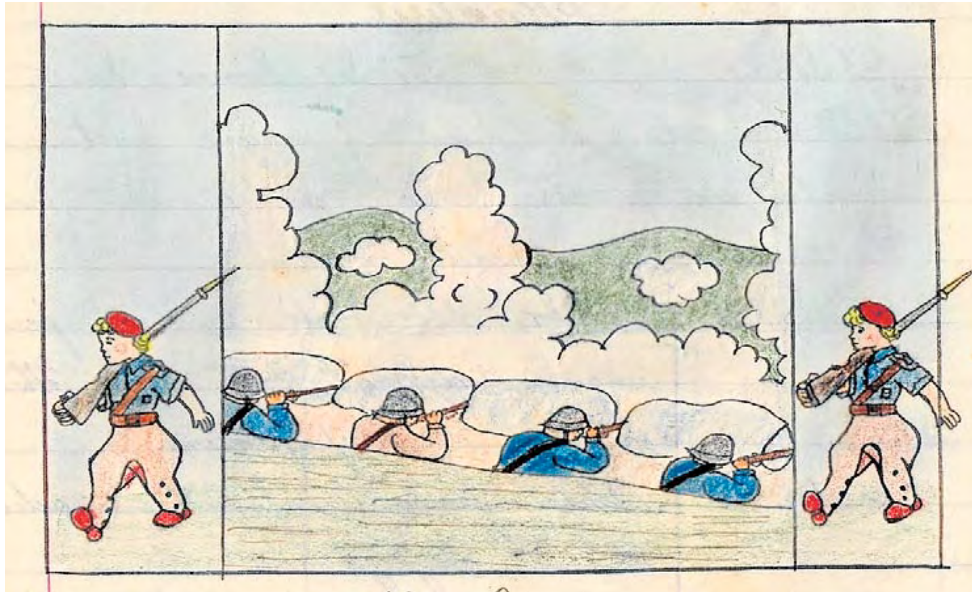
**Source:** Drawing from the "Casa España", between 1936 and 1939. Toronto: Archives of Ontario's (Alexander Albert MacLeod fond).



## Spain

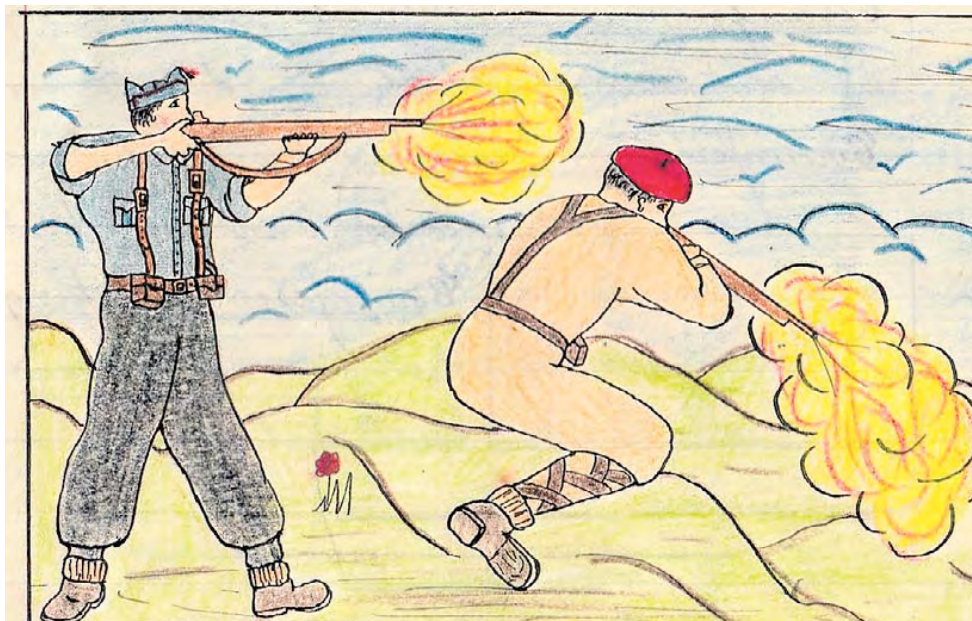
The Museum on Education of the University of the Basque Country is archiving and researching further outstanding collections of drawings by young people in 75 exercise books from the time of the Spanish Civil War.

**Picture 10.** Carmen Sancho, Marching soldiers, 1938



**Source:** Museum on Education of the University of the Basque Country.

**Picture 11.** Carmen Sancho, Soldiers in battle, 1938

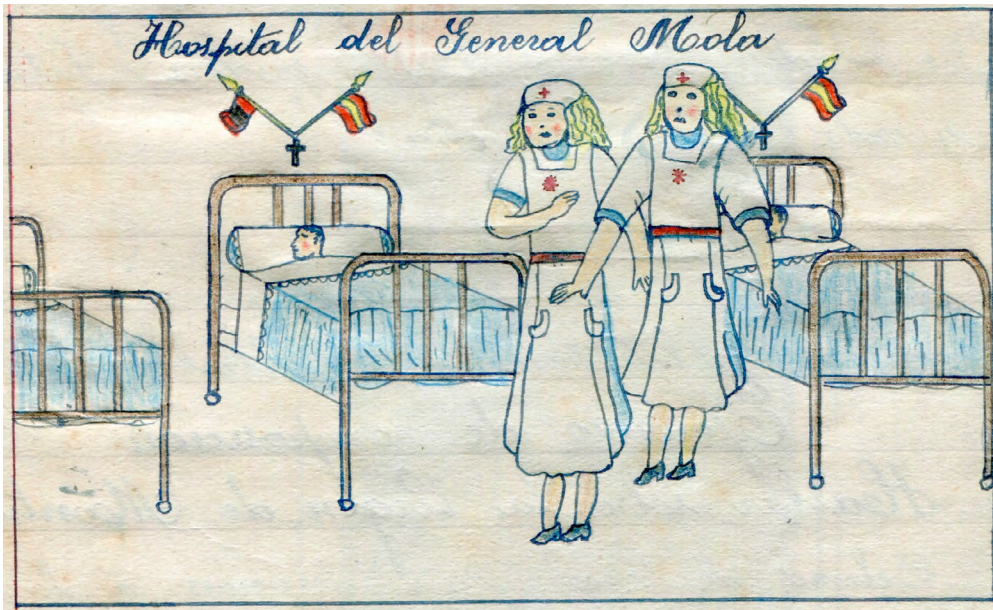


**Source:** Museum on Education of the University of the Basque Country.



The following sheet was created in a school context in the Basque Country after the conquest by Franco in 1937 and is based on popular models. In 1938, Carmen Sancho drew a scene from a military hospital with the beds of injured soldiers and two nurses facing the viewer. The hospital programmatically bears the name of General Mola, one of Franco's leading combatants at the beginning of the coup in 1936. During the civil war, Mola commanded the "Northern Army" and died in a plane crash in 1937.

**Picture 12.** Carmen Sancho, Hospital del General Mola, 1938



**Source:** Museum on Education of the University of the Basque Country.

**Picture 13.** Carmen Sancho, Dying soldier, 1938



**Source:** Museum on Education of the University of the Basque Country.

Another drawing depicts a soldier fatally injured in the Spanish Civil War and his helping comrades and was probably created by tracing. The red beret of the helping soldier refers to the so-called *Requeté*, monarchist troops fighting on Franco's side. The depiction clearly documents the appropriation of historical pictorial forms. The underlying motif is part of a pictorial tradition that goes back to the motif of the "Lamentation of Christ" and demonstrates the penetration of this motif into popular depictions of the war, which is thus simultaneously ennobled: the death of the soldier becomes a "heroic death".

### 3.3. Children and Young People in the Holocaust

#### Germany

The pictures of Jewish children from the time of National Socialism and the Second World War impressively reflect their troubled present against the backdrop of persecution, deportation and the threat of annihilation. The Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf owns an outstanding collection of works compiled by the Jewish artist and drawing teacher Julo Levin. Levin (born in Stettin in 1901, murdered in Auschwitz in 1943) studied painting at the School of Arts and Crafts in Essen and at the academies in Munich and Düsseldorf (Scheffler, 2025). He was not only a member of the "Rheinische Sezession" and the "Junges Rheinland", but also taught at several Jewish schools during the National Socialist persecution, for example at the private Jewish primary schools in Düsseldorf and later from 1937 at schools in Berlin (Scheffler, 2015, pp. 43-53). The themes of the approximately 2,000 works document everyday Jewish life with religious festivals as well as scenes of farewell and the visualisation of places of longing such as Palestine or New York as the dreamed destinations of people oppressed by persecution and exclusion.

**Picture 14.** Ilse Marx: Job, watercolour, October 1936



**Source:** City Museum Düsseldorf.

Against the backdrop of growing repression, the fifteen-year-old schoolgirl Ilse Marx painted the figure of the suffering Job in 1936. Ilse Marx depicts a seated male figure facing left, looking up to the sky and opening his mouth as if to cry out. His left arm is twisted, and his hand is missing. In the Old Testament figure of Job, the pupil reflects not only the fate of Judaism in the past, but also Jewish suffering in her own present.

The motif of “farewell” is frequently encountered in Julo Levin’s collection, as in the scene selected here as an example. The depiction shows a family just before embarking on an ocean liner, which is moored on the quay in the upper third of the picture. In the centre of the picture, several people are waving, apparently relatives or friends who have stayed behind. The lower half of the picture is dominated by the departing family with the central figure of the father with two suitcases. The entire scene is backdropped by a grey surface that vividly conveys the sombre atmosphere of farewell.

**Picture 15.** Unknown: Emigration, coloured pencil, graphite pencil, n.d.



**Source:** Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf.

## Czech Republic

Several of the collections inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2025 reflect the fates of deported and murdered Jews in the drawings of children and young people who were imprisoned in the concentration camps (Heuberger 1991; Goldman, 2000; Blodig, 2003). These include, in particular, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis’ collection of around 5,800 children’s drawings from the “Terezín Ghetto”. They are among the earliest authentic documents of the Nazi genocide of more than 6 million Jews during the Second World War. The drawings were made between 1941 and 1945 and are kept in the Jewish Museum in Prague (Kass 2015; Heuberger 1991; Hořková-Weissová 2004; Jewish Museum Prague 1999). They are often the only remaining documents of 15,000 murdered children and adolescents who were deported to Theresienstadt



during these four years and of whom only around 150 survived this terrible time. The other adolescents died of hunger and disease or were deported from there and murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Hošková-Weissová 2004; Jewish Museum in Prague, online).

**Picture 16.** Vilém Eisner (1931-1944). Drawing lessons in a boys' dormitory, Terezín (undated, March 1943-October 1944), watercolour, 21.0 × 27.7 cm



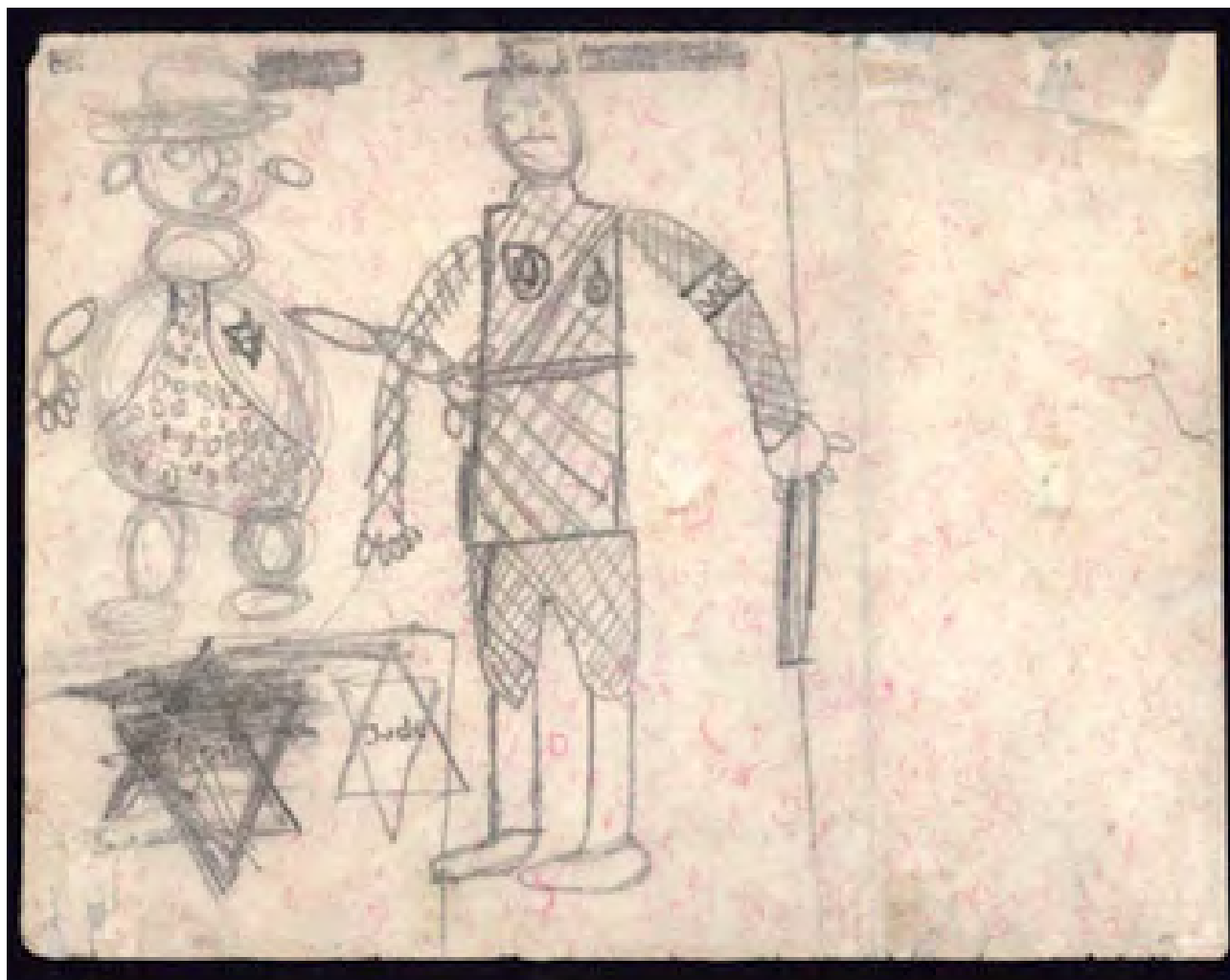
**Source:** Jewish Museum Prague, inv. no. 129.357.

The Jewish ghetto administration in Theresienstadt had organised extensive care for the interned children and young people, including lessons and artistic activities, in order to make life more bearable for the adolescents. When the Austrian artist and art teacher Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (1898-1944) and her husband Pavel were deported to Theresienstadt in December 1942, she began organising art lessons for the imprisoned children and young people, mostly aged 14-18, in 1943. As a young student at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis had attended courses with the reform pedagogue Prof. Franz Čížek, and later courses at the Bauhaus with Johannes Itten.

“Friedl Dicker-Brandeis pursued the same goals in her lessons in Theresienstadt and met her pupils with a similar basic attitude, which was characterised by great respect, accompanied by the greatest possible freedom, which she conveyed to the children and which, according to this understanding, served as a prerequisite for the development of the children’s creative powers [...]. This freedom became the centre of her work and stands in direct contrast to the ‘lack of freedom’ of the children in their entire existence in the ghetto. She saw creativity and imagination as a source of energy inherent in every child that only needed to be activated.” (Kass, 2015, p. 40)



**Picture 17.** Jiří Beutler (1932-1944):  
Ghetto guard and man with the Star of David (undated, March 1943-May 1944)



**Source:** Jewish Museum Prague Inv. no. 125.426r.

The depiction of the “night train” of fifteen-year-old Alice Gutman, murdered in Auschwitz in 1944, is particularly depressing (fig. 18). It is presumably a depiction of deportation or of the trains that picked up prisoners under cover of darkness to transport them to certain death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Alice Gutmann’s work reproduces in the medium of drawing what Helga Hošková-Weissová (born 1919), painter and Holocaust witness, survivor of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, described in an interview with Sarah Kass:

“It was very bad, so this fear of being put on a transport, that always hung over us. But it was said to be even worse when such things happened at night. So they would come at night with a torch and look for the person who was to be put on a transport. Invitation to a transport, but at night. We were afraid, as I said, this fear hung over us, but we still didn’t know what to expect. We thought it would be something bad, but nobody expected it to be this bad, nobody imagined it. We didn’t know anything about it. We also didn’t know where the transports were going. They were just called ‘East transports’. Simply to the east, but we didn’t know where.” (Hošková-Weissová, quoted in an interview by Kass 2015, p. 161)

**Picture 18.** Alice Gutman (1928-1944):

Night Train (undated, March-September 1943), graphite on paper, 21.5 × 29.3 cm



**Source:** Jewish Museum Prague, inv. no. 131.753.

## France

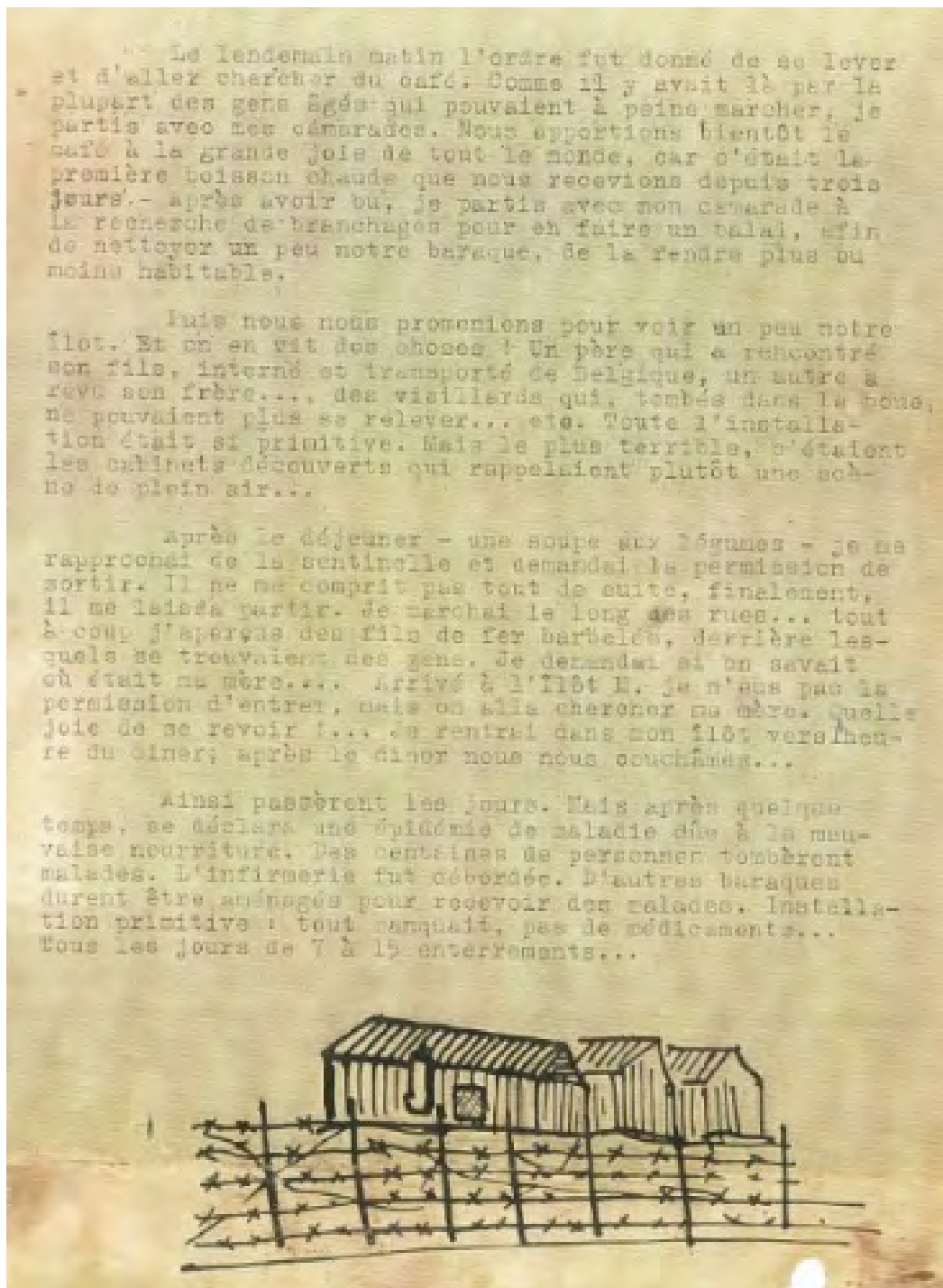
Further aspects of the fates of Jewish children and young people are discussed in the “Journal de Chabannes”, a youth magazine from 1942 from a Jewish children’s home, archived in the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris (Perlstein, 1942). Such homes were established in France after the Pogrom Night in November 1938, when unaccompanied children and young people from Germany and Austria were sent to France by their parents to save them from deportation to concentration camps.

The “Château de Chabannes” was one of these children’s homes (also known as children’s colonies) run by the OSE (“Œuvre de secours aux enfants”) in the village of Chabannes between November 1939 and January 1944, located in the occupation zone of the German Wehrmacht and the Vichy regime. The establishment of the home is due to the courage and intrepidity of the home’s director, Félix Chevrier (1884-1962).<sup>9</sup> To mark the two-year anniversary of the children’s colony in 1942, the home’s management

<sup>9</sup> Together with the local population, Chévrier rescued more than 1,000 children of Jewish origin who were able to survive in various places in the region (cf. Klarsfeld, 2007, p. 344).

organised the publication of an anniversary publication featuring the children and young people: The "Journal de Chabannes". The journal is a mixture of school newspaper, collection of essays and photo album. The texts, some typed or handwritten in French, are illustrated with drawings and collages.

**Picture 19.** Ludwig Meier: Essay "I was in the camp" with drawing of internment buildings "Journal de Chabannes", 1942, Fond Félix Chévrier, code CCCLXXIV-1



Source: Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris.

**Picture 20.** Sheet no. 39: David Hirsch (13 years old): Drawing of a camp, blurred pencil drawing “Journal de Chabannes”, 1942, Fond Félix Chévrier, code CCCLXXIV-1



**Source:** Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris.

In addition to the team of young people, the psychologist and educationalist Ernest Jablonski (1913-1988), who was appointed educational director of Chabannes with his wife Lydia Jablonski at the beginning of 1942, was also responsible for editing the journal. Due to persecution and his activities in the underground of the French Resistance, he took the name Jouhy from 1943.

From April 1943 to April 1944, the OSE's “Maison d'Izieu” children's home, 60 kilometres from Lyon, offered similar protection from Nazism and the Vichy regime to more than 10 Jewish children until they were sent to the Auschwitz extermination camp by the Gestapo (Biscarat, 2003, 2014; Boissard 2022; Klarsfeld, 2001; Pintel, 2024, Vidau, 2018).

The home was run by Sabine Zlatin, art historian, artist and sister of the Red Cross (1907-1966) and her husband Miron Zlatin (1904-1944). Everyday life was organised with many cultural activities for the children and young people, including drawing and painting.<sup>10</sup> In their drawings, the young people liked to adapt pictorial motifs that they knew from the literature made available to them. One example is a work by the twelve-year-old Belgian Max Tetelbaum, who was murdered with his little brother in Auschwitz in April 1944. Max Tetelbaum only lived in Izieu for just over three months. A booklet designed by him contains a total of 13 drawings, including depictions of landscapes, people, animals and historical scenes as well as a picture of a bold flight manoeuvre of a biplane in the Andes. It was inspired by a book published by the French “Aero-club” in 1938.

<sup>10</sup> The Sabine Zlatin estate comprises 47 documents drawn by the children of the Maison d'Izieu (including 2 notebooks with 17 drawings, 6 decorated birthday greetings, 3 films with 2 strips each), 24 pieces, sometimes double-sided. Cf. La collection Sabine Zlatin - Maison d'Izieu ([memorializieu.eu](http://memorializieu.eu)).

**Picture 21.** Max Tetelbaum:  
Manoeuvre of a biplane in the mountains, Pencil, watercolours, 1944



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Source:** Collection Sabine Zlatin. Bibliothèque Nationale France (BNF)/Maison d'Izieu.

In April 1944, forty-four children and young people aged between four and seventeen and seven carers were loaded onto lorries in Izieu, most of whom were deported to Auschwitz on transport 71 and murdered there.

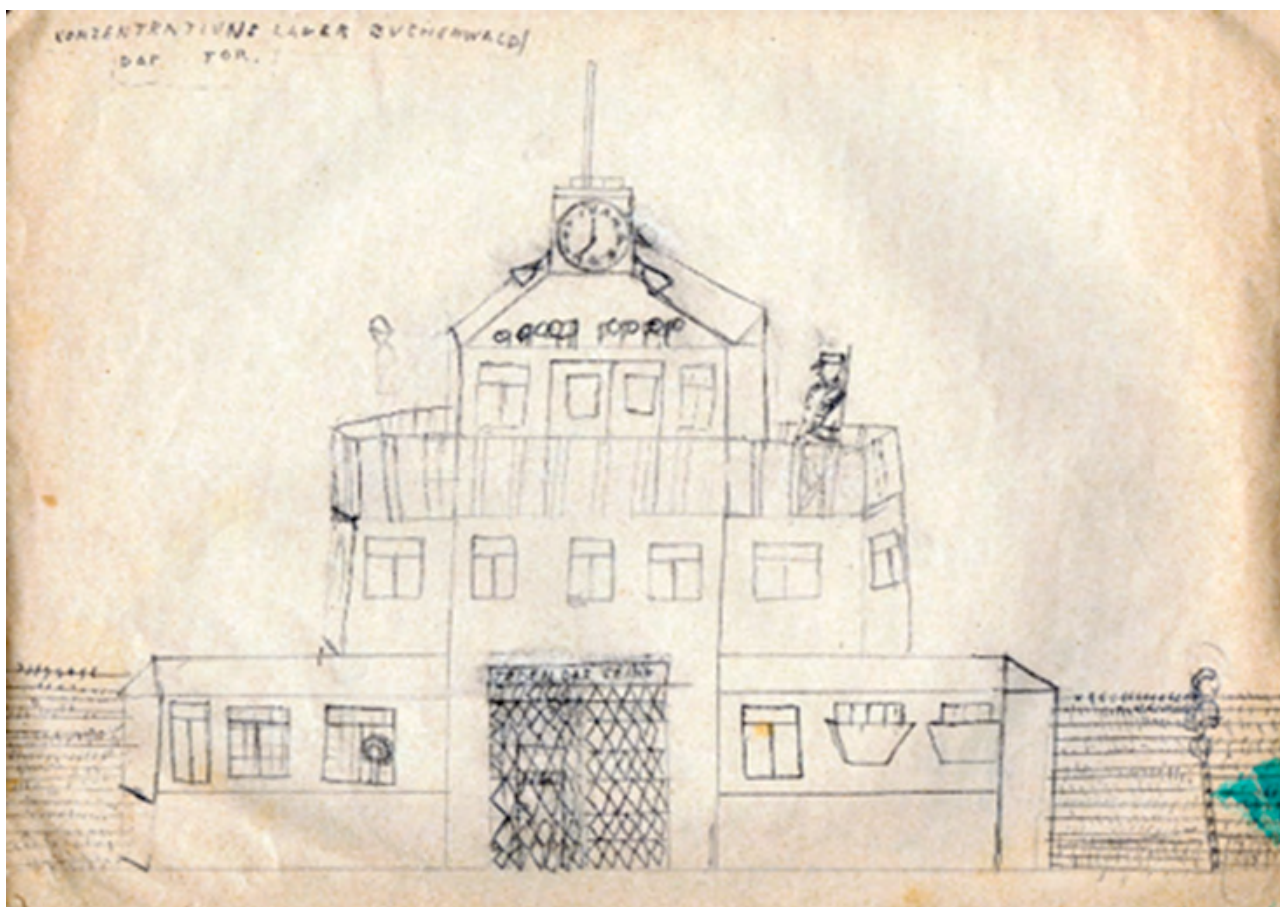


## Switzerland

When the Buchenwald concentration camp was liberated, the American troops found over 900 children and young people in a miserable, completely traumatised state. Numerous children and young people had previously been imprisoned in the Auschwitz extermination camp and had travelled from there —in the final months of the war on so-called “death marches”— to the concentration camp in Buchenwald near Weimar (Trunkwalter, 2015).

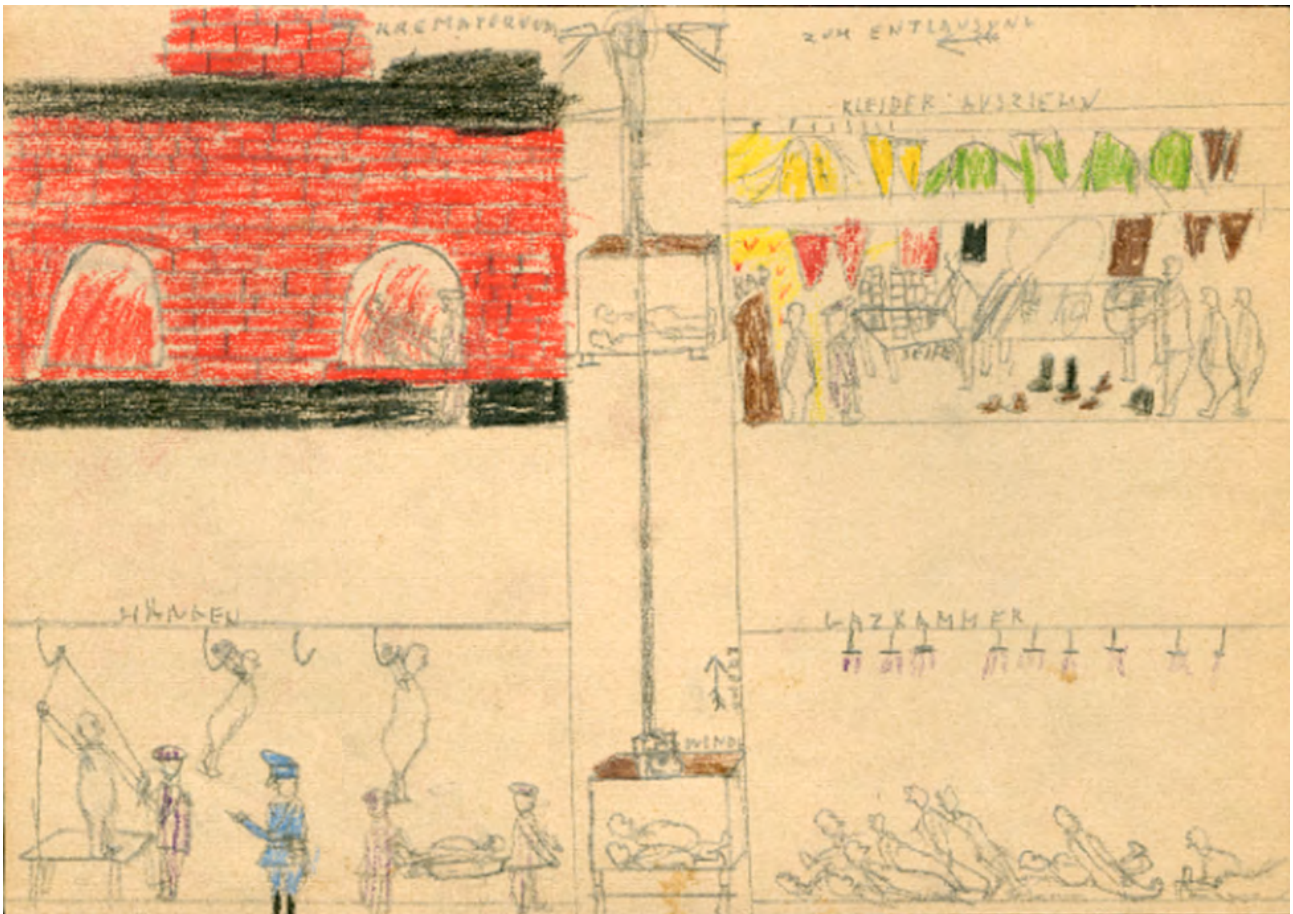
However, the “Buchenwald children”, as they were soon known, were not accepted in Switzerland without reservation, as it was feared that they would want to stay permanently. However, there were very committed teachers who provided them with intensive care and therapy as part of recreational stays. In addition to teaching activities, this also included drawing to help them process and overcome their traumatic experiences in the concentration camps and writing about their experiences (Weber, 1997, pp. 183-282). Today, the “Archive for Contemporary History (AfZ)” at ETH Zurich preserves the drawings of the Buchenwald children. We have the teacher and writer Charlotte Weber (1912-2000) to thank for looking after the adolescents and collecting their work (Trunkwalter, 2021, pp. 189-194). Here are some of the detailed drawings by Henryk Reicher (born 1929 in Cieszyn/Poland) and Kalman Landau (born 1928), two survivors of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration and extermination camps.

**Picture 22.** Henryk Reicher (16 years old): Buchenwald - Gate building, 1945/46



**Source:** Archive for Contemporary History - ETH Zurich.

**Picture 23.** Henryk Reicher (16 years old): Extermination camp, 1945/46



**Source:** Archive of Contemporary History - ETH Zurich.

**Picture 24.** Kalman Landau: Gas chamber, 1945



**Source:** Archives of Contemporary History - ETH Zurich.



**Picture 25.** Henryk Reicher: Executions and graves 1945/46



**Source:** Archives of Contemporary History - ETH Zurich.

**Picture 26.** Henryk Reicher (16 years old): “The liberation in Buchenwald”, 1945/46



**Source:** Archives of Contemporary History - ETH Zurich.

### 3.4. World War II (1939-1945) and its consequences

#### France

Children and young people often suffered particularly from the life-threatening events of the wars. The Parisian teacher and artist Adrienne Jouclard (1882-1972) collected almost 300 drawings of children and young people from the time of the Second World War, which are kept at the Musée de l'Éducation in Rouen (Gilbert, 2012; D'Onville, 2014). Adrienne Jouclard (1882-1972) taught drawing from 1907 as a teacher in the city of Paris at various girls' schools, which are similar to today's vocational colleges.<sup>11</sup>

**Picture 27.** J. Aglave: Darkening of Paris, between 1939 and 1940



**Source:** Coll. Adrienne Jouclard, Musée National de l'Éducation, Rouen, inv. no. 1979.09325.9.

<sup>11</sup> As a recognised artist (Prix Rosa Bonheur 1914 and numerous other awards), Jouclard possessed great formal skills in drawing and painting. Mademoiselle Jouclard's teaching was highly appreciated by both the school management and her pupils. The artist, who is counted among the most important post-impressionists of her time, participated intensively in the cultural life of the city alongside her professional activities, so that these aspects are also reflected in many ways in her works. Among other things, she became famous for her outstanding paintings of public and sporting events. At the same time, Jouclard repeatedly devoted her artistic attention to her pupils and school life by capturing art lessons in paintings (see Marie d'Onville et Association Jeanne D'Arc 2014). Many of her works can be found in European museums.



**Picture 28.** Monique Chanot: General mobilisation, 1939



**Source:** Coll. Adrienne Jouclard, Musée National de l'Education, Rouen, inv. no. 1979.09323.3.

**Picture 29.** C.S.A. Lupoli (aged 14-16):

On the way to the air-raid shelter, Autumn 1939/Spring 1940, drawing paper, gouache, 16.2 × 24.7 cm



**Source:** Jouclard Collection, Musée National de l'Education, Rouen, inv. no. 1979.09325.1.



The girls' drawings from the war years thus provide exemplary impressions of the effects on the civilian population in France. They depict scenes from the air raid shelter as well as food shortages, hunger and worries. These schoolworks on small pieces of paper are created with classic writing and school utensils (pencils, coloured pencils, gouache) and are comparable to authentic written documents in their uniqueness and aesthetic diversity, often oscillating between pictorial signs and writing. At the same time, they are of great painterly quality in the design of the colour areas and shading.

Kristell Gilbert (2021, p. 64) writes about the drawings in the Jouclard Collection:

“The girls' drawings are of immense importance for France's national memory culture as well as for European memory culture and are highly significant for the collective memory of the events of the civilian flight and life during the Second World War. They are authentic testimonies and legacies of a young generation at the time. The exceptional quality of their design reflects the great pedagogical commitment of art teacher Adrienne Jouclard. She was aware of the importance of her pupils' drawings, which she carefully preserved through the events of the war and handed over to the French state as cultural heritage.”

## Switzerland

Switzerland was not unaffected by the war, even if there was no immediate danger to life. From 1939, school and drawing lessons began to address the issues of mobilisation with a wide variety of tasks, as Anna Lehninger's research explains in detail: “The natural treatment of the topic in drawing lessons illustrates how deeply the experiences and perceptions of general mobilisation affected children's everyday lives.” (Lehninger, 2015, p. 64)

“The Defence of the Territory” is a collection of school drawings by the reform pedagogue and teacher Jakob Weidmann (1897-1975), which is kept at the International Institute for the Study of Drawing by Young People, Pestalozzianum Foundation in Zurich. In 1932, the committed educationalist founded the “International Institute for the Study of Drawing by Young People” there as a separate department and built up an important collection of children's and young people's drawings until 1969. Today, the archive contains around 70,000 drawings, most of which can be viewed digitally.<sup>12</sup>

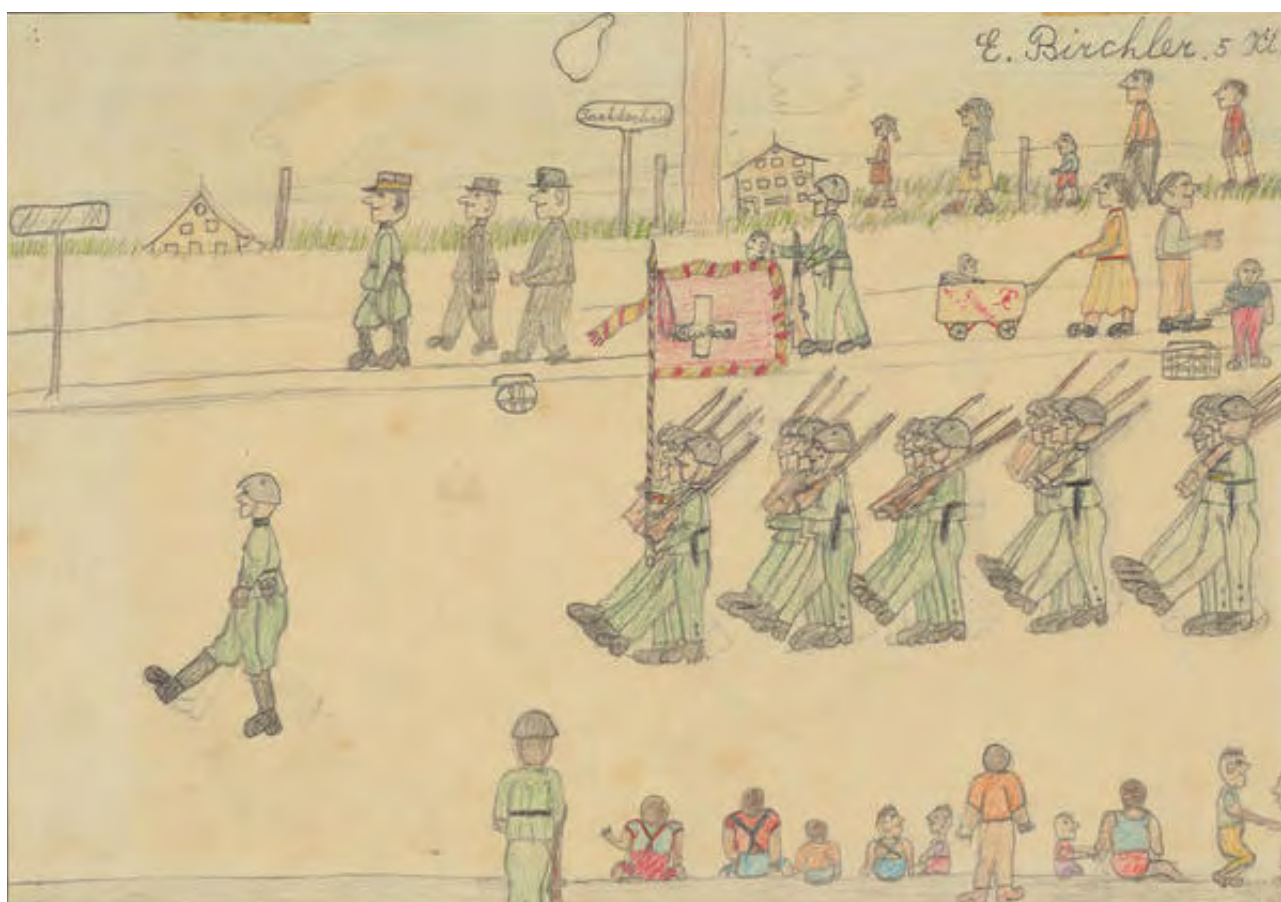
One of founder Weidmann's main aims was to document the development of drawing lessons. Like the pedagogue Wilhelm Daiber (see Chapter 3), Weidmann was a committed representative of the “New Drawing” reform movement, which aimed to promote imaginative drawing and the imagination of adolescents with specific themes (folk art, everyday scenes, depictions of nature and landscapes, fairy tales and imaginations).

Nevertheless, Weidmann confronted the current political situation and created series of motifs such as “Der Aufmarsch (Defillé)”, “Schweizer Soldaten”, “Bei der Übung” and “Im Gefecht”. The resulting drawings provide an insight into the perception of militarisation from the perspective of schoolchildren.

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<sup>12</sup> The fully digitised collection of the holdings: <https://sammlungen.pestalozzianum.ch/>

**Picture 30.** E. Birchler (9 years old, 3rd grade, teacher Jakob Weidmann):  
War, Pencil, coloured pencil, 14.0 × 21.1 cm



**Source:** Pestalozzianum Collection Zurich Sign. IIJ 013 090.

## Poland

It is not only from Terezín and Buchenwald that children and young people report in detail on atrocities in the medium of drawing; in Poland, too, there are large collections with depictions of corresponding events from the years of German occupation that the adolescents experienced. In 1946, the Polish Ministry of Education organised a nationwide drawing competition in which schoolchildren of various ages depicted their experiences of the horrors they had lived through during the Second World War and the German occupation from 1939 to 1945. Around 7,000 works were created, extraordinary historical documents that document the crimes of the German Wehrmacht, the Gestapo and the SA in detail. The works are now in the Polish National Archives Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw (Sadowska, 2019).

**Picture 31.** Barbara Wrotkowska:  
“Rewizja domu” (House search during the German occupation)



**Source:** Warsaw Archives (Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie).

**Picture 32.** Danuta Trąpczyńska (10-11 years old):  
“My memories of the prison cell in 1940, when I was 4 years old”



**Source:** Warsaw Archives (Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie).



**Picture 33.** Jadwiga Idzikowska (4th class):

Rounding up civilians and children in the Warsaw Uprising, 1944 (180,000 Poles lost their lives),  
Pencil, coloured pencil



**Source:** Warsaw Archives (Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie).

## Germany

In the culture of remembrance of the city of Saarbrücken, Germany, a small album designed by young girls as a thank you for food aid from Ireland and Switzerland, the “Thank You Book”, is of great importance (O’Herlihy, 2020). It is now kept in the city archives of Saarbrücken. In autumn 1946, at the suggestion of the school management, their teachers and the Red Cross, schoolgirls from Saarbrücken’s Cecilien School designed this “Thank You Book” with drawings, letters and poems for previously unknown representatives of Irish food aid.<sup>13</sup> The works show views of the destroyed homeland, imaginary maps and landscapes with scenes of food deliveries; everyday life in the ruins of the city or the distribution of urgently needed meals.

<sup>13</sup> O’Herlihy - Ströter-Bender - Kulturstadt Saarbrücken 2020 (with complete image catalogue of the Danke book); cf. virtual exhibition | Landeshauptstadt Saarbrücken (saarbruecken.de).



**Picture 34.** Anita Reinhart:  
Sheet no. 7 from the "Saarbrücken Thank You Book", 1946



Source: Saarbrücken city archive.

In view of the horrors and misery of the Second World War, the Swiss editor and writer Walter Robert Corti (1910-1990) drew up a plan to establish a children's village for war children and orphans (Corti 1944, pp. 50-52; Schmidlin 1996, pp.137-259). In 1946, the foundation stone for the first houses of the children's village was laid in Trogen in the canton of Appenzell with the help of numerous volunteers from European countries (Corti 1955).

In 1950, another of Corti's most important goals was fulfilled at the Pestalozzi Children's Village: the first issue of the Children's Village magazine "Freundschaft" (Amitié = Amicizia = Friendship = Filia = Ystävyys = Przyjaźń) was printed (Pestalozzi Children's Village, 1950). The publication project was intended to be an expression of international friendship between the children and young people of the international village community, a sign of solidarity, tolerance and hope for the peaceful coexistence of nations in the future. Corti explicitly referred to the guiding principle of UNESCO, which was founded in London on 16 November 1945 as a special organisation of the United Nations for the promotion of science, culture and education in association with 37 states: "Since wars arise in the minds of men, peace must also be anchored in the minds of men."



**Picture 35.** “Friendship. Friendship, Amitié, Amicizia, Friendship, Filia, Ystävyys, Przyjaźn”



**Source:** Early covers of the magazine Friendship.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The inscription has strengthened the visibility of children’s drawings collections across Europe and beyond, promoting further research, exhibitions, and cultural dialogue around children’s experiences in war.

The nomination project for the children’s drawings has had a profound international impact, fostering collaboration and research, nurturing new relationships, and generating novel perspectives and concepts. A comprehensive review of the extant literature reveals a marked strengthening and enrichment of international research in the domain of historical children’s and youth drawings, attributable to innovative research questions and exchanges, promoting also the Memory of the World Program and its objectives.

IRAND (International Research and Archives Network ‘Historical Child Art’) is a significant catalyst for the establishment of an international network of extensive archives containing collections of historical drawings by children and young people. Further information and contacts are welcome.

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