The Visual Dimension

Aspects of Jewish Art

Edited by
Clare Moore

THE VISUAL

The Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies is extremely grateful to the Waechter Foundation, Geneva, for the financial assistance that has made the publication of this volume possible.

DIMENSION

Aspects of Jewish Art

Published in Memory of
ISAIAH SHACHAR
(1935–1977)

edited by
CLARE MOORE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

The figure on the title page is from the Photographic Archives of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; © 1967, Sotheby's, Inc.

First published 1993 by Westview Press

Published 2019 by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The Visual dimension : aspects of Jewish art / edited by Clare Moore.
p. cm.
Papers presented at a conference held Oct. 23–25, 1977 in Oxford, England under the aegis of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies and the Tarbuth Foundation.
"Published in memory of Isaiah Shachar (1935–1977)."
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8133-1259-0
1. Art, Jewish—Congresses. I. Moore, Clare. II. Shachar, Isaiah.
N7415.V57 1993
704'.03924—dc20 92-13089
CIP

ISBN 13: 978-0-367-29709-1 (hbk)

Contents

Preface

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on Jewish art was held in St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, from October 23 to 25, 1977, under the aegis of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies and the Tarbuth Foundation, New York. This memorial volume commemorates the life and work of Isaiah Shachar through the medium of papers given at that conference, of which he was the instigator and organizer.

I had met Ishay Shachar only once or twice before the conference was mooted. He lived in London, but when I joined the staff of the Oxford Centre in March 1975 he was its Littman Fellow for 1975–76. From the time the first notices of the conference were dispatched in December 1976 he was not well enough to visit Oxford except for the most urgent reasons, but letters and telephone calls passed almost daily between us as he considered every detail of the approaching meeting. The sharp, critical mind not sparing of himself or others of which Professor Abramsky writes in his Appreciation was a marked part of the character that I saw, as was the lightness and charm and the reaching out to share ideas.

Dr. Shachar wrote an article that appeared in *The Times* of London on August 20, 1977 (reprinted in this volume), outlining the history of Jewish art and the background to the first conference. (A summary by Vera Emmanuel of various conference events and personalities appeared in *The Jewish Quarterly* 25 [93] [Autumn 1977], pp. 34–36, and a report by David Patterson appeared in *Jewish Affairs* [February 1978], pp. 11, 13–14, and in *Reconstructionist* [April 1978], pp. 27–28). Dr. Shachar was to have given a lecture on some aspect of eighteenth-century Jewish art, but his health at the time of the conference was too poor. We were indebted to Professor Dov Noy, director, Folklore Research Centre, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for filling this gap at the eleventh hour. Professor Noy's lecture on Jewish folk art as part of Jewish folk culture is not included in this volume, but the work has been published elsewhere. Likewise, Dr. Mendel Metzger's lecture "The Italian Haggadah, Its Rite and Iconography from the Thirteenth to Nineteenth Century" is not included: Although he and I worked prodigiously on the wealth of material he has gathered on this subject it proved impossible to reduce it to Dr. Metzger's satisfaction in order to fit the scope of our book. Instead, the lecture will be published as a monograph, with an acknowledgment to the conference organized by Dr. Shachar as its source and inspiration.

Interest in the coming conference was high in the early months of 1977. The number of participants was restricted in the interests of informality and ease of communication. Messages of goodwill came from those, like the late Rachel Wischnitzer in New York, who were unable to attend. Ishay Shachar's underlying purpose for the conference, to encourage the systematic photographic recording of Jewish art and artifacts worldwide, was quite clear. But without the impetus that he would have provided had he lived, the proposal coming from the conference (confirmed in a press

release) for the setting up of a central photographic archives of Jewish art has not been realized.

In the event, the conference was attended by about a hundred people concerned with the scholarship and collection of Jewish art. Although many years have passed since the conclusion of the conference, I hope the publication of these papers will recall for those who participated the high enthusiasm exhibited there. Professor Bernhard Blumenkranz's paper (p. 121*) especially recalls the missing presence amid this celebration of common interests and enthusiasms.

Today, our recollections of the quality and style of this most distinguished scholar—who would have surely, had he lived, produced more notable work—are still most potent. I have prepared this volume with all possible care, knowing whose memory it honors. The volume is dedicated fondly by his colleagues and friends to the life and work of the late Isaiah Shachar.

Clare Moore
Administrative Secretary, 1975–80
Oxford Centre for Postgraduate
Hebrew Studies

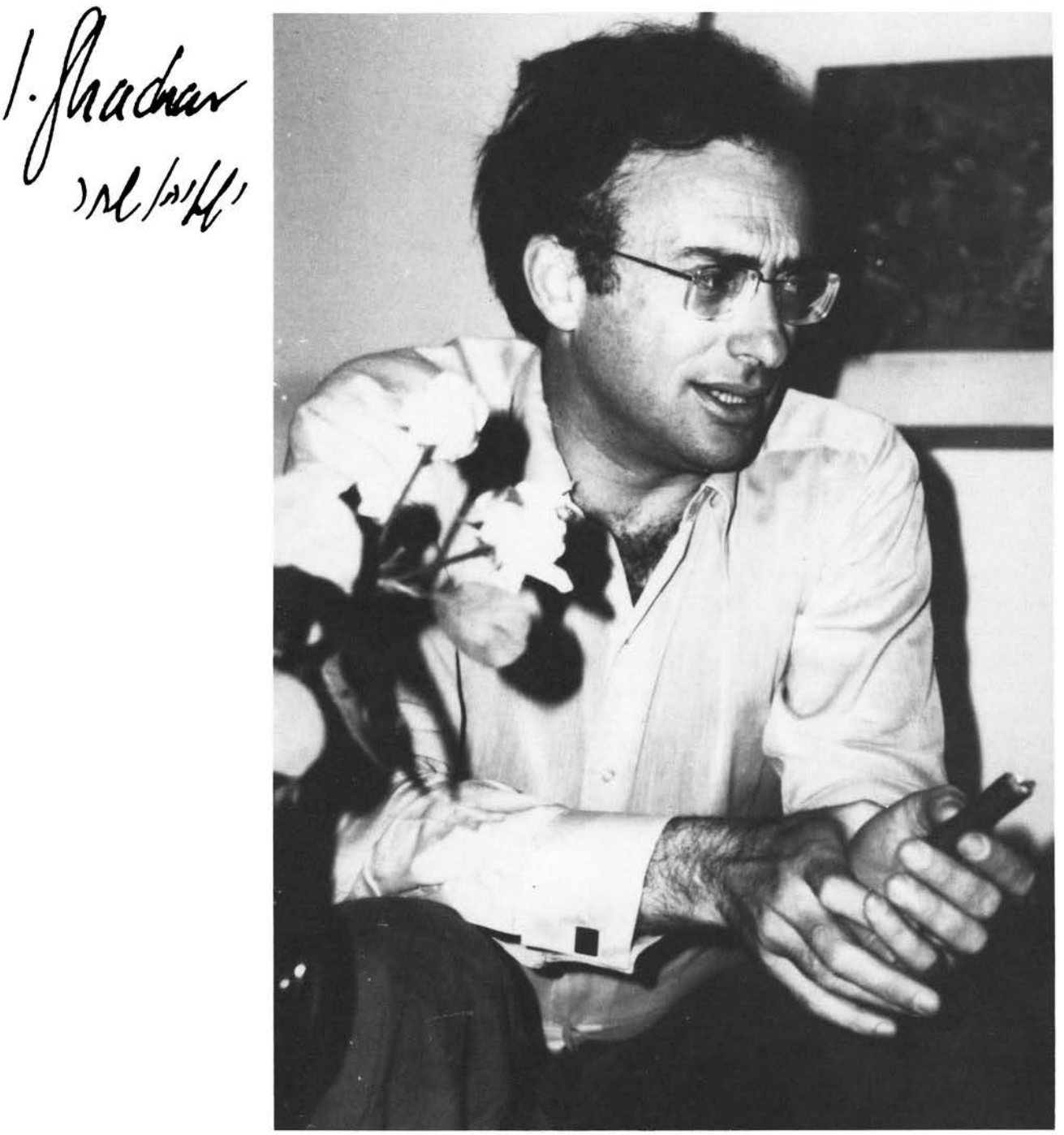
* Professor Blumenkranz's chapter remains as it was prepared for the conference, but the other authors have taken the opportunity to make some alterations and/or additions to their texts.

Acknowledgments

I AM BEHOLDEN to many colleagues and friends for their help both at the time of the conference and since—Dr. David Patterson, president of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies and Cowley Lecturer in Post-Biblical Hebrew at the University of Oxford from 1956 to 1989, for permitting me to take up Ishay Shachar's role as editor of the conference lectures; David Redstone, Dr. Richard White, Fellow in Hebrew and Aramaic Studies, and Dr. Dovid Katz, Wolf Corob Fellow in Yiddish Language and Literature at the Oxford Centre, for their help with Hebrew and Yiddish translation and transliteration; in particular, Dr. George Mandel, David Hyman Fellow in Modern Jewish Studies at the Oxford Centre, for his patient advice; and my office colleagues at the time of the conference, Mollie Tew, Beryl Hill, Jane Swan-Taylor, Mandy Baxter, and Toni Dutson, for their daily help and friendship. My especial thanks are due to Hannah Safran, archivist of the Oxford Centre from 1977 to 1986, and Giora Hon for their hospitality and friendship during my many trips to Oxford since 1980. For their loving interest my thanks are always due to my parents, James and Kathleen Moore.

The authors and I wish to thank the owners of the photographs that we have used; every care has been taken to acknowledge and attribute them correctly.

C. M.
London, England



CHIMEN ABRAMSKY

Yeshayahu Shachar: An Appreciation

DR. YESHAYAHU SHACHAR (known to his friends as Ishay) died on September 19, 1977, after a long illness. He was in the prime of his life at the age of 42. An outstanding and pioneering scholar in the history of Jewish art and folklore, in which field some of his contributions will remain standard studies for a long time, he combined this scholarship with a solid knowledge of the history of the Jews—particularly in eastern Europe and principally in the period of the early Ḥasidic movement—and with groundbreaking work in the study of anti-Semitism.

He was born Yeshayahu Stengel in Haifa on August 6, 1935. His father belonged to the leftist socialist movement Poalei Zion and was a militant follower of the Marxist teachings of Ber Borochov. From childhood Ishay rebelled against accepted views, whether of his parents or of society in general. He changed his name to Shachar, translating his mother's maiden name, Morgenstern, into Hebrew. He longed to study history and Judaism, and after spending his years of military service in Naḥal, the agricultural division of the Israeli army, and then in kibbutzim, he entered the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he studied European history under the late Jacob Talmon and Jewish history in eastern Europe under the late Israel Halperin. He admired Talmon's ideas, though he was also attracted to Halperin's method of analyzing and describing documents in meticulous detail. After graduation he worked for a year as research assistant to Talmon.

From 1958 on he was drawn to late medieval Jewish art—ceremonial, graphic, and manuscript illumination. He divided his time between the Bezalel (later The Israel) Museum, where he worked with Jewish ceremonial artifacts and amulets, and the Department of History of the Jewish People at the Hebrew University, where he worked under the direction of the late Professors H. H. Ben Sasson and Shmuel Ettinger. Under the latter he completed his master's thesis entitled "Criticism of the Jewish Community and Its Leadership in the Ḥasidic and Non-Ḥasidic Literature of Eighteenth Century Poland—A Comparative Study," in which he revealed himself to be an excellent researcher. In his thesis he proved "that compared with the extent and acuteness of non-Hassidic social criticism, the Hassidic literature has very little to say on these subjects and that little is moderate in tone."[1]

From Professor Halperin he learned the careful checking of documents and the veracity of texts, and from Ettinger he learned the history of Russia and Poland and particularly of the place of Jewish history within the wider context of general European history. Ettinger's profound knowledge of historiographic problems left an indelible mark on Shachar's intellectual development.

In 1963, with help from Ettinger, Shachar received a grant to go to London to work on his doctorate at the Warburg Institute of the University of London under

the supervision of the late Professor Otto Kurz and Sir Ernst Gombrich. There he became close friends with Michael Baxendall, Michael Podro, and Simon Pembroke, now well-known art historians. He chose for his doctoral thesis the stereotypic image of the Jews in European art and was awarded his degree in 1967.

While working on his doctorate Shachar became research assistant to Otto Kurz and helped him in recasting completely the skeleton sketch of Professor Leo Mayer's plan for a bibliography of Jewish art. This became subsequently the accepted standard text, *Bibliography of Jewish Art*.[2] Professor Kurz, who was not prone to flattery, paid this generous tribute to Shachar's help:

> Everybody using this bibliography will be grateful to Mr Isaiah Shachar who spent much time in compiling an index which is not the usual string of names and numbers but a veritable key to the contents of the BJA. Only somebody who has his profound knowledge of Jewish Art, and is so familiar with the literature on the subject, could have done it so efficiently.[3]

Shachar's first marriage broke down, though he maintained close contact with his young son, Yaïr. In 1968 he met the very young and vivacious Bérénice Waechter in Jerusalem. Their wedding in Geneva in March 1969 was a memorable occasion not only for Shachar but for his close friends too. Bérénice's knowledge of French and German was extremely useful to him. They traveled extensively in Europe, particularly in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, and his letters to me included beautiful impressions of the places they visited—he had a keen eye, not only for churches and art but for situations at frontiers and in towns and for vivid reportage about people he met. Together he and Bérénice visited a large number of old churches where they discovered many anti-Jewish iconographic motifs, which they photographed and which were later incorporated in his monograph on the Judensau.

In 1974 the Warburg Institute published his monograph *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History,* and in 1975 Shachar completed a long article entitled "The Emergence of the Modern Pictorial Stereotype of the Jew in England."[4] The first work shows not only his painstaking attention to detail but his extremely wide reading of German sources and excellent bibliographic descriptions. The book evoked great praise from German scholars but some reservations from Israeli scholars because of its rather extensive recourse to the work of Nazi-tainted scholars, whose conclusions Shachar seemed sometimes to accept too simplistically but which he included mainly to show the intellectual spirit of the times. Conversely, the 1975 article was highly praised. Both works are pioneering studies, the first in medieval folk beliefs and the other in the rise and spread of the caricature of the Jew with marked anti-Semitic characteristics. They remain pioneering studies of primary importance in popular anti-Semitism.

On his return to Jerusalem after his honeymoon–cum–study trip Shachar was promoted to senior lecturer in Jewish history at the Hebrew University; he was also by then curator of Judaica at The Israel Museum. He compiled the major catalog of the Feuchtwanger Collection of Jewish Art, whose acquisition for the museum by the Rapaport family of Geneva he instigated. It will remain a model of bibliographic and artistic description, minute attention to detail, and concise scholarly references. It is considered the best catalog of Judaica written and is a pioneering reference work,

describing as it does many items previously ignored by scholars. It remains *the* handbook used by dealers and collectors in the field of Judaica. After Shachar's death The Israel Museum published an English translation of the catalog, on which Shachar had been working intensively for two years, making changes and additions to the Hebrew version.

In 1972 he published a monograph on the engraved glass dishes used by Jewish burial societies in Bohemia-Moravia. And when an amateur archaeologist discovered the seal of Naḥmanides and presented it to The Israel Museum, Shachar published the first monograph on a medieval Hebrew seal (1972). Both booklets, like his earlier studies, broke new ground and are of major historical interest.

While in Israel, Shachar had differences with a number of his colleagues. Sometimes these were temperamental differences, and occasionally they bordered on ideological issues. He, therefore, decided to take leave for a couple of years, and in 1973 he and his wife moved to London. They did not consider themselves emigrants but rather as temporary residents.

In 1974, the year his daughter, Davina, was born, he was appointed visiting lecturer, and later visiting fellow, at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies. He planned a richly illustrated history of Jewish customs and ceremonies to appear in the series *Iconography of Religions,* but only fascicle 3 was published. Among his other projects, he dreamed of editing a critical text of the *Shivḥei ha-Besht* (In praise of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov), the first Ḥasidic hagiographic biography of the founder of the Ḥasidic movement. In this project he was greatly encouraged by Gershom Scholem. He had assembled all the known editions and was beginning to compare the different texts, but beyond this he did not advance.

While in London he became ill, and doctors took a long time to diagnose his illness as a rare lung disease, fibrosing alveolitis. In spite of his physical deterioration he remained optimistic. My wife and I saw a lot of him during his illness, and we admired his ability to continue to discuss historical problems brilliantly and to argue heatedly while at the same time remaining a *raconteur extraordinaire.* He kept on inquiring about every new publication on Jewish history, especially on matters relating to Jewish art, and continuously widened and extended his knowledge of illuminated Hebrew manuscripts. In the last few months of his life he was busy organizing the first international conference on Jewish art, of which this book is the record. Alas, he was too ill to attend the conference and did not succeed in completing his paper for it, although he published an article in *The Times* of London on August 20, 1977 (see p. xiv), outlining the purpose of the symposium and his hope that it would act as a catalyst for the foundation of a central archive of Jewish art.

Shachar was a man of many elements: strikingly tall and handsome, with immense personal charm and considerable powers of acting and mimicry (as he exhibited in the Israeli-Hebrew film *Le'an Ne'elam Daniel Wacks?* [Where did Daniel Wacks disappear to?], made by Avraham Heffner, in which Shachar played the male lead under a pseudonym). He had an acute sense of humor combined with a biting and mordant tongue that knew no respect for great or small, friend or foe. Because of his profound love for Israel he was also its most bitter critic; a born rebel against the conformity of society, he was also a conservative, especially in his private life.

An exceptional and near-fanatical bibliophile, Shachar amassed a very impressive

library, which included the bulk of the Hasidic library of the late Professor Joseph Weiss. His collection of books on Jewish art was one of the best in the world. He had an insatiable desire for knowledge and was not only a brilliant scholar but an eternal student, learning from everybody he met. His letters, beautifully written in a fine script and an elegant Hebrew, were full of humor, a search for knowledge, and acute observations on people and books.

The last eight years of his life were, in spite of his terrible illness, the happiest of his life. He found great joy and happiness in Bérénice, who devoted herself to helping him, and in his young daughter, Davina. For his family and intimate friends his death was a tremendous blow, and for Jewish scholarship it was a major loss.

The battle to save the Jewish art which has survived the ravages of persecution

The first international conference to be dedicated entirely to Jewish art will take place on August 23, 24 and 25 at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, under the aegis of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies.

Learned debates about the definition of "Jewish art"—or indeed the possibility of its existence in the light of the iconoclastic Second Commandment—have been increasing repetitively, since the late nineteenth century. Yet that was also the period during which the field was largely discovered and made known to a wide public.

A private collection of Jewish ceremonial art was shown at the 1878 international exhibition in Paris, and the exhibits (today part of the Musée Cluny) were shown again, together with rich material from British collections, in the impressive Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887 at the Royal Albert Hall.

America had its first exhibition of Jewish ceremonial art in 1892, when a private collection (subsequently lent to the United States National Museum in Washington and later to become the nucleus of the Jewish museum of New York) was exhibited in Chicago. In 1898 the famous *haggadah* of Sarajevo, a mediaeval illuminated Hebrew manuscript from Spain, was published by the Viennese art historian, Julius von Schlosser, working with the Hebrew scholars, David Heinrich Müller and David Kaufmann, and the existence of the hitherto unknown art of mediaeval Hebrew book illumination was revealed to the world.

Societies for the preservation and study of Jewish monuments and works of art were founded in Vienna (1897) and Frankfurt am Main (1900), and a steady flow of learned publications, reports and inventories followed.

By the First World War public collections of Jewish ceremonial art had been formed in Danzig (Gdansk), Jerusalem, Prague, Warsaw and elsewhere, and the number of Jewish museums has been increasing ever since. The private collecting of Judaica became a fashion and Jewish ceremonial art an established category in the antique markets as well as the auction houses.

Sharp dealers and inventive forgers were quick to capitalize on the new enthusiasm. It is perhaps not entirely accidental that the new interest in this aspect of the Jewish heritage coincided with the spread of secularization in Jewish society as well as with the emergence of the Jewish national movement (the first Zionist congress assembled in 1897). The craving for cultural roots, symbols and a national artistic tradition has clearly inspired discoveries and research in this new field.

The Second World War resulted in the disappearance of millions of Jewish ceremonial objects. Poland was robbed of most of its Jewish treasures. Throughout Germany precious metals were collected from Jewish homes and melted down. The train load of Jewish ceremonial silver which the Americans found at Wiesbaden towards the end of the war was only a fraction of what had actually been destroyed.

Select collections of synagogue silver, like the one formerly in the museum of Augsburg, disappeared either during the war or in the harsh months following its end. The sense of tragic loss, and the real shortage, endowed the remaining objects with a sentimental value which was soon reflected in the movement of prices as well as other activities in the market.

A curious outcome of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia was the setting up of the Jewish museum (today the State Jewish museum) of Prague in its present form. The Nazis, with a perverse didactic urge, decided to create out of Prague's old Jewish synagogues and cemetery an anthropological museum describing the history, religion, customs and ceremonies of the exterminated race. Many thousands of books, synagogue textiles, ceremonial objects and even household utensils

This article first appeared in *The Times* (London) of August 20, 1977.

Notes

1. See Shmuel Ettinger, "The Hassidic Movement—Reality and Ideals," in Social Life and Social Values of the Jewish People, *Journal of World History* XI (1–2) (1968), p. 255.
2. L. A. Mayer, *Bibliography of Jewish Art,* ed. O. Kurz (Jerusalem, 1967).
3. Otto Kurz's tribute in his preface to L. A. Mayer's *Bibliography of Jewish Art,* p. 15.
4. For publication data on Shachar's works, see the Curriculum Vitae on p. 169.

---

were systematically collected from all over the *Protektorat* and carefully catalogued by a team of Jewish experts.

Other large collections of Jewish ceremonial art, more varied than that of Prague, are owned by the Jewish museums of New York, Jerusalem, London and Los Angeles.

These comprise, with some notable exceptions, material dating mainly from the seventeenth to nineteenth century and include decorative artefacts for synagogue ritual throughout the Jewish year as well as the domestic and personal ceremonies of the individual Jew—textiles and embroidery, silver, brass, pewter, wood, glass and ceramics, illuminated marriage contracts, late illuminated manuscripts, bookbindings, jewelry, tombstones, amulets, and more.

Mediaeval illuminated manuscripts are stored in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the British Library, the Bodleian, and the National Library and The Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The 80 participants in the Oxford conference, familiar with this overwhelming evidence, will probably not be worried about the abstract definition of Jewish art. They will be concerned with more concrete problems. The lecturers will come from London, Vienna, Strasbourg, Jerusalem and Detroit, and will expound on six themes: The continuation of Ancient Jewish art in the Middle Ages; The Iconography of the Hebrew Psalter, thirteenth–fifteenth centuries; Illuminated and engraved Italian haggadot from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century; and Synagogue architecture between neoclassicism and historicism.

An art historian from Wayne State University will discuss the inevitable question, Is there a Jewish art? and a folklorist from Jerusalem will attempt to define Jewish folk art as part of Jewish folk culture. Each lecture will be followed by discussion and the entire proceedings of the conference will be published in a special volume.

The meeting together may be no less important than the content of the lectures. For it is the first conference to bring together all the categories of people who are professionally and personally involved in Jewish art: academic scholars and students, curators, collectors and owners of most distinguished private collections.

The present situation in most Jewish museums is a melancholy one. They are without adequate funds and badly understaffed. They are constantly called upon to perform communal and educational tasks which make them neglect their primary duties of research and preservation.

Trained museum staff are badly needed everywhere but, quite apart from the lack of funds, there is no academic or professional institution that offers a course in Jewish museology or Jewish art. The Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies could play a role here.

The Oxford conference might seem too topical in its readiness to launch yet more projects in a crowded field. Yet its task may be of an entirely different nature. Jewish ceremonial art and related Judaica are to a large extent in private hands and the recording of this material is therefore urgent. There is no need to underline the urgency of establishing a centre for the training of museum staff.

Both projects seem manageable, although they will depend on the good will and cooperation of individuals and the museums whose representatives will meet at the conference. If they decide to establish the central photographic archives for Jewish ceremonial art as well as the training centre for Judaica museology, they will have given an additional and worthy purpose to the Oxford Centre.

Isaiah Shachar
Visiting Fellow, Oxford Centre
for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies

1

JOSEPH GUTMANN

א

Is There a Jewish Art?

> We talk a good deal about Jewish Art. We ask one another if there is such a thing. We write about it. We interview one another upon it. We deplore that there isn't any; and regret that it is so poor or so unnational, or so uncharacteristic. We discuss it from every point of view. We inquire into its history, if any. We claim distinguished artists as Jews, and debate their identity, which others deny. We boast of the strides that Jewish Art is now making, while doubting its very existence.
>
> —**Rose Kohler,** *Art as Related to Judaism*

THE STATEMENT ROSE KOHLER made in 1922 still holds true today. Among Jewish disciplines the study of Jewish art is probably the newest and most misunderstood branch of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Jewish art has been called a "*contradictio in adjecto,*" a "strange combination of these two almost mutually exclusive words."[1] It has been likened to ghosts, which "don't exist, and so keep cropping up forever."[2] In a lighter vein, a friend of mine wrote me that "Jewish art is what remains after you have taken the goy [the non-Jew] out of it."[3]

The earliest mention of "Jewish art" appears to be in the short paragraph devoted to the subject in Johann J. Winckelmann's 1764 edition of *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*.[4] Somewhat later appeared *Histoire de l'art judaïque*—a book devoted primarily to biblical antiquities—written in 1858 by the Christian archeologist and numismatist Louis-Félicien de Saulcy (1807–80).[5] It was not until 1878, however, that Rabbi Dr. David Kaufmann wrote the first significant scholarly article on the topic, entitled "*Etwas über jüdischer Kunst.*"[6] Kaufmann (1852–99) had just visited the Universal Exposition held at the Trocadéro in Paris, where for the first time a collection of Jewish ceremonial art—that of Isaac Strauss—was on public display. He wrote that whoever visited the Paris exhibition under the impression that Jews lacked any talent for the visual arts would be in for a pleasant surprise.[7]

Kaufmann's acute observation must be seen against the eighteenth and nineteenth century background, where traditionalists, or orthodox Jews, were inclined to deny the actuality of art among Jews on the grounds of the taboo the Second Commandment had supposedly imposed on art and the elaboration of that taboo in the *Shulḥan Arukh*.[8] In the eighteenth century, for instance, Claus Gerhard Tychsen, a Christian Hebraist and Orientalist, was intrigued to discover in Hebrew manuscripts a number of marginal illustrations of masoretic notes in the shape of animal and human figures. When Tychsen turned to Jewish scholars of his time for more information about these

figural decorations, some of his Jewish respondents categorically denied their existence and chastised Tychsen for not knowing that Judaism does not tolerate the adornment of Hebrew manuscripts.[9]

Similarly, in 1860 a Jewish congregation in New Orleans was contemplating the erection of a statue in tribute to the American patriot and philanthropist Judah Touro. An itinerant Moldavian, Israel Joseph Benjamin—Benjamin II, as he styled himself—was visiting the city at that time. Incensed and indignant that a Jewish congregation should even consider such an action, he admonished the members, saying that he had visited "four continents and have learnt something at first hand about millions of my fellow Jews. Nowhere did I see or find the statue of a Jew: because this is clearly against the principles of our holy religion."[10] As the local congregation remained unmoved by his arguments, he tried to stir up religious leaders "to prevent a step" he considered "so decidedly in conflict with our holy religion."[11] The leading rabbis who were consulted, luminaries like Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt, Zacharias Frankel of Breslau, and Nathan Marcus Adler of London, expressed negative views on the subject. All concluded that it would be against "ancient Jewish custom and usage"[12] to erect a monument in honor of a man and that such an action would be, "according to Jewish law, prohibited."[13]

This traditional stance is not too difficult to grasp, as Jewish literature has few positive remarks about art and artists. Exodus 31:3–5 may represent Bezalel, the desert artist, as "endowed . . . with a divine spirit of skill, ability and knowledge in every craft," and the Spanish-Jewish grammarian and polemicist Profiat Duran (1360–1412) may assert that "the contemplation and study of pleasing forms, beautiful images and drawings broaden and stimulate the mind and strengthen its faculties"[14]—but these affirmations are mere islets in a sea of negations. The fact that extant rabbinic literature would never have led us to suspect the extravagant and widespread use of decoration and images found in Jewish catacombs and synagogues of the third to the sixth century C.E. even forced the late Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough to conclude that what we accepted as "normative rabbinic Judaism" had been, at most, something of a minor sect—the religion of an intellectual minority responsible for the compilation of the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmuds.[15]

Along with the negation of art among traditional Jews, Hegelian metaphysics played a crucial role in this issue. Hegel (1770–1831), one of the most influential German philosophers of his time, maintained that the "individual spirit [of every people], their *Volksgeist,* was a temporary form of the absolute Spirit [*Zeitgeist*] on its path through history."[16] "Thus the art of every period," asserted the Hegelian art historian Carl Schnaase in 1843, is "both the most complete and the most reliable expression of the national spirit in question, it is something like a hieroglyph . . . in which the secret essence of the nation declares itself. . . . "[17] Influenced by Hegelian thought that a unique *Volksgeist* (national spirit) dominated or controlled each nation or ethnic group, the Protestant theologian and Orientalist Immanuel Benzinger claimed that the "Hebrews had absolutely no gift for the pictorial arts."[18]

What is surprising is that so many Jewish scholars, beginning with the noted historian Heinrich Graetz, affirmed that the Jewish *Volksgeist* had denied the Jews any artistic talent. Graetz wrote in 1846, "Paganism sees its god, Judaism hears Him."[19] This essentially Hegelian idea has been repeated many times by Jewish and non-Jewish

scholars. "The Jew of antiquity," stated Martin Buber, "was more of an aural [*Ohrenmensch*] than a visual being [*Augenmensch*] and felt more in terms of time than space." Bernard Berenson believed that "the Jews like their Ishmaelite cousins the Arabs, and indeed perhaps like all pure Semites (if such there be), have displayed little talent for the visual, and almost none for the figurative arts. . . . To the Jews belonged the splendours and raptures of the word." Sigmund Freud, too, felt that "the prohibition against making an image of God . . . signified subordinating sense perception to an abstract idea; it was a triumph of spirituality over the senses."[20] In other words, the Jew lacked the dimension of aesthetics. He excelled in ethics, but "in everything else" he was insignificant, said Matthew Arnold—in everything else he belonged to a "petty . . . unamiable people, . . . without science, without art, without charm. . . ."[21]

In light of the traditional negation of Jewish artistic creativity and the Hegelian metaphysical claim that the Jewish *Volksgeist* lacked artistic sensitivity, what, we may ask, led to a discovery of Jewish art?

Virulent political and racial anti-Semitic movements and discriminatory legislation in the 1870s and 1880s made central European and especially German Jews aware that they had been deceived. The hopes they had nourished, the expectation that "legal emancipation would destroy the last vestiges of the discrimination and isolation that separated them from their Christian fellow citizens," proved illusory.[22] Persistent anti-Semitism not only sparked the founding of Jewish defense organizations in the 1890s but proved the Jewish realization that full acceptance within the German body politic was virtually unattainable.[23] Some German Jews, therefore, chose the road of assimilation; others turned within—to a greater Jewish self-consciousness; still others turned outward toward Zionism.

It was Jewish self-awareness that effected the realization of Jewish art. In 1895 the Gesellschaft für Sammlung und Conservierung von Kunst und Historischen Denkmälern des Judentums was established in Vienna. Prominent Jewish intellectuals and artists became members of the organization, people like Dr. Hermann Adler of London, Dr. Adolf Neubauer of Oxford, Dr. Albert Harkavy of St. Petersburg, and Dr. David Kaufmann of Budapest.[24] In 1897 David Kaufmann proudly wrote in the Gesellschaft's first annual report, "The fable of the enmity of the synagogue toward all the [visual] arts until the Middle Ages and even modern times should finally be dismissed in the light of the facts of life and the testimony of literature."[25] A year later, David H. Müller and Julius von Schlosser broke new ground in presenting the first art historical analysis of an important fourteenth-century illuminated Spanish haggadah, the so-called Sarajevo Haggadah.[26]

Around the same time, in 1897, Heinrich Frauberger (1845–1920) (*Fig. 1.1*), the German-Catholic director of the Industrial Arts and Crafts Museum in Düsseldorf (Das Düsseldorfer Kunstgewerbemuseum), and the banker Charles L. Hallgarten helped to establish in Frankfurt the Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler. Two years before, an architect had sought Frauberger's advice on appropriate Jewish symbols for a grille he was to design around the grave of the parents of a Jewish banker, but the museum director found he could be of little help because there were no photographic archives, studies, or resource people available on the subject.[27] This situation made Frauberger determined to help establish the society and to gather around him such outstanding Jewish scholars as Erich Toeplitz, Alfred

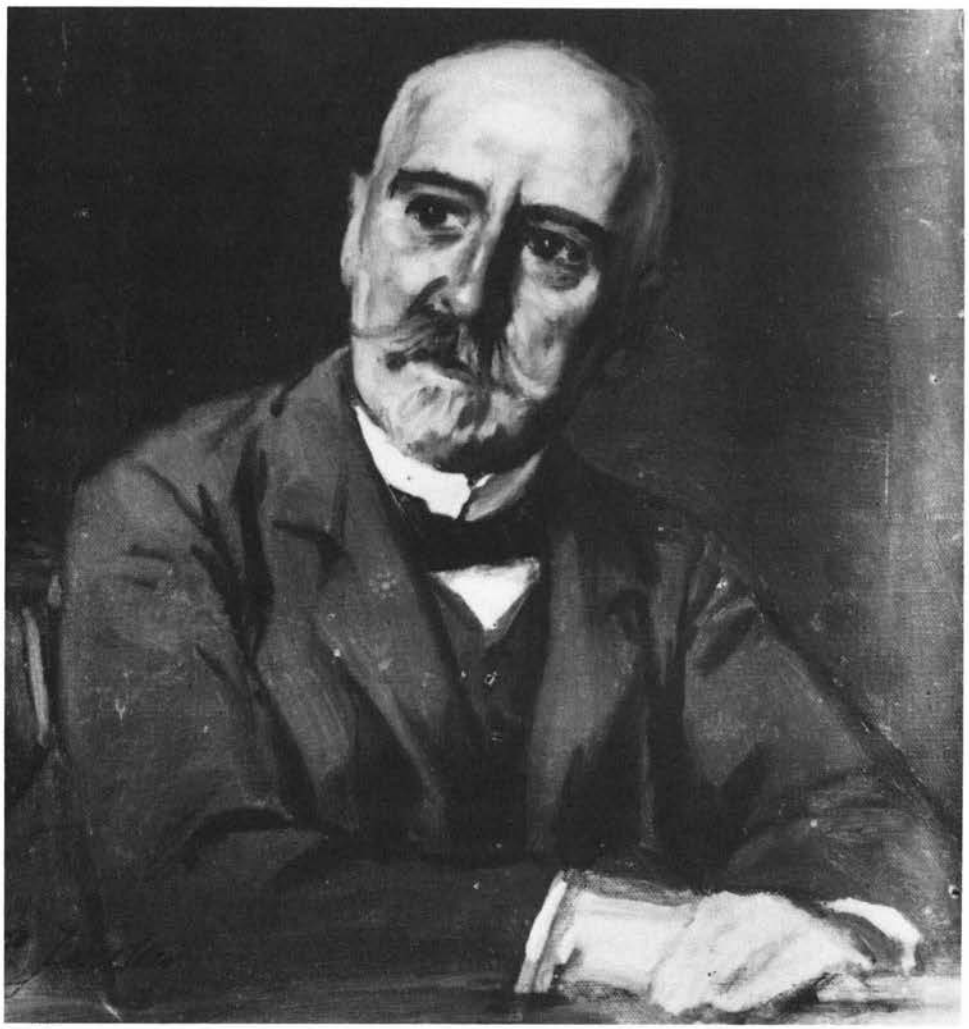


Fig. 1.1 *Portrait of Dr. Heinrich Frauberger (1845–1920) by Peter Janssen, 1904, oil (photo courtesy of Stadtmuseum, Düsseldorf, catalog no. B206, photo no. 4131).*

Grotte, and Rudolf Hallo. In 1900 the first volume of *Mittheilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler* appeared, and in 1902 the first issue of the *Notizblatt* of the society was published.

The program of the society was extremely ambitious:

1. To collect the finest surviving antique ceremonial objects used in the synagogue and home, and to gather photographs, prints and drawings of synagogues and Judaica.
2. To make the collection readily available for scholarly and artistic purposes.
3. To act as an agency for the preservation of Jewish artistic monuments.
4. To further artistic creativity in contemporary art and art objects used for Jewish purposes.[28]

Heinrich Frauberger and David Kaufmann can truly be called the founding fathers of the science of Jewish art. Their efforts were considerably aided not only by the prevailing anti-Semitic climate but also by the establishment of ethnographic mu-