

IMAGES

BRILL



PREVIEW

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Journal

of Jewish Art

&

Visual

Culture

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A JOURNAL OF JEWISH ART AND VISUAL CULTURE

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A JOURNAL OF JEWISH ART
AND VISUAL CULTURE

Editors

Steven Fine, Yeshiva University
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MISSION

The study of Jewish art and visual culture has been cultivated for over a century in European, American, and Israeli institutions. Beginning with the study of Jewish archaeological remains and Hebrew manuscripts, the study of Jewish art and visual culture has come to include all areas of Jewish artistic creativity as well as materials that more recently have come to be studied under the rubric of visual culture. The study of visuality itself has become a significant area of scholarship, in general and within Judaic studies. This field has burgeoned in the last fifteen years. Major universities—first in Israel and now in the United States have established graduate programs that integrate Jewish art and visual studies and Jewish museums dot the landscape in Israel, Europe, and North America. For the first time, the study of Jewish art and visual culture has entered the mainstream of the international Judaic studies community, with scholars across academic disciplines engaging the visual remains of Jewish history. Contemporary scholarship on Jewish art and visual culture has been welcomed into the broader conversation within the wider academy, and a lively interchange among scholars has ensued. The field has now achieved the breadth and maturity to sustain an international journal that represents the interests of this interdisciplinary community of scholars.

IMAGES: A Journal of Jewish Art and Visual Culture has been founded in response to this need. Published by Brill, this journal is intended to be a meeting place for scholars across disciplines and continents who engage Jewish art and visual culture from Greco-Roman antiquity to the present day. The broad and eclectic editorial board of *IMAGES* reflects the diversity of thought and approaches that the editors hope to bring together and cultivate.

Articles will concentrate on all geographical regions in which Jewish participation had an impact, and come from all relevant disciplines, ranging from architecture, painting, sculpture, treasury arts, book arts, graphics, textiles, photography, and film, and other areas of the visual experience. *IMAGES* will include articles on historiography and theory, as well as textual studies that reflect on the themes of the journal.

Each issue of *IMAGES* will include scholarly articles; selections of primary sources related to Jewish art, reviews of books and exhibitions; and notices of scholarly conferences or symposia on Jewish Art.

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JEWISH ART, Jewish art¹

Abstract

This paper offers a provisional answer to the question: Why has Jewish art never managed to become Jewish Art? The End of Art debate conditions the discussion; the institutions of Jewish art provide its substance.

1. End of Art

In the European Middle Ages, art was art; art became Art only when economic and social circumstances promoted the artist from craftsman to celebrity. By the eighteenth century, Art's elevated status was well entrenched and fully theorized by such luminaries as Sir Joshua Reynolds, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and, of course, Immanuel Kant.²

Since Art's establishment, its end has been repeatedly declared.³ Perhaps most famously, Hegel announced its supersession in the early nineteenth century. For idealists like Hegel, Art is neither about entertainment and distraction nor about education and memory. Art's promise is to reveal metaphysical Truth through its contemplation:

In works of art the nations have deposited their richest inner intuitions and ideas, and art is often the key, and in many nations the sole key, to understanding their philosophy and religion. Art shares this vocation with religion and philosophy, but in a special way, namely by displaying even the highest [reality] sensuously, bringing it thereby nearer to the senses, to feeling, and to nature's mode of appearance. What is thus displayed is the depth of a suprasensuous world which thought pierces and sets

up at first as a *beyond* in contrast with immediate consciousness and present feeling; it is the freedom of intellectual reflection which rescues itself from the *here* and now, called sensuous reality and finitude.⁴

Thus Art functioned to help [Western] culture emerge from primitivism by providing a glimpse of Truth in the Classical and further refining that Truth with the help of Christianity in an era Hegel identified as Romantic. But, subverted by its essential physical plasticity, Art is unable to unfold Truth further. Art is displaced by religion and philosophy, both of which, unencumbered by Art's materiality, ultimately do a better job of disclosing Truth.

Despite Hegel Art flourished in Modernity. Indeed, Modernity turned Hegel's condemnation of Art's materiality on its head. Painting's genius in investigating its own materiality, most brilliantly and consistently professed by Clement Greenberg, allowed Art to maintain its status as a significant vehicle for the enlightened individual's own self-construction. Of course, the narrative of Art thus fabricated was also readily read as a confirmation of the West's continuous social and cultural (e.g. economic and technological) progress. Nevertheless, Art was still assumed to provide the ground for an actively critical understanding of the world; Art still enabled a consciousness of history because, as a unique work, its history clung to it.⁵ Most importantly, Art still put up some resistance to being used as a mere advertisement for a vendible good or for a nostalgically construed (fascist) politics.⁶

¹ I am grateful to Kalman Bland for his careful reading of this text and to Margaret Olin, Steven Fine and Vivian Mann for their very useful comments on its initial draft.

² Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin: Libau, 1790), Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, [1797] 1997), Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (Dresden: Walther, 1764).

³ Even in antiquity. See the reference to Petronius below. Declarations of the end of art by artists—Futurists and Con-

structivists, for example—suggest the complexity of the subject whose surface is treated here.

⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 7–8.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

⁶ Art was not, of course, necessarily successful in its resistance. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur

In the 1980s, however, Art's death was again pronounced.⁷ Truth of any sort was no longer an issue either for Art or for society. This time Art's end was effected not by agents of the greater purity of abstraction—religion and philosophy—but rather by one of an even grosser materiality—popular culture. This is not the place to review the numerous individual voices crying in the wilderness of the post-Art moment, but two of the more recent iterations in the argument provide a sense of what they share.

One variation of the new “End of Art” lament is pseudo-Hegelian: the current abundance of objects identified as art issues from the loss of standards on the part of artists and of critics. Because beauty is no longer the object of artistic production, an art object no longer has the power to move the properly conditioned and initiated observer to a new plane of self-awareness. The aesthetic function of images has, it is claimed, been displaced by a commercial or political agenda. Art no longer stands above the worldly; it is polluted by its association with commerce or its proximity to the everyday.⁸ This perspective is essentially elitist, which for those who believe that elitism is not such a bad thing, makes it particularly attractive. Donald Kuspit articulates this grumpy form of the “End of Art” argument:

High art has become simply another sample of visual and material culture, losing its privileged position as a source of aesthetic experience. . . . Indeed, it is socially and politically incorrect just because it seems to be a unique, “higher” experience, not available for the asking by everyone—not for sale in the store of cultural entertainment and as such priceless, indeed, inherently unmarketable. It is not a common experience, and thus not democratic; popular and commercial art do not even pretend to offer it, although they

have sometimes been understood to offer a simulation of it, that is, a corrupt version of it. Aesthetic experience is in fact discarded as a rhetorical, idiosyncratic effect—an aspect of the illusion of personal autonomy.⁹

Such an argument seems to assume that with a little self-control on the part of its producers and consumers, Art could be revived. Art has come to an end because no one—apart from a few astute New York critics—is willing to stand up for it. Perhaps the State should intervene on Art's behalf.

A second form of the “End of Art” argument also acknowledges the proliferation of works identified as art, but embraces rather than rejects this new profusion. An eloquent articulator of this more cheerful notion of the end of Art is Arthur Danto. Danto describes the “End of Art” as the cessation of a metanarrative that depended on exclusion:

[T]he end of art [is] a somewhat dramatic way of declaring that the great master narratives which first defined traditional art, and then modernist art, have not only come to an end, but that contemporary art no longer allows itself to be represented by master narratives at all. Those master narratives inevitably excluded certain artistic traditions and practices as “outside the pale of history”—a phrase of Hegel's to which I more than once have recourse. It is one of the many things which characterize the contemporary moment of art—or what I term the “post-historical moment”—that there is no longer a pale of history.¹⁰

The story of Art, as Danto notes, was constructed through exclusion. Work that did not fit into the narrative—craft, decoration, non-Western production—was simply not Art. Without that exclusionary practice, Art ends, even as art in ever-greater abundance flourishes.

Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Guilbaut's book has a place in the End of Art arguments of the 1980s.

⁷ Among the principal contributors to the discussion were Hans Belting, *The End of Art History?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1984] 1987), Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, [1986] 1987), Arthur Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

⁸ The notion that money disables Art is clearly articulated already in the first century C.E. “I likewise inquired into the causes of the decadence of the present age, in which the most refined arts had perished, and among them painting, which had not left even the faintest trace of itself behind. ‘Greed of money,’ he replied, ‘has brought about these unaccount-

able changes. In the good old times, when virtue was her own reward, the fine arts flourished, and there was the keenest rivalry among men for fear that anything which could be of benefit to future generations should remain long undiscovered.” Petronius Arbiter, *Petronius/Satyricon*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 68.

⁹ Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10–11. Kuspit quotes voraciously from those who share his opinion. His footnotes provide access to earlier versions of this form of the “End of Art” debate.

¹⁰ Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, vol. 44, *A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1995* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xiii.

Both of these “End of Art” arguments acknowledge the profusion of objects claiming the status of art and recognize the impossibility of including them all in a coherent story of Art’s evolution. Globalization converted the status of art history’s grand narrative from historical record to ideology.¹¹ “End of Art” arguments of whatever ilk never, so far as I am aware, entailed the cessation of the production of artworks. Those of the turn of the millennium, however, acknowledge, whether morosely or joyfully, that art no longer blithely affirms the ascendancy of the Western tradition.¹²

2. Jewish art

Jewish art was certainly “beyond the pale” in the nineteenth century, as is illustrated by Heinrich Frauberger’s description of his initial involvement with Jewish artifacts:

The extraordinary technical and industrial growth of our period, combined with the unparalleled development of highways and traffic, have so profoundly changed customs, habits, and biases, and indeed the form and production of the objects in which they were embodied, that the remains of the past are reduced and ancient buildings, old implements, old folk dress . . . are, in the foreseeable future, doomed to disappearance. To be sure, there are various institutions that work to save and collect these things that have survived from the past. Nevertheless, vast areas remain left behind, as I believe a single example demonstrates.

Towards the end of 1895, I was asked for help in the design of an enclosure screen for a Jewish tomb. When I asked the architect to apply Jewish symbols in his design, he indicated that he didn’t know any. Reference to the rich collection of models in the Düsseldorf Kunstgewerbemuseum only revealed that it had a serious gap in this area. Designs for the Catholic and Protestant churches numbered in the thousands. The collection was rich as well in designs

for Islamic and Buddhist cults—despite the fact that there are no Muslims or Buddhists living on the Rhine. For the Jews living in the Rhineland and Westphalia, only five of the 30,000 pages of designs displayed old synagogues, and these were worthless for the case in question.¹³

Frauberger, the first Director of the Düsseldorf Kunstgewerbemuseums (Düsseldorf Arts and Crafts Museum), founded in 1882, was a liberal Catholic.¹⁴ His shock at not finding examples of Jewish ornament in the museum initiated his own research and collection of Jewish artifacts. His object was the salvaging of a culture under threat of extinction in industrializing modernity. He recounted the story of his experience as the introduction to the first academic journal devoted to Jewish Art, the *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler* (*Communications of the Society for the Research of Jewish Art Monuments*). The *Mitteilungen* appeared in 1900, the same year that Camille Pissarro painted his *Vue des Tuileries* and the Kodak Brownie camera was made commercially available. The narrative strikingly reveals the ethnographic motivation and practical objectives of Frauberger’s scholarly undertaking. Jewish Art was already art.

Conditions of Jewish culture changed dramatically from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. If the first serious journal devoted to Jewish monuments was published in German in Germany by a Roman Catholic, the next on-going academic serial devoted to Jewish visual culture that ran for any length of time was edited by Bezalel Narkiss, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and published in English initially in Chicago. The *Journal of Jewish Art* (later *Jewish Art*) was founded in 1974, the same year that Nixon was impeached and Judy Chicago began work on the *Dinner Party*. Despite its changed conditions, the new journal’s expressed purpose is uncannily similar to the old one:

¹¹ The power of this narrative is still great and lingers on as an assumption in much art historical discourse. Even in ‘End of Art’ arguments, the mechanisms of collapse are commonly internal to the art world. An exception is brilliantly provided by Fredric Jameson, “‘End of Art’ or ‘End of History’?” in *Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983–1998* (London: Verso, 1998). For another useful consideration of the changing location of art in relation to philosophy and politics, see, Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

¹² This notion is perhaps most clearly articulated by Hans

Belting, *Art History after Modernism*, trans. Caroline Saltzweid, Mitch Cohen, and Kenneth Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹³ Heinrich Frauberger, “Zweck und Ziel der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler zu Frankfurt a.M.,” *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler* 1 (1900): 3. I want to thank Professor Peter McIsaac for his corrections to my translation of this passage.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Barbara Til, Head of the Department of Sculpture and Applied Art of the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf for providing me information on Heinrich Frauberger.

The historical time limits of Jewish art are from the period of the Second Temple [536 BCE–70 CE] and up to the age of Jewish Emancipation [beginning in the late eighteenth century]. Jewish art of this period was determined by a closed society, with a special religious, cultural, legal and national nature. Throughout this period Jewish society and its art was constantly influenced by its general environment, though it managed to develop distinctive features in form, iconography, motifs, and style. Not all these traits have been studied yet, and one of the aims of this Journal is to encourage the study of special Jewish manners within the general trends. The Age of Emancipation and the following periods are also essentially different, characterized by breaking the boundaries of Jewish society and enabling the artist to free himself from religious and social ties. However, Jewish ritual art continued to flourish during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, within the Orthodox community. Moreover, some Jewish artists tried to create an art of a distinct Jewish character.¹⁵

Jewish art, as identified by Narkiss in the early 1970s, then, is a creditable subject of research in so far as it is an expression of *ethnos*, tribal or national culture. The objects most worthy of study are those in which that *ethnos* is best preserved—objects produced before Jewish communal identity was compromised by acculturation.¹⁶ Narkiss' point thus seems to absorb something of the oddly anachronistic nationalism of an argument about Jewish art made by the art historian Heinrich Strauss. Strauss assumed that ancient and medieval Jewish art was an expression of the proto-nationalism of

a minority that lost its distinctiveness with the assimilation of the Jews in modernity. The centrality of nationalism to Strauss' discussion of Jewish art is revealed in the last paragraph of his article, in which he suggests that the establishment of a Jewish state might yet yield Jewish Art:

There are among certain modern Israeli artists indications of the development of a local style, deriving from the experience of Israel, its landscape and people, its colors and atmosphere. The three millennia old struggle between a world style and 'Jewish art' has not yet come to an end.¹⁷

In terms of its limited time frame—from Antiquity through the eighteenth century—Narkiss' definition of Jewish art also resonates with an argument made by Stephen Kayser, the first Head Curator of the Jewish Museum in New York.¹⁸ Kayser held that "Jewish art is art applied to Judaism." Jewish art, to be worthy of the name, had to have a Jewish function. Indeed, for Kayser, "All the visual arts . . . should serve a special purpose. As long as the visual arts were an integrated part of an organic civilization they fulfilled this task. When the Western world lost its integrating force in the eighteenth century, the arts fell apart."¹⁹ Whether or not Narkiss' discussion had adopted its particular chronology from the earlier nationalist arguments or from functionalist ones, it seems that for the author Jewish art flourished only before art became Art.

The stated project of the *Journal of Jewish Art* raises questions: Why are Jewish monuments and objects, even when discussed in a journal devoted

¹⁵ Bezalel Narkiss, "Introduction," *Journal of Jewish Art* 1 (1974).

¹⁶ Richard I. Cohen rightly indicates the complex work that such ethnographic displays performed—the framing of the past is inevitably a response to a particular contemporary politics. "In the postemancipation era, different elements of Jewish society found contrasting ways to reappropriate the past without succumbing completely to its previous tenets. Collecting and exhibiting 'Jewish art' was part of that process. Jews of opposing ideologies from across Europe and abroad were engaged by this cultural domain and found it a viable expression of their association with the Jewish past. For various reasons—apologetics, nostalgia, patriotism, historical consciousness, and nationalism—they turned to display Jewish art and promote their particular self-image. They had come to appreciate the ability of art to convey traditions and evoke memories of the past, while asserting a particular view of the Jewish present and future." Richard I. Cohen, "Self-Image

Through Objects: Toward a Social History of Jewish Art Collecting and Jewish Museums," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 242.

¹⁷ Heinrich Strauss, "Jewish Art as a Minority Problem," *Journal of Jewish Sociology* 2 (1960): 169.

¹⁸ A Directorship of the Jewish Museum was declined by Richard Krautheimer, then by Meyer Schapiro, before the Head Curatorship was offered to Stephen Kayser. Julie Miller and Richard I. Cohen, "A Collision of Cultures: The Jewish Museum and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1904–1971," in *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 328–30.

¹⁹ Stephen S. Kayser, "Defining Jewish Art," in *Mordecai M. Kaplan: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1953), 457–58.

to Art, treated as art? Why have Jewish monuments and objects resisted the decontextualization or deracialization and aestheticization that Art (as Truth or the expression of a universal idea) implies? Or more critically, why have Jewish monuments and objects avoided the disclosure or surprise that Art (as embodiment of a particular history) promises? A survey of Jewish museums makes these questions more poignant and suggests an answer.

Jewish museums are indicative of the continued ambivalence about defining Jewish art as Art. In conventional museums, where Art produced by Jewish artists (Camille Pissarro, Barnett Newman, Judy Chicago, Cindy Sherman, Sol LeWitt) is on display with other works of art it is rarely contextualized as Jewish. In Jewish museums, where Jewish art is exclusively exhibited, artworks are almost inevitably represented as Judaica; they are treated as historical and cultural signifiers, not as aesthetic markers. The Israel Science and Technology website provides a list of seventy-nine Jewish museums (a further fifty-six Holocaust museums and monuments are listed separately).²⁰ The vast majority of institutions in this inventory title themselves ambiguously “Jewish Museum” (e.g. Adelaïd Jewish Museum, the Jewish Museum of Frankfurt, the Jewish Museum of Turkey, in Istanbul, The Jewish Museum, New York).²¹ Only three have “Art” in their titles (the Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme in Paris, the Ben Uri Gallery/The London Jewish Museum of Art, and The Sherwin

Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma).²² Of those three, only the Ben Uri recognizes Art as its mission. That Art is the work of Jewish artists. The Ben Uri was established in 1915 in the East End of London as an art gallery intended to “offer a platform for Jewish artists, home and émigré, to exhibit.” It was later converted into a museum offering “a permanent collection of works by Jewish artists” that “fulfills” its originating commitment to “enrich and ennoble the Jewish population.”²³ In contrast, the Paris museum describes its mission not in terms of Art, but in terms of culture: “Since its inception in 1988, the Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme has endeavored to add to the original collections, focusing on France, the history of the Jews, religious art, ethnography and works by Jewish artists.”²⁴ Similarly, the objective of the Tulsa museum “is to foster understanding between people of all cultures through an appreciation of their common history and values.” It works to fulfill this mission by “the creation of an image based upon the groupings into which Jewish objects naturally (sic!) fall. At the Miller, there are five such groups: Archeology, Ritual Objects, Life Cycle, Ethnology, History. The Miller Museum interprets these themes by means of objects from the permanent collection.” Indeed, the Miller seems a bit embarrassed by the “Art” in its title: “Despite our name, the Miller Museum defines itself as an educational rather than an arts organization, one that utilizes both art and history to preserve and

²⁰ Israel Hanukoglu, *Israel Science and Technology Homepage* (2006 [cited April 3 2006]); available from <http://www.science.co.il/Jewish-Museums.asp>; <http://www.science.co.il/Holocaust-Museums.asp>.

²¹ For a useful history of the remarkable struggle between art and Art in one Jewish museum, see, Miller and Cohen, “A Collision of Cultures: The Jewish Museum and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1904–1971.” Discussions in 1944 about the name of proposed museum are an important indication that the art/Art question is much more complex than is represented in this short essay. Richard Krautheimer, one of the great art historians of the last century, argued against including “Art” in the museum’s title: “It has been suggested from various sides to constitute the new institution as a Museum of Jewish Art. The difficulty of such a scheme lies in the limited amount of material available. It lies even more in the fact that the quality of Jewish art is rarely so outstanding in itself as to make it an object of purely aesthetic interest. Jewish life and thought has never been expressed as pre-

dominantly in the field of art as, for example, in the life and thought of the Italian Renaissance or of seventeenth century Holland; rarely has it created any great work in the field of art. Jewish art is to a large extent folk art and its position in the life of the Jewish community resembles very much the position of art in the life of colonial America: rarely outstanding and never on a pedestal, yet part of the community’s religious and daily life.” “Comments on the Memorandum, ‘General Plan for a Museum of Jewish Culture in New York’” (September 29, 1944), Archives of the Jewish Theological Seminary, quoted by Miller and Cohen, 332.

²² Some of the museums on the list are, of course, named for an artist, patron or institution (e.g. the Marc Chagall Museum of Vitebsk, Belarus, the Levi Strauss Museum of Bittenheim, Germany, the Yeshiva University Museum).

²³ Richard Aronowitz-Mercer, *Ben Uri Gallery: The London Jewish Museum of Art* (2006).

²⁴ *Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme* (2006); available from <http://www.mahj.org/defaultgb.htm>.

present Jewish Culture. We also serve as the Jewish Historical Society of Oklahoma.”²⁵

If a superficial survey of Jewish museums seems to confirm the notion that Jewish artifacts have not managed to gain the status of Art, the perusal of one volume devoted to Jewish museums—Grace Grossman’s recent, lavish, super-quarto publication entitled *Jewish Museums of the World*—nods toward the impediment.²⁶ In this volume, the Jewish museum is represented not as a site of the transcendent, the beautiful, the powerful vessel of a particularly creative history, but as the locus of the memory of death and loss. An image of Daniel Libeskind’s Berlin Holocaust Museum occupies its opening. Powerful photographs, printed in sympathetic sepia, document the destruction of Jewish monuments and objects throughout the book. A handsome late antique synagogue lintel is juxtaposed to Esther Lurie’s *Portrait of a Young Woman with Two Yellow Stars*; an exquisite seventeenth century Hanukkah lamp is faced by a violent seventeenth century print, *Plundering of the Frankfurt Ghetto on August 22, 1614*. Even the two paintings by Marc Chagall that are reproduced—*The Gates of the Cemetery* and *Loneliness*—describe loss. The author articulates the book’s mission in her preface:

Jewish museums today are a vital aspect in the quest for preservation. Some are now places of memory where Jewish communities once thrived and are no more. Some interpret history and teach its lore and lessons far removed from the origins of the art and artifacts. Some are the cornerstones helping to keep a community vibrant. Ultimately, all share the same mission—to look to the past and learn from it to help shape the future.

The conservation and exhibition of Jewish works was, in the nineteenth century, and still is in the twenty-first, a discriminating means of connecting increasingly assimilated Jews to a traditional religious identity.²⁷ The Jewish museum, at least as witnessed in Grossman’s splendid volume, is devoted

exclusively to the didactic memory of Judaism framed by the Holocaust. Those museums, as represented in Grossman’s book, offer art (objects in the service of education and memory), not Art (a work engaging the viewer in the revelation of its own objecthood and particular history).

One final “End of Art” expression is relevant here—Theodor Adorno’s famous comment:

Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final state of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation.²⁸

Adorno’s argument, like other “End of Art” observations, is, I think, not about artistic production, which continues unabated. Rather it suggests the impossibility that art serves as cultural-critical means of being self- and socially-inquisitional. As Adorno comments in another essay, “Once tradition is no longer animated by a comprehensive, substantial force but has to be conjured up by means of citations because ‘It’s important to have tradition’, then whatever happens to be left of it is dissolved into a means to an end.”²⁹ When art is made to serve as a means to another end—in this instance, remembering the Holocaust—art is emptied of other meanings, meanings which might allow further understandings of ourselves and our history.³⁰ A work denied its capacity to surprise, to mystify, to enchant, to shock is not an art object, but a cultural roadmap.

3. Concordance

The review of the “End of Art” debate presents the conditions which have modeled the modern

²⁵ Brenda Michael-Haggard, *The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art* (2006 [cited April 3 2006]); available from <http://www.jewishmuseum.net/Museum/introduction.htm>.

²⁶ Grace Cohen Grossman, *Jewish Museums of the World* (Southport, CT: Hugh Lauter Levin, 2003).

²⁷ Pre-World War II scholarship on Jewish objects was published in the newsletters of an increasing number of institutions collecting and displaying Jewish artifacts as part of understanding Jewish culture. This research was similarly

ethnographic in character. There also appeared less scientific publications which offered Jewish arts and literature to a bourgeois audience, as, for example, M. Wischnitzer, Baruch Krupnik, and Rahel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, *Rimon: Zeitschrift für Kunst und Literatur* 1–6 (1922–1926).

²⁸ Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press, [1967] 1983), 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁰ Much, of course, has been written concerning the economic

reception of Jewish art and contributes to an understanding of what continues to frustrate Jewish art's urge to become Art.³¹ Jewish art was regarded as a craft through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When Jewish visual production seemed to be on the verge of advancing its status in the twentieth century, Art became art. More

unexpectedly, an assessment of Jewish art's impasse also adumbrates another aspect of Art's end: any artwork that is constrained to a single mission, that only has a moral, and that is not allowed to engage its audience in its own stories, might well lose its urge to become Art.³²

and ideological abuse of the Holocaust, for example, Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2003).

³¹ For the added complexity of the *modern* Jewish prejudice against the visual, see, Kalman P. Bland, *The Artless Jew:*

Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³² For the ascription of agency to art, see, W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? Essays on the Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

VIVIAN B. MANN WITH DANIEL D. CHAZIN

PRINTING, PATRONAGE, AND PRAYER:
ART HISTORICAL ISSUES IN THREE
RESPONSA—SELECTION

Abstract

“Printing, Patronage, and Prayer: Art Historical Issues in Three Responsa” presents texts from 16th-century Italy, 17th-century Bohemia, and 20th-century Russia that explore the following issues: the impact of the new technology of printing on Jewish ceremonial art and limits to the dedication of art in the synagogue.

The responsa literature—questions posed to rabbinic decisors and their answers—have proved to be rich sources of both Jewish history and art history.³³ One category of responsum considers the use of newly-created art forms in a Jewish context. Samuel Aboab (1610–1694), who served as rabbi in Venice, was asked if porcelain dishes could be used for both milk and meat, as glass was.³⁴ The question arose during a period when porcelains were imported from the East, but the process by which they were made remained a mystery in the West. In the eighteenth century, the manufacture of printed textiles with biblical subjects led to the question posed to Ezekiel Katzenellenbogen (1670–1749), rabbi of the unified community of Hamburg, Altona and Wandsbeck, on the suitability of their use as the material for a Torah curtain. The first text below is similar. It was written in Mantua less than ninety years after the printing of the first Hebrew books in that city, and concerns the use of a printed scroll to fulfill

one’s obligation to read sacred texts from scrolls that were traditionally handwritten.

Another art historical theme is the rights of a patron who donates synagogue furnishings. Various examples are discussed by Menachem Mendel Krochmal (d. 1661), rabbi of Nikolsburg, Moravia, in the second responsum presented here. Discussions of patronage often involve considerations of aesthetics and communal standards of beauty, of the hierarchy of sanctity inherent in synagogue furnishings, and the value ascribed to media.³⁵ Other issues concerning art—for example, the appropriateness of figurative decoration in a space used for prayer—reappear through the centuries, from the responsa of Maimonides (1138–1204) to those of Samuel Archivolti (1515–1611) and other pre-modern rabbis, and even in twentieth-century responsa such as the third text, written by Abraham Walkin.³⁶

In his answer to the question whether figurative paintings are allowed in a place of prayer, Walkin, as is customary in the responsa literature, cites opinions of other rabbis, including an opinion of Mordechai ben Hillel haKohen (1240–1298) that colored drawings were similar in nature to the embroideries on a Torah ark curtain.³⁷ Previously, in the literature on Jewish ceremonial art, the existence of decorated ark curtains could only be

³³ On the responsa as an historical source, see Haym Soloveitchik, *The Use of Responsa as Historical Source. A Methodological Introduction* (Jerusalem, Hebrew University and Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1990) (Hebrew). Two of the early historical works based on responsa are Louis Rabinowitz, *The Social Lives of the Jews of Northern France as Reflected in the Rabbinic Literature of the Period* (London, 1938); and H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim: Their Relations, Differences and Problems as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa* (London, 1958). For the responsa as a source of art history, see Vivian B. Mann, *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, 2000).

³⁴ Loc. cit., pp. 58–60.

³⁵ On the role of aesthetics and communal standards of beauty, see Mann, *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*, pp. 13–16, 80–82, 114–16, 123–26.

³⁶ The Hebrew text of Samuel Archivolti’s discussion of mural paintings in the synagogue was published by David Kaufmann, “Art in the Synagogue,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 9 (1897), pp. 254–69. For an English translation, see Mann, *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*, pp. 83–86. For the responsum of Maimonides, see Vivian B. Mann, “The Place of Art in Liturgical Spaces,” *Liturgy in the Life of the Synagogue*, ed. Ruth Langer and Steven Fine (Winona Lake, IN, 2005), pp. 109–11.

³⁷ Mordechai ben Hillel was a leading rabbinical authority

affirmed from the time of Joseph Caro, who died in 1575.³⁸ The few medieval depictions of ark curtains in Hebrew manuscripts show them as consisting of unembellished textiles. The comment of the Mordekhai underscores the importance of both literary and visual evidence in reconstructing the history of lost forms of art. . . .

Aaron Walkin (1863–1942):

*Responsa on Figural Images in a Place of Prayer*³⁹

Aaron Walkin was a student in the yeshivot of Volozhin and Kovno and later the rabbi in Pinsk. In addition to his responsa, Walkin wrote a commentary on the Code of Jewish Law and novellae to the Babylonian Talmud. He died during the Holocaust in 1942. The question discussed in this responsum, the suitability of images in a place of prayer has a long history in halakhic literature.⁴⁰

Question: Thursday, 7 Tammuz 5690 [=1930], to Kalman Held, rabbi of Shatz (Rumania): You have asked concerning the transgression that took place, whereby they drew⁴¹ several human figures in the study hall (*beit ha-midrash*). They are complete images of the entire body, including hands and feet, and some of them are kneeling. Among the twenty figures on the western wall are images of two women who are much shorter than the men, reaching only to their faces of the others.⁴²

Answer: I have nothing to add, as the basic law regarding human images is stated clearly in the Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 24) and in a section of [Joseph Caro's] Code of Jewish Law: *Yoreh De'ah* 141. It is forbidden to make them. Even if the image were made by someone else, it is forbidden to retain it in one's possession. It was even forbidden by the rabbis to request a non-Jew to make such an image. . . . Maimonides and Caro were of the opinion that the

prohibition is applicable only to a projecting image, but not to a sunken relief or a drawing with colors. On the other hand, [Jacob ben Asher, author of the] *Tur* cites the view of Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi [and others] that the prohibition applies even to a sunken relief. Clearly, we should take the stricter position in this dispute and rule in accordance with Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi [and others] that even a sunken relief is prohibited. . . .

With regard to a colored drawing, nearly all the decisors . . . take the view that a drawing with colored pigments is the equivalent of a sunken relief. . . . and would prohibit the drawing of a person, even if made with colored pigments. . . . A basis for allowing it can be found in . . . the Mordekhai . . . which states that since a drawing with colored pigments has no substance, it may be made, even by a Jew. . . . [He takes the view such a drawing] cannot be considered either projecting or sunken; it is not considered a "creation" at all. . . . It is only a visual rendering. Even the forms embroidered on the curtain of the holy Ark are not considered "projecting," despite the fact that the embroidery appears to project from the fabric [ground], and the threads do have substance. *A fortiori*, a drawing with colored pigments has no substance, but only a visual appearance.

In truth, though, this lenient view should not be relied upon, as many great authorities disagree with it. . . . Since making the image of a person is prohibited by the Torah, we should adopt the stricter position that even the appearance [of an image] is considered to have substance and should be viewed as a projecting image. . . .

The author of the book *Ya'arot Devash* [Jonathan Eyebeschutz, d. 1764] strongly admonishes one not to keep a drawing of an image in one's home. *A fortiori*, [such an image should not be kept] in a synagogue, which is a regular place of prayer. . . . Similarly, all of the later halakhic authorities rule that it is only proper to remove all images from our study halls. On the verse: "Neither shall you set up

in the second half of the thirteenth century. He was related to many esteemed scholars such as Asher ben Yehiel who is cited below (n. 14). His major work, the *Sefer Mordekhai*, considers issues discussed in the Talmud, arranged in the order of the law code of Isaac Alfasi (1013–1103). The *Mordekhai* (as it is generally called) includes otherwise unknown writings of rabbinic sages. Since it does not include the responsa of Meir of Rothenburg written after his imprisonment in 1286, the *Mordekhai* must have been completed before that date. Mordekhai ben Hillel was killed during a massacre in Nuremberg.

³⁸ Joseph Caro, *Responsa Avkat Rokhel*, no. 66. For a transla-

tion, see Mann, *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*, pp. 51–53, esp. 51.

³⁹ Aaron Walkin, *Responsa Zekan Aharon* (Pinsk-Karlin, 1932), no. 50.

⁴⁰ See above, p. 16.

⁴¹ The text could mean that the worshippers commissioned the painting, rather than creating themselves. The ambiguity in the use of the word "made or drew" is common in medieval Latin and Hebrew texts on art. See Mann, *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*, pp. 72–74.

⁴² The Hebrew description of the painting is not entirely clear, nor has the subject been identified.

a pillar, that the Lord thy God despises.” (Deut. 16:22), Rashi⁴³ commented, “Even if the monument was looked on with favor in the days of Abraham, nevertheless, it is now despised, because other nations have made it part of their worship.” Therefore, even

if this practice itself was once viewed favorably, [it should now be prohibited because] it has been adopted by the non-Jews and the Reformed, whose sole intent is to imitate the gentiles and the sinners of Israel. . . . [*end of selection*]

⁴³ Rashi is the acronym for Solomon ben Isaac (1040–1105) who wrote authoritative commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud.

R.B. KITAJ

THE HOSTS, THE OTHER GUESTS, AND
THE STRAIGHT BLACK LINES:
FROM *THE SECOND DIASPORIST MANIFESTO*
SELECTIONS EDITED BY MARGARET OLIN

Abstract

Selections from R.B. Kitaj's forthcoming Second Diasporist Manifesto (Yale University Press) are provided with a brief contextual introduction emphasizing his conception of the role for Jews and Jewish art within the diverse world of the Diaspora.

7. *Do for Jews what Morandi did for Jars, or what Mondrian did for straight black lines.*
10. *Assimilate and Don't in painting!* Admix lessons from Host Art with stubborn Jewish Questions. Beware correct assimilation (with Host modes) in my art. That's too dull for me, and historically dangerous, and murderous for those Jews who want to merge with mainstream, conventional host cultures in symbiosis.
53. "Certainly there are great differences with the Aryan spirit."—Freud to Ferenczi upon the break-up with Jung. *What* differences for art spirit? This is a crucial and wining question for painting, with Jewish answers, I hope and intend.
105. What lies beyond Mondrian and Duchamp for Jews, now (2005), who would begin to paint Jewish pictures where those guys (plus Matisse and Picasso) *left off?* (See 23). Paint as a Jew from where Matisse did his last Blue Nude cutout and died—(I was a very young painter then.) I'm doing it! Will tell more down this Diasporist line, if I don't burn out. First of all, I'm trying to wake up a Blue Nude (my own Jewish one) in a Freudian painting called *TRANSFERENCE* (see 150).
112. Draw as anyone alive or better. But I think that Hockney is the best natural draughtsman alive (see 8). We've been watching each other draw each other for 46 years, Diasporist and his Host.
117. There are, of course, very many *NON-JEWISH PROPHEETS* of my new religion. These are my *DIASPORA HOST PROPHEETS*
- from Giotto to Rembrandt to Nietzsche to Cézanne to Degas to Matisse to my best man under the chuppa, Hockney, to Creeley and Ashberry, my two great poet-pals, etc. No Diaspora would be what it is without its HOST KULCHUR. My Hosts are hundreds, great and small . . . Bless them . . .
133. Diasporists prowl big sensual cities, haunting their books, art and hosts . . .
141. *Bataille!*—Strangely inexcusable in this endless Manifesto, as a truly uncanny *Kulchur-Diaspora Host*. Young Jewish wife (Sylvia Maklès); Their Daughter; Jewish mentor (the absurdist philosopher Léon Chestov); Jewish close pal (the Trotskyist Souvaine-Lifshitz); Bataille hid Benjamin's Arcades papers for him at the Bibliotheque Nationale when Benjamin fled Paris on his fatal run in 1940; etc, etc. . . . Bataille as Brothelist; *Bataille's Fu Chou Li* (look up this ultimate (1905) precursor of Auschwitz yourself if you dare!) What is one to make of fearful Bataille, beyond Surrealism, beyond the Jewish Question and its transgressions, *for painting?* Try something towards his death-limit, for a Jewish Art.
150. *Matisse!* I resolve, now, in old age, to try to bring your sublime nu bleu cutouts to life, so to speak, a sort of Jewish-Painting-Drawing-LIFE (see 150). Not that your gorgeous flat blues are unlife! I began looking at them around 1950 when I was a young painter in NY, and you were alive, "drawing" them with scissors, on the Riviera. In 1951, I was there too but did not dare to seek you out. Now, 55 years later, when I look a little like you, I dare convert your Blues to JUDEN-TUM! Jewish Blues.
158. While I'm trying to bring Matisse's NUS BLEUS to "life," so to speak (see 150), consider: allying the Black and Jewish Diasporas

- in a painting inspired by M's JAZZ and BLUE cutouts (see 157). . . .
161. *SHOAH*. Like a fly buzzing by my ear, the paintings which seem to *tell* the Camps to me. . . . No, *the Camp years in time* are the most radical late blackline paintings of. . . Mondrian!—Honorary Diasporist. blackmilkstrips.
164. *Digression*: Bataille seems to have posited a death-in-life instinct (see 141). Whether that would have had Freud's blessing, I have no idea, but Bataille disturbs my sleep of anxious dreams. He could stay put in Vichy France of course.
180. *MELVILLE HERSKOVITS*. Study for painting: "America's leading authority on black diaspora and on Africa."—N. Glazer (see 181). Blackness by Black painters; ____? ____ by Jewish painters. Black milk at daybreak?
182. *ERNST MAYR* just died at 100 (see 165). He would shoot birds, study them, and eat them. This *feels* like my own radical Diasporist game: I "shoot" a precursor, say, Matisse or Warburg or Scholem or Mondrian—shoot a painting or text or *sense* of these beloved guys—*with my eyes*—study them, devour them!
190. *It's uncanny* the way Matisse/Frankl, contemporaries, strengthen my odd resolve in picture making. Something to do with a flashpoint for art where *Matisse at Vence* (a Jewish Passion after all) happens peaceably during Frankl's, and Lévi's, Auschwitz years (a Jewish Passion after all). Diasporist Agony and Riviera Genius deliver (clash) for me in L.A., 2005 (see 191).
191. And Mondrian too, painting those years in N.Y., then dying, as the Jews are almost free. I find myself *consulting* in his blackline idealism and his *Victory Boogie Woogie*, This Rashi of Judeo-Christian "Theosophy," one of the Honorary Jews of my own dying years (see 161). What a good idea those blacklines were! And he took them *with* him to N.Y. as he fled bloody Europe.
202. Auerbach just phoned me from London on Academy Award day to say he's read the part of this Manifesto printed in the catalog of my current (2005) N.Y. show. It was crazy as Blake, he said, and I agreed. Whatever crazy means. What *does* crazy mean, to Foucault or Nietzsche or to Bataille or to Van Gogh? Surely Mondrian was crazy. Neo-Plasticism?? Blavatsky? (see 209). It's (easy?) for a Jew to drive his painting crazy, believe you me.
205. Attention! Begin to read dissident surrealist Benjamin FONDANE, the absurdist philosopher murdered in Auschwitz. Fondane was a Diasporist link with Artaud, Bataille, Camus and the ABSURD, which I try to predicate some pictures upon (see 206).
231. Prophetic ethical concern for social justice in a modern interiority of . . . painting, beyond Mondrian; picture ethics. . . . [*end of selection*]

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