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Artists under the Care of their 'Patrons' in the Warsaw and Lodz Ghettos. The Case of Maximilian Eljowicz and Yitskhok Brauner

Abstract

The outbreak of World War II was a tragic caesura in the history of the European diaspora. The German occupant's ever stricter anti-Jewish policy left its mark on every aspect of life, and also determined the inhibition and, in the longer term, the annihilation of Jewish culture, literature and art. In Warsaw and Lodz, both of which were important centres of art during the interwar period, Jewish artists were a significant group shaping local artistic environments. After 1939, some of them left the city, whilst others died there or were locked up in the created ghettos. In the reality of an isolated district, art served different purposes, from documentation to propaganda. The possibility of artistic creation not only offered a chance to break away from reality, but also to survive another day. The head of the Warsaw Ghetto, Adam Czerniakow, similarly to Chaim Rumkowski in Lodz, tried to protect 'their' artists by taking care of the conditions in which they worked, paying them salaries for performing their commissioned tasks and giving them additional food rations. This article is an attempt to present the situation of artists living in the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz. The analysis of preserved archival material enables not only the reconstruction of the fate of certain people, but also allows to indicate similarities and differences in the functioning of the 'artistic patronage' in the closed district.

Keywords: Jewish Art, Warsaw Ghetto, Jewish Culture, Litzmannstadt Ghetto, Holocaust, Brauner, Eljowicz, Jewish Painters

Introduction

During the interwar period, Poland was inhabited by about 3.5 million Jews, who made up approximately 10% of the total population. Members of this largest European diaspora settled down mainly in larger cities, where economic, political and cultural life was concentrated: Warsaw, Lodz, Vilnius (Wilno), Kraków, Białystok, Lviv. However, taking into account demographic potential and development prospects, Warsaw and Lodz can be considered the main centres of Jewish life in Poland. At the end of the 1930s, the Warsaw community consisted of over 368,000 people. There were numerous Jewish organisations. Literary, musical, theatrical and film movements were flourishing, whilst favourable conditions promoted the development of the press (published in Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish). The interwar years were also productive for Jewish art. Warsaw gathered about one hundred painters, artists and sculptors (including metalworkers) of Jewish origin. They represented different aesthetic views, drew inspiration from Jewish folk tradition and Western European art, functioned "between two worlds: the one of the Polish culture – by participating in exhibitions, belonging to groups [...], and the one of the Yiddish culture" (Tarnowska 2012: 48). Jewish art was presented by the Polish exhibition organisations, such as the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts [*Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych*, TZSP] and the Institute of Art Propaganda [*Instytut Propagandy Sztuki*, IPS], but the key role in the process of the integration of the Jewish artistic community was played by the Jewish Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts [*Żydowskie Towarzystwo Krzewienia Sztuk Pięknych*] established in 1923, and the Association of Jewish Artists in Poland [*Stowarzyszenie Żydowskich Artystów Plastyków w Polsce*], established in 1934.

In Lodz, where Jews made up almost 35% of the city's population, the Jews had a developed network of social and political institutions. Despite a significant number of active artists, no academy of fine arts was established in the 'Polish Manchester', and the associations and groups, which practised and promoted art generally led a short life. Based on research into exhibition catalogues and the interwar press, especially the sections devoted to culture and art, we may say that between 1918 and 1939 there were several dozen Jewish artists in Lodz, only some of whom lived in the city permanently. A number of them stayed abroad for years, whilst others went to Warsaw for shorter or longer periods, spending their professional life between two centres. They were members of local artistic associations, such as Yung-yidish, *Grupa Łodzian*, *Srebrny Wóz*, *Start* and the Union of Polish Professional Artists in Lodz [*Związek Zawodowy Polskich Artystów Plastyków w Łodzi*].

The outbreak of World War II was a tragic event in the history of the European diaspora. The tightened anti-Jewish policy of the German occupiers left its traces on every aspect of life. It also caused inhibition and, in the longer term, the annihilation of Jewish culture, literature and art in Poland. In Warsaw and Lodz, which during the interwar period were important artistic centres, Jewish artists formed a significant group, shaping local artistic milieus. After 1939, some of them left the city, whilst others died or were locked up in the newly-created ghettos. Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Warsaw Ghetto, just like Chaim Rumkowski in Lodz, tried to protect 'his' artists by ensuring good working conditions, rewarding artists for commissioned tasks in the form of wages or additional food rations.

This article attempts to present the situation of artists in the ghetto with the examples of Maximilian Eljowicz in Warsaw and Yitskhok Brauner in Lodz. Thanks to the preserved archive materials (administrative documents, diaries, memories and witness accounts), we can partly reconstruct the fate of an individual, and also indicate the similarities and differences in the functioning of the 'artistic patronage' of both closed districts.

The Warsaw Ghetto

Founded in April 1940, the Warsaw Ghetto was the largest forcibly created dwelling place for the Jewish population in Poland. From spring 1940, the area in the centre of Warsaw, designated by the Germans to the Jews, was gradually surrounded with a high wall. The ghetto was cut off from the rest of the city and finally closed on 16 November 1940. Over 360,000 people were crowded into 307 hectares — one third of the city's inhabitants into just two and a half percent of its area. As a result of resettlement from other cities, the number of prisoners in the ghetto increased to over 450,000, and then gradually decreased, as around 96,000 died of hunger and disease. In the summer of 1942, the Germans deported and murdered nearly three hundred thousand people in the gas chambers of Treblinka.

Depending on the period, the Jewish population in the ghetto was controlled either by the administration of the general governor or directly by the security administration. The Jewish Council, or Judenrat, was responsible for the implementation of German orders, and first of all for providing labour, collecting and transferring contributions and organising the collection of, for example, fur or furniture. Over time, the Judenrat was asked to help in the deportation of the Jewish population to the death camps. In addition, the Jewish council dealt with administrative matters such as housing and health issues, population records, etc. and social assistance. The Judenrat was subordinated to the so-called Order Service, also called the Jewish police.

Adam Czerniakow — Chairman of the Jewish Council in the Warsaw Ghetto

On 4 October 1939, Adam Czerniakow was appointed as the president of the Warsaw Judenrat. An engineer before the war, Czerniakow was an ardent supporter of Jewish assimilation in Poland, but his social and political work was largely connected with Jewish institutions. Between 1927 and 1934, he was a member of the Warsaw City Council. Immediately after the outbreak of World War II, he remained in Warsaw and together with his son volunteered in the Civil Guard. On 23 September 1939, President Stefan Starzyński appointed him as the Chairman of the Jewish Religious Community. In his diary under this date he wrote: "I was nominated by President Starzyński to become the President of the Jewish Religious Community in Warsaw. Historical role in the besieged city. I will try to cope with it" (Czerniakow 1983: 37).

In the autumn of 1939, the occupation authorities designated Czerniakow as the Chairman of the Jewish Council, although he referred to himself as the Chairman of the Commune. The Germans wanted him to be an obedient executioner of their orders. However, his diary that was discovered after the war explains his real role, and, above all, indicates his persevering work for the Jewish people.

The meticulous record of the events between 6 September 1939 and 23 July 1942 is filled with facts, figures and dates. It reveals a number of problems which Czerniakow had to face, and shows his dilemmas. Despite the unprecedented succinctness and brevity of the records, numerous ambiguities, understatements and allusions bearing the hallmarks of conspiracy — notes only fully understandable to their author — the diary reveals a cruel and dramatic life in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Whilst performing the role entrusted to him by the occupiers, Czerniakow tried to protect his fellow men against poverty, hunger and disease. He looked after the poorest, fought for the equal distribution of wealth, devoted great care to education and protected cultural life. Until the very end, he never believed that Germans would decide to carry out total extermination of Jews. On 23 July 1942, he wrote: "It is three in the afternoon. At the moment there are four thousand people ready to leave. According to the order, another nine thousand are to be prepared" (Czerniakow 1983: 243). This is the last entry in his journal. When the Germans insisted that he appointed a contingent of children to be transported to Treblinka, he swallowed the potassium cyanide, which he had been carrying with him. Before swallowing the poison, he drafted two more letters. He wrote the following words to his wife: "They want me to kill children of my own nation with my own hands. There is nothing else I can do but die" (Czerniakow 1983: 243).

At the time of his suicide, Adam Czerniakow was 62 years old. He was a native Warsaw inhabitant and an educated man. He graduated from the Warsaw Technical

University in 1908 obtaining a diploma in chemical engineering and from the Industrial Department of the Technical University of Dresden in 1912 obtaining a second diploma. Knowledgeable in his profession as an engineer and economist, he was also a humanist and wrote poems and sonnets. He was a protector of the Jewish Symphony Orchestra and an honorary curator at the Mathias Bersohn Museum. Above all, he defended people involved in creating values of culture and art, supporting actors, painters and sculptors. When the ghetto was closed and life became limited to satisfying basic biological needs, he often asked himself about the purpose and role of artistic creativity, being aware of the importance of all cultural activities that allowed to survive the horror and to preserve all the symptoms of humanity.

Artists in the Warsaw Ghetto

The outbreak of World War II placed Jewish visual artists in a difficult situation. Contact with the Aryan side, where the artists used to sell some of their paintings, was hindered. Many artworks were destroyed during the bombings, and many more were looted by the Germans. Based on the preserved documents, it can be assumed that from the early 1940 to 1942 the group of Jewish artists consisted of about forty-five people (Tarnowska 2015: 88). Among them are some well-known names, including the painters Samuel Filkensztajn, Feliks Frydman, David Greifenberg, Max Haneman, Adam Herszaft, Roman Kramsztyk, Samuel Puterman, Henryk Rabinowicz, Szymcha Trachter, Bernard Trębacz and Stanisław Uzdański, the painter and draftsman Regina Mundlak, the sculptors Abraham Ostrzega, Henryk Chajmowicz and Henryk Gabowicz, the painter, theatre director and musician Roman Rozental, the watercolourist Moshe Rynecki, the watercolourists and draftsmen Gela Seksztajn and Hersz Cyna, the metal sculptor, graphic artist and stage designer Józef Śliwniak, the painter, graphic artist and draftsman Izrael Tykociński, the painter and stage designer Władysław Weintraub.

The majority of the artists closed inside the ghetto did not have the opportunity to practice their profession. Thanks to their pre-war acquaintances with activists from various social organisations, some of them became the beneficiaries of aid from charities distributing gifts from the Red Cross. Another supporting institution was the Jewish Self Aid [*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*] that operated in the ghetto and helped to organise a few exhibitions and poster competitions. In 1941, a group of artists established the so-called Garden of Artists, a café on the premises of the former Atelier of Artistic Decoration, Painting and Sculpting of Abraham Ostrzega and Władysław Weibtraub at Mylna 9a/11, which turned out to be such a lucrative venture that by 1942 it had supported no less than 20 Jewish artists and their families (Tarnowska 2015: 97–99).

Maksymilian Eljowicz

In July 1940, the Germans requested that all the writers, journalists and artists of Jewish origin registered with the occupying authorities. One member of a small group of artists staying in the Warsaw Ghetto between the early 1940 and 1942 was Maksymilian Eljowicz, who at the end of the 1930s actively participated in Warsaw's artistic and cultural life. Together with Arnold Blaufuks, he was one of the city's wealthiest artists. At the time, Eljowicz was the custodian of the collections of the Jewish Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, and apart from painting he was involved in the applied arts. Together with his brother, he ran a profitable antiques restoration company. After the establishment of the ghetto, he was forced to leave his studio on the top floor of a tenement house on Emilia Plater Street and move to a closed district, where he lived at 6 Solna Street. Despite the official ban on artistic work for commercial purposes, Eljowicz had the opportunity to make his living from art. In March 1940, Emanuel Ringelblum in the *Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto* described a case when the artist could pursue paid orders:

> "[..] Eljowicz was caught working on tanks. He lit the oven well, they asked how he could do it. 'I'm an artist painter,' he replied. They asked him to paint. He is already painting the sixth person with the higher and higher rank. He received a fee of 150 zlotys for the painting, and the name of the painter was written in each painting. Good portraits" (Ringelblum 1983: 100).

We do not know what the works he made under German orders were like. From the last stage of the artist's life in the ghetto, only two images of private individuals have survived depicting the sister-in-law of the painter, Jadwiga Fendler, and the father of the lawyer Landau. *The Portrait of Jadwiga F*. was painted against a dark background, and realistically reveals the lack of painting means, giving the impression that the artist was painting with the remnants of paints, and tried to dilute them and combine different media together. A post-impressionistic portrait of an elderly man gives the impression of being more carefully planned and finished; perhaps the materials were made available to the artist by those who commissioned the painting.

The most significant artistic undertaking in which Eljowicz took part around the end of 1941 or the beginning of 1942 was the renovation and decoration of the premises of the Commune Seat. The work was commissioned for a large sum of money thanks to the resourcefulness of Adam Czerniakow.

Other artists also participated in the project, among them Symcha Trachter, Samuel Puterman and Feliks Frydman, who painted the frescoes, Abraham Ostrzega, who prepared the sculptural décor and Maksymilian Eljowicz, who together with Józef Śli-

wniak and Henryk Rabinowicz made the stained-glass windows. Eljowicz and Puterman were also employed to work on an exhibition at Królewska Street, which was organised outside the ghetto by Transverstelle. None of the works that were created during this period survived the war. We know them only from the account of Samuel Puterman and a frame from a propaganda film shot by the Nazis in which we can see a fragment of the stained glass window in Czerniakow's office. In Puterman's account, we read:

> "The president of the Commune decided to help the artists, since the representative room where the councillors' meetings were held, often with participation of German authorities, was in a deplorable condition, the ceiling was scratched [..], the plaster was falling off, some elements of the pilasters were missing and the walls were blackened and dilapidated. The Council decided to renovate this room, and Czerniakow, who secretly supported the painters, buying from each of them one or two paintings for the municipality collection, managed to push through higher subsidies, but the representative room had to be renovated by the artists. In this way, he would support the artists who live in poverty and, at the same time, the interiors would be aesthetic. [..] Czerniakow's motion was finally accepted, and the Council allocated quite a big budget. In addition to the architectural alterations, the project included paintings to decorate the walls as well as new chandeliers and stained glass windows. Tens of thousands of zlotys, spent by the Commune for this purpose, gave a wide scope to debates among all the ghetto's inhabitants: people concluded that since so much money was spent on it, the ghetto was safe [..] a group of artists benefited from it and eagerly started working on the projects. On the largest wall there was to be the composition of Job painted by Trachter, Puterman and Frydman. The stained glass windows were made by Śliwniak, Eljowicz and Rabinowicz. Ostrzega started a few sculptures, and the remaining artists were going to produce a dozen other compositions of religious subjects" (Puterman 1942: 44).

Later on, Puterman described the central painting depicting Job and the process of joint creation that had a particularly positive effect on the psyche of artists:

> "The program of decorating the parade Community Hall, whose main motive was the figure of Job surrounded by faithful companions of misery (the fate of the Jews compared to the fate of Job) was to be a symbol of hope for salvation by a human or supernatural power. The paintings were created 'to lift hearts' and were expected to bring to mind the faithful call of their hero, Job: 'I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted'" (Puterman 1942: 44–46).

Puterman does not mention the stained glass windows that referred to the scenes from Jacob's life. It is known that, according to Czerniakow, 'they were very beautiful'. As Magdalena Tarnowska writes:

> "A characteristic feature of the decoration of the Commune Halls was their monumental form, referring to the art of the great masters of the Renaissance, especially of Michelangelo. This monumentalism was, on the one hand, a response to the requirements of the official art (on the order of the Commune), and on the other, to the tragedy of the occupation reality, going beyond all known tragedies of mankind" (Tarnowska 2011: 121).

Maksymilian Eljowicz died after being deported to Treblinka during the first large liquidation campaign begun by the Germans in July 1942. His first and last name is on the list of people from the autumn-winter period 1942 entitled *Whom did we lose?* in the letters from the ghetto of Emanuel Ringelblum (Ringelblum 1983: 623).

The Ghetto in Lodz (Litzmannstadt-Ghetto)

The order to establish an isolated district for the Jews of Łódź was announced by the chief of German police, Johann Schaffer, in the *Lodscher Zeitung* on 8 February 1940. The ghetto was located in the most neglected northern part of the city and covered an area of just over four square kilometres. The district was finally closed and isolated on 30 April 1940. According to official records dating from June 1940, over 160,000 Jews passed through the ghetto. Administratively, the Lodz Ghetto was subject to the City Council. In October 1940, an independent department named the Ghetto Board, or *Gettoverwaltung*, was established, with Hans Biebow, a merchant from Bremen as its head (Sitarek 2017: 82–83).

The Jewish Ghetto administration reported to the *Gettoverwaltung* officials. The administration was particularly well developed in Lodz, because — mportantly — the ghetto economy was extremely centralised (for instance, private enterprises were not allowed). The head of the Jewish administration was called the Eldest of the Jews [*Der Älteste der Juden in Litzmannstadt-Getto*], a position held by Chaim Mordechai Rumkowski. The Council of Elders [*Ältestenrat*,] appointed by Rumkowski, was supposed to perform the role of an advisory body, but in fact it was ineffective and unable to make any decisions (Sitarek and Wiatr 2016: 23). Rumkowski was given a great deal of independence. He supervised the police and was allowed to arrest and send people to the ghetto prison. He could set up new offices, departments and labour workshops [*Ressorts*]. The structure of the Jewish administration in the Lodz Ghetto was complex, distinguishing it from a regular administration system. It consisted of departments,

headquarters, workshops and constituting independent agencies with various degrees of competence (Sitarek 2017: 90–93). Rumkowski managed the structure through the Central Secretariat at the Bałucki Marketsquare, called the Headquarter (Sitarek and Wiatr 2016: 24–25). From the beginning of its existence, the Lodz Ghetto worked for the Germans. So we need to ask whether, in the previously described administrative and organisational structure of the ghetto, in a system of constant control, there was any space for artistic creativity. And if so, what was its nature, and to what extent could it be an expression of free creation?

Artists in the Lodz Ghetto

Based on the documentation from the State Archive in Lodz and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, as well as personal diaries, memoirs and oral accounts, it can be assumed that from 1940 to 1944 there were several dozen painters, sculptors and graphic artists from Poland and other countries living in the Lodz Ghetto, such as the poster artists Marianne Altschul, the painters, graphic artists and sculptors Yitskhok Brauner, Pola Lindenfeld and Erna Löwenstein, the painters Ewa Brzezinska, Anna Cohn, Marta Cohn, Pola Dancygier, Fajga Edelbaum, Hirsch Feldman, Sara Gliksman [Faytlowitz], Luba Lurie, Moshe Gurewicz, Robert Guttman [Gutman], Sophia Kutner, Izrael Lejzerowicz, Jakub Lesman, Leopold Leyser, Josef Okun, Emma Rothgiesser, Maurycy Trębacz, Leon Weber and Klara Wertheimer, the poet and sculptor Melania Fogelbaum, the painter and draftsman David Friedmann, the graphic artists Heinrich Magsamen, Sonnenfeld, Kovacs, the painter Józef [Josef] Kowner, the lithographers Chaja Szmulewicz, Leopold Hauser, Israel Seligman Schnog, Jakub Schwarz, Salomon Lubelski, the painter, sculptor and set designer Dina Matus, the sculptor Robert Neubieser, the illustrator Maria Ruda, the painter and draftsman Szymon Szerman, the painters and graphic artists Alter Pinkus Szwarc [Pinchas Shaar] and Hersh Szylis [Shylis] (APŁ, PSŻ 997; 282; 202; Sitarek 2019: 31).

It soon turned out that artists were extremely useful in the ghetto, mainly for propaganda purposes. On 4 June 1940, the newly established so-called Statistics Department [*Statistische Abteilung*, *Wydział Statystyczny*] became responsible for the statistical analysis of the demographic and professional structure of the ghetto. The office, managed by Henryk Neftalin, and Samuel Erlich also dealt with the migration statistics and the statistical analysis of the ghetto workshop production. In July 1940, the office was expanded to include a Graphics Office, and in August – a Photography Office. The Graphics Office employed 12 artists, who presented statistical data and created photographic collages that were valuable for propaganda and training reasons, the Photography Department created and collected visual documents.

Before 1944, many artists from Lodz, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Germany were active in the Statistics Department, among them Sara Gliksman, Moshe Gurewicz,

Zdenek Holub, Luba Lurie, Marie Aleš, Helga May, Eva Schneider, Arnost Vinarsky, Szymon Szerman, Sonnenfeld, Pick, Kovacs, Josef Moshe Grynwald, and photographers: Lajb Maliniak, Mendel Grosman, Henryk Rozencwajg-Ross and Jakub Guterman.

The office's output included numerous tables, diagrams, albums, photographs, posters, etc., many of which had a sophisticated and artistic form. An important area of artistic creation at the office was utility graphics, such as the creation of banknotes and postage stamps. Sara Gliksman recalled:

> "We made statistical charts. Of course, mathematicians and scientists collaborated with us, and at the beginning we prepared real statistics, that is the ones that the Germans demanded. What they were interested in was, for example, the provision of food and mortality [..] all the charts, both the raw — statistical — and illustrated ones were made to a high level" (YVA, RG O3/3889).

Apart from charts, the artists at the department created albums for Rumkowski, in which statistical information was enriched with graphics and photographs. Each of the draftsmen working on the albums received an additional food ration. Over time, similar albums were created at the request of the managers of individual departments and the German ghetto administration. They were richly illustrated, and bound in leather, wooden and metal covers. Such works were created by the painters Kowner, Brauner, Gliksman and Friedmann. Commemorative albums made it possible to select a few more names of people making drawings, watercolours and graphics. They were mostly young, talented amateurs without formal artistic education such as Kasriel Charłupski, Dawid Kurant, Strykowski (signboard painters), Ołomucki, I. Kapłan, J. Braun, M. Rozynes, Sz. Rajch, Klajner Pik, M. Frydenzon (all from Lodz,) Horst Guttman from Berlin, Hans Pick, Zdenek Holub, Marianna Koppel and Heda Margolis, and Heinz Skall from Prague.

Another institutional unit that employed the ghetto's artists was the so-called Science Department [*Wissenschaftliche Abteilung*], which was established in May 1942 on the orders of the *Gettoverwaltung*. It was the only institution to remain outside the supervision of the Judenrat. Operating as a branch of the Institute for Study of the Jewish Question [*Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage*] in Frankfurt, it concentrated on creating a library and museum presenting the 'face of Eastern European Jewry', which was going to exhibit collected objects stolen from Jewish houses and synagogues as well as materials concerning ghetto production achievements. The person responsible for the development of the institute was Professor Adolf Wendel (W. 1942: 4), and the evaluation of the exhibits was entrusted to Rabbi Emanuel Hirschberg. According to the general concept of the exhibition, groups of figurines presenting the costumes and customs of Eastern European Jews were to be placed in the new museum. Selected painters, graphic artists and craftsmen created sculpted Jewish types and grotesque

genre scenes including *A Chassidic Wedding in Poland*, *The Kindling of the Lights in a Jewish House*, *Friday Evening in a Shtetl in Volhynia*, *Monday in a Beth Midrash* and *A Scene of Everyday Jewish Life in the Ghetto in Litzmannstadt*.

The figures were made of wood, plasticine, wool, scraps of fabric, leather and cardboard, and the exhibition was accompanied by paintings by Izrael Lejzerowicz and Hersh Zvi Szylis (Sitarek and Wiatr 2016: 234). The Department's collaborators included the poet, painter and sculptor Melania Fogelbaum, the painter and metal artist Yitskhok Brauner, the graphic artists Jakub Schwarz and Hirsch Feldman (YVA, RG O6/105: 255–258). In a short note from the *Chronicle of the Ghetto*, devoted to the organisation of the museum, there was a mention of a search for artists, painters and graphic artists who could join the team involved in the creation of the exhibition (Baranowski 2009b: 323). In 1942, it consisted of 17 people and they all received additional food rations for their work. Despite loud announcements and ambitious plans of the German authorities, the museum was never established and the Scientific Department was dissolved on 24 June 1943. Jews working on creating exposition were dismissed and employed in other departments.

In parallel with the official artistic 'production' that served the needs of propaganda, creative activity aimed at documenting real life in the ghetto also took place. Statistical charts contained genuine data, which unfortunately did not survive, and photographs illustrating the everyday problems of the ghetto's inhabitants. Using materials such as paint, canvas and cardboard delivered to fulfil orders, the artists tried to create paintings and drawings the subject matter of which did not correspond to the official information policy.

Many artists who were prominent in the local pre-war milieu worked for the ghetto administration. Some could count on additional orders, such as painting portraits of officials, department heads and even representatives of the German administration. Within a few years, the 'wire bound state' (Sitarek 2016) established a specific model of the relationship between a customer and an artist in which the latter was completely — economically and physically — dependent on the former. The role of artistic creation was, primarily, the preservation of the Jewish image, hence the likenesses of the Eldest of the Jews on stamp designs, photographs and portraits. The official images of Chaim Rumkowski represented a specific iconographic type, which can be described as 'the serious father of the nation'. Rumkowski's head and shoulders took most of the space in the image, with the model dressed in a dark suit, a light shirt and tie, glasses and grey hair combed upwards. This is how Mendel Grosman presented him in a photograph, and how he was portrayed by Yitskhok Brauner, Izrael Lejzerowicz, Hersh Szylis or Józef Kowner. A unique example of art created for the authorities was the large-format *Rumkowski on the Ghetto's Background* by Lejzerowicz (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw A-163) in which Rumkowski was pictured surrounded by children in an image intended to represent him as a 'guardian of the weakest'.

Official orders were an opportunity to acquire painting materials and to earn some additional money, which, however, sometimes had to be asked for. In a letter to the Eldest of the Jews, Izrael Lejzerowicz complained about a late payment:

> "As Oberwachmeister Lohse has recently informed me, I am going to be paid by the community for his already finished oil portrait [..]. This time I am forced to bother you only because of my severe material loss, which I would suffer if the Community did not pay me for the portrait of Mr. Lohse, which I have painted on request" (APŁ, PSŻ 282: 82).

Professional artists and artistically talented individuals found employment also in other departments, for example in the Metalwork Department [*Metallabteilung*] (Friedmann,) Carpet Department [*Teppich Abteilung*] (Kowner,) Underwear and Clothing Division [*Wäsche Ressort*] (Matus). Based on the preserved documents, it can be concluded that most of them, especially those connected with the local artistic community before the war, thanks to the work guaranteed by the Jewish administration, survived until the liquidation of the ghetto in 1944.

Yitskhok Brauner

An artist particularly supported by the ghetto officials was Yitskhok [Vincent, Wincenty] Brauner (1887–1944). A well-known painter, graphic artist, metalworker and stage designer and a native of Lodz, Brauner was one of the most important figures in a large group of local artists between 1918 and 1939. The initiator of many cultural events who contributed to the promotion of art in the 'Polish Manchester', he participated in the activities of several artistic groups, including *Yung-yidish*, *Srebrny Wóz*, *Grupa Łodzian* and *Start*. Despite his unquestionable musical talent, Brauner chose the career of a painter and sculptor, and became truly famous thanks to his puppet and theatre designs (Malinowski 1987; Gadowska 2016: 304–320). A review of a pre-war performance mentions Brauner's puppets: "Extremely apt in the grotesque sense, they completely reflect the nature of the characters. Technically, they are first-rate because they reflect all kinds of movements. They even dance and they do it well" (Widz. 1935: 7).

The outbreak of World War II destroyed his career. Like many artists who did not manage to escape, he was confined to the Lodz Ghetto, where he lived at Piwna Street (Bierstrasse 21). At the turn of 1940 and 1941, together with Kowner, he had an exhibition of his pre-war paintings attended by Rumkowski and other officials (Trunk 2006: 337–338). Between 1940 and 1943, his name appeared mainly in the context of theatrical performances. In January 1941, Brauner created puppets for the ghetto's puppet theatre that impersonated famous ghetto figures (Baranowski

2009a: 69), and at the end of the same year he was appointed as the artistic director of the ceramics factory at 11 Chłodna Street (Baranowski 2009a: 409). On 30 May 1943, the Paper Products factory organised a parade. The programme included a performance with 'serious and funny scenes', the music was supervised by Dawid Bajgelman and a mixed choir was conducted by Teodor Ryder. "The decorations were sophisticated, artistic and tasteful. The parade of ghetto figure puppets, the work of the painter Brauner, met with thunderous applause" (Baranowski 2009c: 245). Before the war, Brauner's work covered various fields, including painting, sculpture and metalwork. He freely used a variety of techniques, drawing on the experiences of the Post-Impressionists, Expressionists and the École de Paris. The critics noted that his works were linked with the paintings of Marc Chagall, although such influences were "strongly digested and neutralised by the artist's individuality" (S. 1937: 8). Brauner's creative activity in the ghetto included ceramics, embossed sheets, drawings, watercolours and puppets. His work from the period is characterised by a simplified, calm form and a realistic approach. The poet, Isaiah Spiegel compared them to Egyptian art. In 1946, he wrote:

> "[..] wooden figurines, Jewish heads, sloping backs, with yellow patches, they had the features of ancient Egyptian drawings and figures. 'We live in Egypt' – the artist used to say to me – and his wonderful canvases, woodcuts and copperplates actually manifested ancient Egypt and in all its depth portrayed the slavery of the Jewish ghetto in the 20th century" (Spiegel 1946: 6).

Some of Brauner's works were commissioned officially, for example, *Portrait of M.Ch. Rumkowski* [1940] (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw: A-1234), and *Portrait of David Perl* [1943] (Museum of Cracow). In 1940, the artist completed an order for a commemorative album dedicated to Rumkowski. The preserved cover of the book was made of polished wood. In the central area of the title page there was a half-round door made of embossed copper sheet that was divided into two wings connected by a hook. On the left-hand quarter there was an image of a woman with an infant, and on the right-hand quarter there was a figure of a man holding a pot in his left hand. The entire image was crowned with a Star of David. In a cut semicircle visible after opening the door and on a piece of cardboard stuck to the leather, Brauner placed a portrait of Chaim Mordechai Rumkowski with spectacles on his nose and wearing a white shirt and a red and blue tie. The work is signed and dated (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw: A-1124). What remains interesting and still undiscovered is Brauner's activities with the Science Department. Several preserved figurines and sculptures confirm the artist's involvement in the project of creating the museum, but Oskar Rosenfeld does not mention his name in the report that describes the institution's activities, referring only to Lejzerowicz, Szylis, Schwarz and Feldman (YVA RG O6/105).

It seems that in the extreme conditions of the closed district, Brauner belonged to a narrow group of privileged artists, namely, those who received support from the Jewish ghetto authorities, although according to Spiegel, he openly criticised Rumkowski (Spiegel 1945: 5; Spiegel 1946: 6). For almost four years, Brauner received a monthly grant from the School Department [*Schul-Abteilung*] (YVA RG O3/1315). Apart from that, he also received additional portions of food for various artistic tasks.

In 1944 the painter was seriously ill with tuberculosis, and it seems that he had abandoned his artistic work (YVA RG O75/2698). On 9 August 1944, when the liquidation of the ghetto began, the area where he lived was put under liquidation on the first day. Brauner was deported to Auschwitz and probably murdered there shortly after his arrival.

Conclusion

To sum up, it should be emphasised that any assessment of the situation of artists in both ghettos largely depends on the nature of the sources, which may affect the interpretation of the research results. In the case of Warsaw, these are private or semi-official materials in the form of mainly personal accounts, diaries and bills, as well as documents and drawings preserved in the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, the so-called Ringelblum Archive. In the case of Lodz, most information comes from official documentation created for the needs of the ghetto administration, which ignored, probably deliberately, data about the activity of artists acting without supervision.

In the reality of an isolated district, art was pushed to the margins of the everyday struggle for health and life. Artists rarely had access to materials and tools, and creativity, for understandable reasons, ceased to be their main source of income. Nevertheless, on the basis of the preserved documents, paintings, drawings and sculptures, we can identify a group of artists who, in the ghettos in Warsaw and Lodz, fulfilled orders from the Jewish administration or documented life in isolation themselves. The work created under official 'patronage' was mainly functional, such as charts, document designs, stamps and posters, and often had a propaganda character. Privately commissioned works, for example, portraitures, were rather rare.

The conditions for the development of art in Lodz and Warsaw were different due to the specificity of both centres. The support of the administrative authorities ensured that certain artists were commissioned to create art, consequently receiving extra food rations and some payment. In the Lodz Ghetto, where the administration was more centralised and the internal organisation of the ghetto limited the possibility of acting outside the system, artists were harnessed to the propaganda apparatus, serving the politics of Chaim Rumkowski and his officials. In Warsaw, in its turn, art was created

more freely and was not subjected to strong pressure and the manipulation of the authorities.

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