



Exhibit of the Month

BOX OF CARDS

Museologist Simona Gustaitytė

- Materials – wood, iron alloy;
- Manufacturing technique – grinding, glueing, carving, cutting;
- Kaunas, 1943

The wooden box was made in Kaunas Hard Labour Prison (currently, A. Mickevičius Str. 11); the Ninth Fort became its branch in 1924. The box was added to the museum collections in 1958. Today, it can be seen in Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum exposition, which presents Kaunas Hard Labour Prison (KHLP).

The author of the card box is an unknown person who served a sentence in the central KHLP. The prisoner was really skillful and decorated the box with carved and cut patterns and images. Its lid was decorated with a carved profile of a lady and fragments of plants, while the front of the box was decorated with the motifs of cards and plants with the inscription "Wilno" below. The exhibit was made of wooden tables; the cover was attached to the base with two metal hinges. The inside of the box was divided into two equal parts, with a rectangular table placed horizontally in the middle. The exhibit reminds us that there were talented and artistic souls among the prisoners and illustrates their ways of spending monotonous everyday life beyond the prison fence. Meanwhile, the year that the

box was made (1943) testifies to the continuity of the KHLP function during the period of Nazi German occupation (1941-1944). After the Nazi officials became the direct leaders of the institution, the prisoner composition of the central KHLP changed according to the policy pursued by the occupiers. In June, 1941, after Nazi Germany occupied Lithuania, most of the prisoners were Jews. After the latter were shot and the rest of the city's Jews were imprisoned in the ghetto, the prisoners consisted mainly of Lithuanians and Russians (political prisoners and criminals). The number of people who lost their freedom in the institution grew significantly in 1942, and this tendency remained until the end of the Nazi occupation, when the repressions against the participants of the anti-Nazi resistance and boycott of labour and military mobilisation began.



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