Riga Jewish Community

Museum *Jews in Latvia*

Art and the Holocaust: Reflection for the Common Future

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Editor: Dr. Laine Kristberga

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Picture on the front cover: Aleksandra Beļcova *Holocaust.* 1941 – 1944. Pencil on paper. 14 x 20,6 cm. From the series of drawings of the Riga Ghetto. Collection of the Romans Suta and Aleksandra Beļcova Museum, collection No. SB/B–1082.

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Introduction

This collection represents a part of the papers read at the conference *Art and the Holocaust: Reflections for the Common Future*, held in Riga on July 2–3, 2019. The conference was the first stage in a project of the same title, which also included two seminars devoted to the evolution of memorial art and an exhibition of works by Jewish artists of the interwar period, many of whom were victims of the Holocaust. The project was conducted by the Riga Jewish Community and the Museum *Jews in Latvia* in cooperation with the Romans Suta and Aleksandra Beļcova Museum, the University of Rostock, and a number of other organizations. Funding was secured within the framework of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Commission, with support at various stages of the project provided by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, Boris Lurie Art Foundation, and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

At the conference, papers were presented on the following subjects: the fate of artists during the Holocaust and the impact of the Holocaust on their work, depiction of the Holocaust by non-Jewish artists, the Holocaust in photography, art in internment facilities, the art of Holocaust memorials, and other topics. The present collection contains papers dedicated to visual arts, created both during the Holocaust as well as in response to it.

Almost 80 years separate us from the Catastrophe, from those tragic events. The art of the Holocaust has come a long way since then: from being forbidden or at least invisible, unexhibited, as it was at the time of its creation, during the war years and immediately after, to becoming artefacts in the collections of specialized museums where they are found today. Speaking about the art of the Holocaust, we must understand that in different historical circumstances the respective artists might have never 'met' on the pages of the same publication; however, the Holocaust became a defining fact in their biography – many of them died, while for others the Holocaust became an important theme in their art, as well as in their dialogue with contemporary society decades after the tragedy.

A key thesis of the conference was Theodor Adorno's statement that creating art after Auschwitz is barbaric.[1] This thesis has been the subject of many debates. Some

[1] 'To write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric' – Adorno Th.W. *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft // Adorno Th.W.*

believe that depictions of the Catastrophe are unacceptable, as there is no single photographic document of death in a gas chamber. Only eyewitness accounts are valid, but in this case they are impossible, since nobody survived the gas chambers. Furthermore, images are inferior to the power of human words – they are 'images without imagination' (for more, see the article by Eckhart J. Gillen). However, if we approach this problem from the point of view of psychology, the contradictions are less evident. The therapeutic practices of psychologists show that people who have been mentally traumatized are first only able to visualize the traumatic experience, long before they can talk about it. Overcoming trauma is possible only in a dialogue with the traumatized inner 'I', and it is precisely images, including works of art, that are the assistants guiding one on the path to healing. Likewise, when it comes to works created during the Holocaust, many of those were also created with a kind of therapeutic aim – to maintain the illusion of a normal life, to continue the artistic process that began before the war. Many of these works do not contain anything visually related to the Holocaust; however, the context of their creation allows them to be also attributed to the art of the Holocaust.

The works of artists examined and presented at the conference and in the articles of this collection can be theoretically divided into several categories. A significant portion of the art of the Holocaust is made up of portraits, posters, propaganda material, graphics, etc. that were commissioned by Nazi authorities or ghetto officials. Nowadays, the surviving documentary evidence of such commissioned works presents a special interest to researchers (see the articles by Irmina Gadowska and Teresa Śmiechowska on Warsaw and Giedrė Jankevičiūtė on Vilnius and Kaunas). In this case, methods of social art history make it possible to illuminate individual details of the artists' existence in the ghetto, their socioeconomic situation, and explain the mechanisms of survival in those unbearable conditions. Besides these commissioned works, the artists painted portraits of their loved ones and acquaintances who were also there, in the ghetto, and drew sketches depicting the everyday life and reality in the places of internment. Of course, in addition to artistic value, these works also have documentary and historical value, but for the authors themselves this creative output became a kind of psychological way of survival. Some of the works by their contents and positive emotional mood – bright, saturated with light and colour – were in no way associated with the grim reality of life in the ghetto, but thereby expressed the artists' desire to escape that reality (for instance, Tadeusz Bornstein and Gela Seksztajn; for more and particular examples, see the article by Magdalena Tarnowska).[2]

Gesammelte Schriften. Frankfurt; Darmstadt, 1997. Bd. 10/1: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I. S. 30.

[2] Even though there are no articles on the representation of the Holocaust by non-Jewish artists among the articles presented in the collection, it is important to mention that there were such cases (for instance, Andrzej Wroblewski's series of paintings 'Executions', 1949, or Aleksandra Beļcova's drawings of Riga Ghetto that were presented at the conference).

The art of the Holocaust also includes works created in the post-war decades, while not all authors of these works were victims of genocide. For them and for the formation of the iconography of the art of the Holocaust as a whole, the preserved photographs in which crimes were documented or life in the camps and ghettos was recorded, have been of great importance. Such is, for example, the so-called 'Stroop Report' on the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The 30 photographs attached to the report prepared by SS officer Jürgen Stroop have become textbook images of the Holocaust. Artists Gustav Metzger (1926–2014), Samuel Bak (1933), and Nir Hod (1970) have used these photographs or their fragments to create collages. The documentary material was utilized in a similar fashion by Boris Lurie (1924–2008). In the early months and years following the war, he created traditional paintings, which documented his experiences. However, he quickly moved on to a new method: his collages, including those that used photographs of the Holocaust, resemble literal shards of fragmented memories, chaotic, mixed with the artist's impressions of the post-war life in the United States. This is how the shocking contrasts of imagery appeared in his works, where pin-up photos and modern advertising coexist with documentary photos from concentration camps. The path of Boris Lurie, in a sense, confirms the aforementioned typical scenario of overcoming psychological trauma – the transition from images to words, from fine art to exploits in literature. His novel House of Anita is an attempt to rethink and reconcile himself with the tragic past.

But this appeal to photography was more than just a search for an expressive formal solution. Behind it, there is a deeper meaning, related to the very essence of the phenomenon of photography, the essence of the photographic image, and Eleonora Jedlińska in her article most appropriately refers to the ideas of Roland Barthes. Photography, according to Barthes, is a certain 'certificate of presence', a super-confirmation of reality, 'a new type of evidence'. In this case, it documents facts of incredible cruelty – so horrible that it is simply impossible for a regular person to fully grasp their scale. However, the fact that those are actual people depicted in the individual photos allows the viewer to perceive their tragedy on a more personal level. The Catastrophe takes on a face; it ceases to be abstract. Consciously or not, it was precisely this goal that the artists pursued by using photographs and their fragments in their works.

The fact that many works of art were created at a time when society was not interested in hearing about the Holocaust is an important aspect – and the reasons for that could be very different. In Western Europe and the United States, the post-war years was a period of overcoming difficulties and rapid economic growth, and tragic events were deliberately pushed to the periphery of public consciousness. This came to be one of the factors that influenced Boris Lurie. The artist had a hard time coping with the feeling of alienation and being misunderstood in a society focused on consumption and hedonism. In Eastern Europe, however, the art of the Holocaust, to some extent, remained in the shadows due to reasons of a political nature, including the compli-

cated relationship of the regimes with the surviving Jews. In official art, emphasis was placed on perpetuating the memory of the anti-fascist movement (the problematics of this issue are examined in the article on GDR in the 1940s–1970s by Jenny Gaßer and Katrin Schmidt). The situation in the USSR was somewhat similar: the memorials and monuments that arose in the post-war years often failed to mention the Jewish origin of the victims, whereas many works of visual art were created within the boundaries of unofficial culture and were hardly available to general public.

Summarizing the papers and articles presented at the conference and in this collection, we can conclude that researching the art of the Holocaust provides a number of challenges of both objective and subjective nature. First, there were not that many works of art as well as related photos and archival documents to begin with, and even fewer have survived to this day. At the same time, even materials related to one artist are often kept in different institutions in different cities and countries and may be scattered all over the world. Among difficulties of a subjective nature there is the fact that the artists of the Holocaust, with rare exceptions, were not the leading representatives of national art schools. They were not stars of the first magnitude, many of them died at a young age, before being able to reveal their talent to the fullest. Second, many of the artists did not leave behind any theoretical or memoir texts that could clarify the context of many works and their place in art history beyond the framework of the art of the Holocaust. Third, the ideological, political, and social taboos that existed in the first post-war decades considerably delayed not only the creation of art, but also its research.

The art of the Holocaust is a testimony to the Catastrophe, a reminder and a warning to the living and future generations. There are still many blank spots left in the study of the biographies and creativity of the artists of the Holocaust, and it is likely not all of them will ever be filled, but that should not be an obstacle to exploring it.

Magdalena Tarnowska

Artists' Attitudes Towards the Holocaust Experience: Tadeusz Bornstein, Gela Seksztajn and Alexander Bogen

Abstract

The article discusses various attitudes toward the terrifying reality of World War II, which is depicted in the works of three painters, Tadeusz Bornstein (1919–1942), Gela Seksztajn (1907–1943) and Alexander Bogen (1916–2010). The first two were forced to live in the Warsaw Ghetto and did not survive. Bornstein was a talented poet and painter, and only his poems survived. Seksztajn is well-known because her work formed part of what became known as the Ringelblum Archive, which contains several examples of her work that were made in the ghetto. Bogen's fate was different. Connected with Vilna, Bogen was a partisan who helped rescue many people from the Vilna Ghetto. He also created art during this time, art that was a sort of fight against the Germans. After the war, in Poland and then in Israel, he became a symbol of fighting Jewish artists.

Keywords: Holocaust art, Jewish art, Alexander Bogen, Tadeusz Bornstein, Gela Seksztajn

Art created by Jews during the Holocaust is an exceptional phenomenon for many reasons – the time and circumstances of its creation and functions, the way in which it survived, the material, techniques and artistic expression employed and the personal fate of the artists and their attitude towards the reality surrounding them. It seems that nowadays, when we already have a lot of fundamental studies containing documented

catalogues of works, the most interesting subject of analyses are the issues concerning the creator and their art, that is, their fate during the war, transformations of identity, and attitude towards the experience.[1]

As evidenced by my research on the artwork produced by painters connected with Poland, particularly with Warsaw, it is possible to distinguish a few basic types of art according to the function: (1) art as a document of the times of the Holocaust, (2) art as a form of struggle with Germans, (3) art as a form of escape from tragic reality and (4) art as a form of saving the Jewish community and cultural heritage from oblivion. Apart from those mentioned, for example in the Warsaw Ghetto, there was also the so-called official art performed on behalf of the Judenrat and commissioned by the financial ghetto elites.

In the article herein, I would like to present the profiles of three artists whose work is representative of the above-mentioned basic types of Holocaust art. The entourages that shaped their worldview, attitudes and fate during World War II were all significantly different and are reflected in their work. Two of the artists lived in the Warsaw Ghetto and died during its liquidation (July 1942) or in the Uprising (April 1943).[2] Their memories survived thanks to their preserved artwork, archives and the accounts of people who had been close to them. One artist survived and continued his artistic work after the Holocaust.

The first of the artists to be examined is Tadeusz Bornstein (1919–1942), to whom I have devoted a separate monographic article published in the *Jewish History Quarterly* in 2017 (Tarnowska 2011: 47–62). A talented poet and painter, Bornstein came from an assimilated family of wealthy industrialists from Tomaszow Mazowiecki.[3] In 1937, he began studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and had just begun his artistic

[1]For the art of the Holocaust, see: Constanza, Mary S., *The Living Witness. Art. In the Concentration Camps and Ghettos*, London 1982; Jaworska, Janina, *Nie wszystek umrę…. [I shall not wholly die….] Twórczość plastyczna Polaków w hitlerowskich więzieniach i obozach koncentracyjnych 1939-1945 [Artistic Work of Poles in Nazi Prisons and Concentration Camps 1939-1945]*, Warsaw, 1975; Milton, Sybil, *In Fitting Memory: the Art and Politics of Holocaust memorials*, Detroit, 1991; Lang, Berel, *Holocaust representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics*, Baltimore, 2000; *Spiritual Resistance. Art. From Concentration Camps 1940-1945. A selection drawings and paintings from the collection of Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetaot*, Israel, USA, 1981; Sujo, Glen, *Legacies of silence. The visual arts and Holocaust memory, Imperial War Museum, London 5 April-27 August 2001*, London, 2001; *Testimony Art of the Holocaust,* Yad Vashem—The Holocaust Martyr's and Heroes Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, 1986

[2]For more details connected with art in the Warsaw Ghetto, see: Tarnowska 2011; Tarnowska 2015; Brutin 2020.

[3]His father, Emanuel Bornstein (1879—1942), co-owner of the Factory of Cloth Products in Starzyce of Zusman (Zygmunt) Bornstein, social activist, in the years 1931-1936 President of the Jewish Religious Community. He died on 5 August 1942 in the Warsaw Ghetto. His mother, Romana née Koral (1888—1942), died at the Treblinka extermination camp. His sister, Wanda Aronson (1911-?), was shot in a village near Tomaszów, where she had been hiding with her son Alek. Alek Aronson and his father survived the war in a German prisoner-of-war camp, and after the liberation they both left for the United States. For more details about Tadeusz Bornstein see: Witczak 2010: 58-64; Sandel 1957/I: 54-55.

career. He participated in exhibitions and wrote poems. After the outbreak of World War II, until summer 1941 he and his parents had been staying in the so-called Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic annexed by the USSR, in Lwów [Lviv] and Białystok. At the time, he participated in exhibitions organised by the Soviet authorities. When the German troops entered Poland in June 1941, they escaped to the General Government and the Warsaw Ghetto. They lived in the so-called Small Ghetto on its main thoroughfare, Sienna Street.

It is known that Bornstein lived in isolation and suffered from depression, but he was still engaged in creative work. He wrote poetry, painted views of the ghetto streets and colourful still lives. The Majda family that lived outside the ghetto at 61 Grzybowska Street helped him from the so-called Aryan side. Bronisław Majda, who from 1942 to 1943 was a messenger of the Tax Office to the ghetto, delivered letters and food packages to him. Alexander Majda, a friend of Tadeusz from their school years, was a member of the Conspiracy Consensus Committee of Doctors Democrats and Socialists, which provided medical aid for the ghetto.[4] He tried to persuade Bornstein to escape to the Aryan side. Everything had already been organised, however Bornstein refused because of his parents. Bornstein was murdered during the so-called liquidation action in September 1942. Almost all members of his family perished during the Holocaust, and most of his artwork was destroyed. A few poems, a narrative poem and a description of the artist's personality and his fate have survived, which thanks to the courtesy of Majda-Mincowa were handed over to collections at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

From the point of view of reflections on the art of the Holocaust, the most important is the representation of his attitude in the ghetto's extreme conditions in the context of issues associated with identity. The artist fully identified himself with Poland and its intellectual elite. He wrote his poetry in Polish. In the ghetto poems, which have survived, he uses the codes of meaning related to European culture — to the Napoleonic wars, Lord Byron and the Greek struggle for liberation from Turkish occupation in 1830. As Majda-Mincowa writes: "Raised in an entourage of deeply cultured people, he had great knowledge, great erudition. He was characterized by great world-view individualism" (Majda-Mincowa 1957).

His reaction to the reality of the ghetto was characteristic of a member of the elite, an escape into a sphere capable of protection from contact with the tragedy taking

[4]The Conspiracy Consensus Committee of Doctors Democrats and Socialists was active in Warsaw from mid-1940 to 1944. Its tasks included organising resistance against the occupier among the physicians, collecting evidence of Nazi crimes, taking care of the wounded, medical aid for the ghetto and hiding Jews on the Aryan side. The committee published a periodical called *Abecadło Lekarskie* [Medical Alphabet], distributed to larger hospitals and outpatient clinics. The journal would firmly speak in defence of the Jews (Dobroszycki 2019).

place around them.[5] In the case of Bornstein, this reaction was expressed in poetry, painting and religion. As Majda-Mincowa recalls in her letter:

> "[Tadeusz Bornstein] escaped from all forms of social life in that district, too shocking to accept them as reality. [..] In addition to intense poetic and painting creativity, he would try to find consolation in religion, [...] in his life he had a long period of specific emotional engagement in Christianity [..]" (Majda-Mincowa 1957).

As far as painting is concerned, it is known that during Bornstein's studies he belonged to the circles of the partisans of the Colourists. He was also a fan of the French Post-Impressionists, especially of Van Gogh. As I already mentioned, the artist tried to continue his artistic activity in the ghetto. Bornstein's friend from the Aryan side supplied him with paint, although unfortunately he did not hand his works over to her. Similarly to his poetry, he would seek liberation in painting from the oppression of reality. Like many other artists who dealt with the theme of misery, he preferred the healing power of art to its documentary functions.[6] Majda-Mincowa recalls his "tremendous emotion [when] he welcomed the album of Van Gogh's reproductions which I managed to convey to him during the time of extreme misery and hunger in the ghetto" (Majda-Mincowa 1957). She recalls his painting:

> "[The reproductions] were [in the genre of] still life [..] different variants of a set table. [..], but I hadn't seen anything as beautiful as these in Polish painting. [..] it seems to me that they were a specific and very individual continuation of Impressionism. Crystal objects, glasses and bottles with water penetrated by the sun rays instilled a serenity that for me [..] was incomprehensible However, several works were completely different than those still lives, their Gypsy tablecloths with a black

[5]The author of memoirs adds that Bornstein had been aware of the danger even before the war broke out: "He was stigmatised by the real talent of an artist—poet, painter. [..] Life was standing in front of him in all its beauty; it seemed to him that he would win everything. But he was also a Jew. This modest 'advantage' balanced so many others. I remember he used to tell me this before the war. He spoke with bitter laughter. However, at that time he had not known that it had such a heavy weight on his life and would soon outweigh the scales of everything" (Majda-Mincowa 1957).

[6]An analysis of the art of the Holocaust allows one to distinguish its two fundamental functions—documentary (resulting from the desire to save the dying world and the documentation of the Nazi crimes) and therapy. In the art of the Warsaw Ghetto, we can distinguish two basic trends—the trend of 'engaged, documentary art', referring to current events, and the trend of art which refers to the idea of beauty and harmony, which is both a cure and an escape from reality. In the ghetto's extreme conditions, art's therapeutic function was extremely important. Contact with it, whether through the act of creation or its reception, provided a chance to forget at least for a short while, and allowed an opportunity to experience catharsis. For more information see: Tarnowska 2011; Tarnowska 2015.

background and bright flowers. [..] There were 3 or 4 landscapes from the ghetto in the folder. Grey, muddy, terrifying..." (Majda-Mincowa 1957).

The fragment quoted above shows that Bornstein tried to face the ghetto's reality, to preserve its image and the evoked feelings.[7] The painter's works did not survive the war, despite the efforts of his friend who, after deportation from the Small Ghetto, in August 1942 found a folder with 20 of his works in a pile of things left over by the residents of the house on Sienna Street. They burnt during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 along with her house at 61 Grzybowska Street. According to Rachela Auerbach, a writer and journalist saved from the ghetto, an ambivalent attitude toward the reality was typical of artists imprisoned in the closed district:

"[..] I remember how one of them [urged to record the tragedy of the ghetto] answered me that then it was necessary to paint bright, sunny things that would give the artist and the viewer the opportunity to escape from the terrifying reality. And when the current reality was over, it would be possible to return to it from retrospection. Nevertheless, each one of them had full portfolios of contemporary works that unfortunately were lost to a large extent" (Auerbach 1948).

Gela Seksztajn (1907–1943), an artist associated with Warsaw and insignificant before the war, today is one of the most well-known figures in the art of the Holocaust owing to the fact that more than 300 of her works along with biography, testaments of both herself and her husband, the writer, teacher, and member of the 'Oneg Shabbat' in the ghetto, Israel Lichtensztejn (1904-1943), as well as various other personal documents constitute a part of the so-called Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto (ARG, since 1999 in the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register).[8]

Her life and creative work are well known thanks to a solo exhibition at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw in 2007 and a catalogue of Seksztajn's works (Tarnowska 2007) dedicated to the publication of a series edited by the Jewish Historical Institute titled *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Tom IV. Gela Seksztajn 1907–1943. Życie i twórczość* [Ringelblum Archive, vol. 4: Gela Seksztajn 1907-1943: Life and Art] of which I am the author (Tarnowska 2011). It is worth recalling, however, that her environment, educa-

[7]Two paintings (the first and the third) were once owned by Bohdana Majda-Minc, while the second one was owned by the artist's family in Tomaszów Mazowiecki.

[8]Izsael [Izrael] Lichtensztejn, born in 1904 in Radzyn Podlaski. He was a teacher, writer, and social activist. He attended the Jewish and then the Hebrew Teacher's Seminary in Vilnius/Wilno (until 1925). In 1932 he moved to Warsaw, where he conducted pedagogical activities and cooperated with the children's press. He was the editorial secretary of the magazine *Literarisze Bleter.* During the German occupation, he took an active part in conspiratorial education and social self-help. In the Underground Archive of the Ghetto he was a secretary, ran the school department and was responsible for hiding a part of the Archive materials. He was killed in the early days of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

tion and political views differed from those of Bornstein. First of all, she was associated with Yiddish culture (although in her adult life she wrote in Polish). She came from a working-class family, and completed her primary education under the patronage of the CISZO [*Centrale Idysze Szul Organizacje*] at 68 Nowolipki Street. Her talent was discovered by the writer Israel Joshua Singer, and thanks to him she joined the circle of the Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists in Warsaw. She studied for only two months at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. Starting in 1931, she regularly participated in exhibitions by Jewish artists that were organised in Warsaw. She belonged to two associations — the Association of Jewish Artists and the Jewish Society for the Promotion of Fine Arts. She specialised mainly in portraiture. Among others, she painted the portraits of Jewish writers, as well as children's portraits for a future exhibition entitled *The Jewish Child*. In 1938 she married Israel Lichtensztejn. She worked in Jewish schools teaching children drawing and handicraft. According to the art historian and art dealer Jozef Sandel (1894—1962):

> "To paint was [Seksztajn's] only desire. [..] The development of her artistic abilities was constantly hampered by harsh living conditions, but she would never lose hope that she would eventually achieve her goal. She drew children with special affection. She loved children and was able to conjure up beauty out of each one of them. She lived, rested and rejoiced when she was painting a Jewish child" (Sandel 1948).

After the war broke out, Gela Seksztajn and Israel Lichtensztejn found themselves in the Warsaw Ghetto, just before its gates were sealed. On 4 November 1940 Seksztajn gave birth to her daughter, Margelit. Apart from his work in the ghetto at 'Oneg Shabbat', Lichtensztejn was active in welfare organisations, and belonged to the kitchen management of School No 145, located on the second floor of the school at 68 Nowolipki Street. Seksztajn taught drawing there, curated exhibitions of her students' work and made costumes and decorations for performances, including *Seasons*, staged at *Femina*, a pre-war cinema hall, in May 1942. Known and appreciated for her commitment, in 1942 she received an award from the Chairman of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniaków.[9] After the liquidation of the ghetto, she stayed with her daughter in the so-

[9]Adam Czerniaków (1880-1942), engineer, activist of Jewish artisan unions, senator of the Republic of Poland (1931–1935), counsellor of the city of Warsaw. He received a degree in chemical engineering from the Warsaw University of Technology and a second diploma from the Faculty of Industry of the Technical University of Dresden. For many years, he served as a legal counsellor to the Jewish Community in Warsaw. He contributed to the expansion of the Mathias Bersohn Museum, and later became its honorary curator. He wrote many scientific works. During the German occupation, he became the Chairman of the Judenrat (Jewish Council) in the Warsaw Ghetto. He co-organised civil resistance and social aid in the ghetto, helped create a covert archive and maintained contacts with the underground, although he opposed plans for armed resistance. He refused to sign the announcement on the forced 'resettlement' of Jews on July, 1942, and committed suicide on July 23.

called 'residual ghetto'. Most likely, both of them perished in April or May 1943 during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Seksztajn's attitude towards the reality of the ghetto was very clearly stated: "I cannot convey the details of our terrible fate, the great tragedy of our nation. I leave it to my colleagues, the Jewish writers" (Seksztajn Gela 1942). Avoiding documenting the tragedy, the artist turned towards life, looking for its positive aspects. Having carried out a formal and thematic analysis, I certified that a self-portrait, as well as portraits of her husband and daughter, pictures of her friends — among them Pola Folman, a paediatrician who worked at the same school — sketches of children, a cigarette seller and three gouache paintings of young girls are all genuine. Most of them are characterised by gentleness in both formal and emotional terms. They are a kind of shelter in a world of feelings for the family, of caring and friendship. Seksztajn's self-portrait has a different, warlike character. This is clearly visible when we compare it with the photograph taken just before the war where one can see a happy woman full of energy and charm. The portrait has only a slight trace of the past image, despite the two images being separated by just two or three years. The lines are restless. Seksztajn's look is hard. Her lips have the expression of fierceness, as if she wanted to say that although she was ready to die, she would save something more than her own life — she would save her work. A similar claim can be noticed in the three portraits that I certified as works created inside the ghetto and depicting young girls whom the artist had portrayed earlier in 1938. However, unlike her earlier compositions these portraits emanate with the overwhelming feelings of cold, resignation and abandonment. The portrayed girls are emaciated, dressed in rags and seen on an almost smooth grey background. The colours of the works are dominated by cool, dark tones. The omnipresence of death is intensified by the addition of a clear shadow of the figure of a small beggar leaning against the wall. This motif had never appeared in her paintings before. It seems that the three portraits, obviously placed intentionally among the works intended to be hidden, were Seksztajn's only acceptable form of portraying the tragedy of the closed district's prisoners.

It should be noted that the extreme existential conditions during the Holocaust raised the need to appeal to a world of positive values, to preserve the memory of the people sharing the same fate as them. Therefore, the most professional and amateur artists devoted themselves to portraiture in the face of ubiquitous death. Hoping that their works would survive the war, they tried to use the art to save a world condemned to be destroyed. Such was the goal pursued by Gela Seksztajn.

"I am an artist, I will use this term, broken in half. I went out of the hell of darkness into the light of the sun. Here in Israel I was reborn. I breathe with its light, the sun and the air. They say that I'm a colourist. Yes. Because I sing all my songs with colours" (Ćwiakowska 1984). These are the words Alexander Bogen used to describe his attitude towards the past and the present. Bogen (actually Katzenbogen, 1916-2010)

was an exceptional figure. A painter and a partisan, Bogen was one of the few 'survivor' artists and fighters who took up arms against the occupiers joining the partisan troops in the forests around the Lake Narach in Belarus. Owing to his heroic war past, he became a kind of symbol of the cultural policy of Israel, where he settled in 1951. Bogen was actively involved in the art field his whole life. He was the President of the Union of Artists in Israel and a, lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His solo exhibitions, more than thirty-five, took place all over the world. Many catalogues and books are dedicated to him, where the album titled *Alexander Bogen* (Amishai-Msisels et al., 2005) and the catalogue *Bogen Alexander, Revolt* (Ghetto Fighters House, 1989) can be mentioned as the most significant ones. His time in Poland between the years 1948-1951 is described in an article written by me (Tarnowska 2014).

From the age of about two, the Tartu-born artist was associated with Vilnius, the second centre of Jewish secular and religious culture after Warsaw.[10] His parents were doctors with left-wing sympathies, and advocates of Jewish culture in the diaspora. At home, an atmosphere of freedom prevailed, confirmed by the fact that Bogen was a member of the Zionist youth organisation, Hashomer Hatzair.[11] After graduating from the secondary school in 1934, he joined the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Stefan Batory University in 1936, where he studied sculpture and painting until June 1941.[12] He debuted in the mid-1930s at exhibitions of the Vilnius' Jewish artistic milieu (Malinowski 2000: 393—394). In May 1940, he married Rachel Szachor (1914—1998).[13]

After the outbreak of the German-Soviet war in 1941, he found himself in the Święciany Ghetto. He escaped from there, and joined the Belarusian partisan fighters in the forest around the Lake Narach located about 100 km from Vilna. Under the pseudonym Szura, he became the commander of the Nekama — or Revenge — platoon. Among the actions carried out by his troops, 150 *Farejnikte Partizaner Organizacje* (FPO) volunteers were transferred from the Vilna Ghetto to the partisans during the liquidation of the ghetto (11 September, 1943). Later, until 1945, he worked for a documentary troop in Voroshilov's brigade, thanks to which he could continue the work that he had begun whilst still in the ghetto to record the everyday life of soldiers. His artistic

[10]Vilnius was called 'Little Jerusalem', and before 1939 the Jewish kehillah numbered 70,000 people.

[11]Hashomer Hatzair (Hebrew from young guard, or scout), left-wing Zionist pioneer organisation, established in Galicia in 1916. Its task was to prepare the youth for kibbutz settlement in Palestine. In 1928, the organisation joined the youth organisation HeChalutz—or Pioneer—on the principle of autonomy. After the war, it conducted social activities and dealt with the organisation of emigration to Palestine. The organisation was dissolved in 1949.

[12]Stefan Batory University was re-opened in 1919 by the Polish authorities, among the lecturers there were Warsaw artists, including Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Ludomir Ślendziński and Tymon Niesiołowski. Forty-five Jews studied there.

[13] The Alexander Bogen Foundation in Tel-Aviv is the owner of Bogen's documents and works of art.

attitude towards the Holocaust contained a desire to save the memory of his combat comrades through art and to preserve for posterity the tragedy that was unfolding:

> "When I asked myself why I was drawing all this, when I am almost constantly fighting, I discovered that I had been guided by the instinct of physical survival. Every person is guided by this instinct, the desire to continue the species in the family, in their children who are part of him in the future. Another motive was to hand over information about German crimes to the free world" (JPEF 2011).

Bogen owes his post-war popularity to a series of drawings he created during the occupation, of which 50 survived, showing events in the ghetto, images of the partisans and the silhouettes and faces of his brothers in arms. They are a testimony to the armed struggle of the Jews, and are particularly desirable by both Polish and Israeli propaganda.

In 1944, Bogen returned to the recently liberated Vilnius and resumed his interrupted studies. He graduated in 1947 with a diploma thesis *Ostatnia rodzina w getcie* [The Last Family in the Ghetto], which, as he said in an interview in 1984, was his symbolic end to the settlement with the past (Ćwiakowska 1984), although he did not completely forget the tragedy that he witnessed. During the three years of his stay in the city, he also created a series of drawings showing the destruction of war. A small girl with a doll, whom he first drew in the ghetto in 1943, started to appear in his paintings towards the end of his life. According to his granddaughter, he used the girl motif as a symbol of the Holocaust tragedy. In 1947, he settled with his wife and son Michał in Łódź. In 1951, they emigrated to Israel and settled in Tel Aviv, and his international painting career started to develop. He continued his education at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, travelled extensively and exhibited his works all over the world, becoming one of the most respected artists in contemporary Israel. For over 60 years, he enjoyed international fame as well as recognition from critics and connoisseurs of art.[14] His works can be found in museum and private collections around the globe. Many of his wartime drawings are in the collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., Israel and several places in Poland including the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and the Museum of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

The discussion about the three artists with different fates, their social and cultural backgrounds and their attitudes towards the Holocaust is a small fragment of my research on the subject. However, it seems that they are, on the one hand, representative examples of the functions that art performed during World War II. On the other

[14]The First State Prize of the Polish People's Republic 1950, in Israel – the Histadrut Prize (1961), the Israel Ministry of Education & Culture Prize (1962), Tel Aviv and Negev awards (1980, 1983).

hand, they are also a point of departure for further reflection on this subject, namely the relationship between a sense of an artist's national or cultural identity, the reality surrounding him or her and art created in response to it.

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Irmina Gadowska
Teresa Śmiechowska

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, Braun-er, 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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Giedrė Jankevičiūtė

Through the Eyes of Witnesses: Visual Evidence of the Ghetto Life in Vilnius and Kaunas During World War II

Abstract

The article is focused on the works of art created, seen and discussed in Lithuania's largest ghettoes in Vilnius and Kaunas as visual evidence of the ghetto life. The author explains the reasons why this phenomenon has been understudied, as well as why the important artefacts, including examples of design, have been overseen. The differences of intensity in artistic life in the Kaunas and Vilnius ghettoes are discussed. The case study of a portrait of the composer, beloved music teacher and Vilnius Ghetto inmate Jacob Gersztein implemented by the painter Roza Suckever is examined as a case study in order to reveal the functioning of works of art in the ghetto and the importance of the image as a form of visual evidence for the contemporaries.

Keywords: design, documental source, Holocaust, ghetto, Lithuania, visual art.

This article is devoted to the phenomenon of works of art created, seen and discussed in Lithuanian largest ghettoes in Vilnius (Vilne) and Kaunas (Kovna, Kovne). First, the key historical facts of these two ghettoes should be recalled. The Vilnius Ghetto was established on 6 September 1941 in the Jewish quarters of the Old Town and liquidated on 23–24 September 1943. The Kaunas Ghetto, also called the Slobodke (in Yiddish) or

Vilijampolė (in Lithuanian) Ghetto after the city's district on the right bank of the River Neris, was founded on 10 July 1941. Jews were ordered to move in by 15 August 1941. Vilijampolė was isolated by the river from the central part of the city. It was also the area densely inhabited by Jewish workers, artisans, small businessmen. That were two main reasons why this particular area was chosen for the construction of the ghettoe at the very beginning of the Nazi occupation. In 1943, the Kaunas Ghetto was converted into a concentration camp, and on 8 July 1944, its liquidation began.

In the so-called stabilisation period, which lasted from January 1942 until the autumn of 1943, mass annihilation campaigns were temporarily halted. During the stabilisation period in the Vilnius Ghetto, on 30 January 1942 the Writers and Artists' Society was established (Kruk 2002: 194–195),[1] and a theatre was founded at which the first premiere took place on 18 January 1942. Art exhibitions, lectures about art and more practical issues such as personal hygiene, diseases etc. also took place at the theatre's premises.[2] The ghetto's inhabitants had mixed feelings towards cultural activities. Some of them were indignant that so much fun was taking place in the presence of death. Yet the majority wanted a distraction from the dreary thoughts, and eagerly attended performances and concerts, which cannot be said about the lectures, which required concentration and intelectual efforts. Statistics about what people were reading also reflect the general mood, the will to relax and to escape from the brutal reality to the world of imagination. Among the most popular writers in the ghetto's library were the authors of high-suspense romantic and adventure novels by Edgar Wallace, Margaret Mitchell, Vicki Baum, Jules Verne, Karl May and Thomas Mayne Reid, as well as War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy and All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque (Fishman 2017: 45). The latter was included in the index of books prohibited in Nazi Germany and occupied countries.

Artistic life in the Kaunas Ghetto was somewhat different, because visual art and design occupied a much more prominent place than in Vilnius. Besides, it is not so challenging to carry out research about the Kaunas Ghetto, as thanks to the Ältestenrat (The Council of the Elders) member Avraham Tory (originally Golub) quite a lot of artefacts have survived to this day. Tory was a lawyer and an outstanding figure within the pre-war Kaunas Jewish community. With the help of his assistant Pnina Sheinzon, whom he later married, Tory accumulated documents and artefacts testifying to the

[1] The Society's executive board consisted of the famous literary and book people Zelik Kalmanovich, Herman Kruk, Abraom Suckever and the artist Jacob Sher. The Society aimed to foster the intellectual traditions of Vilnius. Its main form of activity was lectures and discussions. The Society was supported by the Judenrat—financial subsidies were given and art works were bought. For example, the album The Vilnius Ghetto was purchased from Sher (Kostanian-Danzig, Rachel. Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto. Vilnius: Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus, 2004: 65).

[2] For more about the Vilnius Ghetto cultural activities see: Biber, Jevgenija and Kostanian, Rocha, and Rozina, Judita, eds. *Vilniaus geto afišos. Vilna Ghetto posters. Plakatn fun Vilner getto*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2006.

ghetto's life, and systematically kept a diary.[3] Having put this material into five containers, he hid them away in several places. Three of these containers survived, and after the war were taken to Palestine via Poland and Bucharest.[4] Today, the archive of Pnina and Avraham Tory is held in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Bearing in mind the amount of attention given by society and historians to the fate of Jews in the region defined by the influential American historian Timothy Snyder as the 'bloodlands',[5] it is difficult to explain why the artistic work of the Vilnius and Kaunas Ghetto inmates still remains marginalised. The situation seems paradoxical, since the works of art by the artists who were active in the Kaunas Ghetto played a significant role in two recently held important exhibitions on the ghetto art: the show of portraits of ghetto inmates Last Portrait: Painting for Posterity, held in Yad Vashem in 2012,[6] and Art from the Holocaust, a display of 100 works of art from Yad Vashem, organised in 2016 by Yad Vashem and the Deutsche Historisches Museum in Berlin on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of German-Israeli diplomatic relations.[7] However, the paintings and drawings that were created in the Kaunas Ghetto were presented in both exhibitions as the works of individuals, not taking into consideration the different circumstances of life in each particular ghetto, where they were created, as well as the artists' place of birth and life before the Holocaust. Nor did Jacob Lipschitz (or Jokūbas Lipšicas in Lithuanian), or Josef Schlesinger or Ben Zion (Nolik) Schmidt become important names in the Holocaust art history after these exhibitions were held. Only the cases of two artists who survived the catastrophe — the talented Vilnius-born Samuel Bak, who chose to become an artist after the war, and the Liepaja-born survival Esther Lurie who was imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto — could be seen as an exception from this point of view. These two names are internationally renowned, and a separate wing dedicated to Samuel Bak's work was opened at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum in Vilnius in the autumn of 2018. However, their fame does not contribute towards a better understanding of how important art was for the inhabitants of the ghettos in

[3] Tory's diary is comprised of two volumes: *These Are Laws – In the German Style* and *The Slobodkė Ghetto 1942,* designed by the artists imprisoned in the ghetto, above all, Fritz Gadiel. The diary was published in Hebrew in 1983, in English in 1990 (Tory, Avraham. *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary.* Foreword by Gilbert, Martin; commentaries by Porat, Dina. Harvard University Press, 1990), and in Lithuanian in 2000 (Tory, Avraham. *Kauno getas: diena po dienos*. Foreword by Sužiedėlis, Saulius; commentaries by Porat, Dina. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2000).

[4] https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/avraham-tory; seen on 15 June, 2019.

[5] The term became very popular after the publication of Snyder's book *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010); in Lithuanian: idem, *Kruvinos žemės. Europa tarp Hitlerio ir Stalino* (2011).

[6] See the exhibition's printed catalogue (*Last Portrait: Painting for Posterity,* ed. by Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Art Museum, 2012) and information on the website of Yad Vashem: https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/last_portrait/index.asp; accessed on Febr. 1, 2020.

[7] See, for example, the trilingual catalogue in German, English and Hebrew: Moreh-Rosenberg, Eliad and Smerling, Walter, eds. *Kunst aus dem Holocaust.* האושהמ תונמא. *Art from the Holocaust.* Wienand Verlag, 2016.

Lithuania, or in what kind of circumstances it was created. We still lack a wider and more complex overview of Jewish artistic life and the life of Jewish artists during the Nazi occupation in Ostaland (Reichskommissariat Ostland or RKO), that included not only Lithuania, but also Latvia, Estonia and western Byelorussia.

One of the obstacles for accessing the works of art and understanding the legacy of the artists imprisoned in Lithuanian ghettoes is the fact that the works are scattered in many different institutions: some of them are held in Lithuania, mainly in the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. The Tory collection, as has been mentioned already, was transferred to Yad Vashem in Israel. Several works by Esther Lurie from Kaunas and Alexander Bogen from Vilnius are kept at the Ghetto Fighters House in Lohamei HaGeta'ot kibbutz in Western Galilee. Some works are part of private collections in Israel and the United States. Even in Lithuania, one must dig for evidence of artistic life in the ghettos in different collections. For example, besides the aforementioned Samuel Bak's ghetto period drawings, the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum holds a small bundle of Roza (Rochl) Suckever's (Suck(i)ewer; Suckewer-Uszajewa) drawings and watercolours as well as posters created by her and other artists. The posters are part of the collection of the ghetto theatre's playbills, which is divided between the Museum and the Lithuanian Central State Archive (Biber at al 2006). It is only possible to say something about artistic activities in the Vilnius Ghetto by having all of these artefacts at one's disposal. In order to reconstruct history, all of them are crucial; however, the works and personality of, for instance, Roza Suckever, remain almost unknown outside Lithuania and Poland. In Poland, she is known mainly due to the fact that she along with a few other visual artists such as Szejna Efron, Bencion (Bencje) Michtom, belonged to the Yung Vilne literary group, which was established in the late 1920s to create and promote modern Yiddish art.[8] Her life in the ghetto and fate afterwards remain understudied.

Another reason behind the lack of interest in the artistic heritage of the ghettos, at least in Lithuania, is the fact that none of the ghetto artists has become part of the national art discourse. All of the influential and most famous Jewish artists either moved abroad before the outbreak of the war and thus escaped death (for example, Neemiya Arbit Blatas from Kaunas who settled in New York in 1940), or retreated into the depths of the Soviet Union (for example, Rafael Chvoles from Vilnius), or were killed during the first days of the round-up of Jews (for example, Bencion Michtom in Vilnius or Zalė (Zalman) Bekeris in Kaunas).

Among the early victims of the ghetto killing campaigns were probably the most 'Lithuanian' of the Jewish artists, Černė Percikovičiūtė and Chaimas Mejeris Fainšteinas, who had both been well integrated into the Kaunas art scene and local artistic community before the war. In the meantime, entries about Vilnius Ghetto artists such as

[8] See for comparison Lisek, Joanna. *Jung Wilne – żydowska grupa artystyczna* [Yung Vilne – Jewish Artistic Group]. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2005.

Liza Daiches or Judel Mut, as well as the Kaunas Ghetto artists Peter Gadiel and Josef Schlesinger, are missing even in *The Dictionary of Lithuanian Artists*, which was published as recently as 2013 (Šatavičiūtė-Natalevičienė 2013). In other words, they are still non-existent in the history of Lithuanian art. The reasons can be clarified quite easily. Gadiel and Schlesinger arrived in Kaunas on the eve of World War II. They have been seen as accidental bystanders of Lithuanian cultural history, as their stay in Kaunas was limited to just a few months before the Nazi occupation and their imprisonment in the ghetto. As for Daiches and Mut, they were very young, and so they did not leave a strong imprint on artistic life in Vilnius. Moreover, Vilnius was part of Poland during the interwar period, and so the conviction that Jewish art created in the city during the 1920s and 1930s does not belong to Lithuanian artistic heritage is still present, even if Polish art from the same period is accepted as an integral part of the local heritage. Nevertheless, the situation is slowly changing. An extremely valuable contribution towards the exploration of art history from the Holocaust period is the 2015 book by Aistė Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė on the legendary model of Vilnius produced by the ghetto inmates (Niunkaitė-Račiūnienė 2015). It is a pioneering work, which reveals many interesting facts about cultural activities in the Vilnius Ghetto and its participants.

Among the artists in the ghettoes who survived until the stabilisation period in 1942, Jacob Szer, Roza Suckever and Uma (original name Fania) Olkienicka-Le(h)rer were particularly active in Vilnius (Fig. 1, 2, 3). All three were local artists who were well known in the Vilnius Jewish cultural community and who were already becoming known outside the Jewish milieu. For example, on the eve of the war, Szer held a solo exhibition at the Vilnius City Art Museum. Incidentally, his works were still at the museum when the Nazis occupied the city, and because of his Jewish signature the works became noticed by Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce or ERR) and were subsequently confiscated. Some believe that these paintings, which unfortunatelly were never photographed or registered in any other way, along with the works of other Jewish artists including Rafael Chvoles and Bencion Michtom from Vilnius, and Zalmanas Bekeris, Chaimas Mejeris Fainšteinas, Esther Lurie and Černė Percikovičiūtė from Kaunas,[9] could have been moved to the ERR centre in Berlin (Klimavičius 2011: 92). In short, the final fate of Szer's work is unknown.

All three of the above-mentioned artists were dedicated fosterers of Yiddish culture. Olkienicka worked at the YIVO Jewish Scientific Institute where she headed its Esther Rachel Kaminska's Theatre Museum. Szer, as well as Suckever, as mentioned before, belonged to the milieu of the modernist Yung Vilne group, even if he was not its member. All three firmly believed in leftist ideas, and were influenced by social utopianism, although it was only Suckever who did not avoid open social critique in her work.

[9] See for comparison the list of art works of AG 'Litauen', Lithuanian Central State Archive, f. R-633, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 120-121 and the list of Jewish artists artworks in the depository of the Vilnius Art Museum, Archive of Lithuanian Art Museum, f. 2, ap. 1, b. 31, l. 1-2.

Olkienicka was more interested in graphic design, and Szer won fame as a painter of romantic views of the Old Vilnius.

In the Kaunas Ghetto, Peter Gadiel, Jacob Lipschitz (Jokūbas Lipšicas), Esther Lurie and Josef Schlesinger were particularly active. Among them, only Lipschitz was a native of Kaunas (Fig. 4). He was an alumnus of the Kaunas Art School and, from 1935, a member of the Lithuanian Artists' Union, taking part in the Union's group exhibitions and, in January 1940, holding a solo exhibition at the Union's premises. Lipschitz was killed, and the other three survived. The survivors arrived from other countries and by a turn of fate chose to travel to Lithuania on the eve of the war, where they found themselves at the epicentre of the Holocaust's mayhem.

Of Latvian descent, Esther Lurie's family lived in Palestine from 1934. In 1939, she travelled to Kaunas via France, Belgium and Holland to visit her relatives, where she settled down and began to attend classes at the local art school (Ramonienė 2006: 116). The young and active artist got involved in the local movement of female artists, became close to the Society of Female Artists of Lithuania and took part in its first exhibition in a still independent Lithuania in January 1940. Asked by the Ältestenrat to meticulously document daily life in the Kaunas Ghetto (Fig. 5), Lurie created numerous drawings while living there, and in 1944, she was sent to the Stutthof and then the Leibitsch camp. She survived and returned to Palestine via Italy and died in Tel Aviv in 1998.

Josef Schlesinger was an alumnus of the Prague Academy of Arts, where he had enrolled in 1938. Soon after he began his studies, in the spring of 1939 he was forced to flee the Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia with his parents. In Kaunas, Josef's father opened a textile workshop, while he continued his art studies in Lithuania and married Sarah Siegel. In August 1941, he found himself in the Kaunas Ghetto with his wife and parents. He was offered work at a toy workshop founded by Gadiel. Acting on the Ältestenrat's instructions, Schlesinger together with other artists documented the ghetto life and drew portraits of the Ältestenrat's members and other inmates (Fig. 6).[10] When the ghetto was liquidated, he was sent to Dachau. Schlesinger survived and returned to Prague, where he finished his studies and worked as a painter and the head of several municipal art galleries.

Gadiel and his wife Rene Silverman fled from their native Germany, where they were under the threat of repressions both as Jews and as members of the Communist Party. Having stayed in the Netherlands and England for some time, when the Battle of France was over and the Battle of Britain was about to start in perhaps the late spring of 1940, they left England for Lithuania and joined the Rene's relatives in Kaunas. Lithuania was occupied by the Soviets soon after their arrival, but this was not a problem for Gadiel's family. Having received the nickname Fritz, a pet form of Friedrich and a slang

[10] The majority of his works are held in the Yad Vashem collection, but recently a gallery of Vilijampolė Ghetto Jewish policemen portraits was found at the Lithuanian Central State Archive.

word meaning a German that was very popular during and after World War I, Peter got involved in the activities of the local branch of Agitprop, a communist propaganda organisation. Relations with the Communists and other political activists, together with his extraordinary artistic skills, ensured him an important position in the ghetto, where he founded and ran the so-called art workshop, thus saving the lives of some artistically gifted ghetto inmates who were unfit for heavy physical work. Peter and Rene survived, but their son Raanan, who was born in the ghetto, was killed during the so-called 'Children's Aktion'. According to Gadiel's biographers, he studied at the Bauhaus. However, so far the author of the article has not succeeded in finding his name among the former art school's student lists. In any case, it is obvious that he worked in a similar manner as the Bauhaus alumni, knew the principles of Constructivism, took an interest in typography and, in general, was an excellent graphic designer (Fig. 7, 8).

Today it is practically impossible to establish the authorship of the surviving constructivist-style artefacts from the Kaunas Ghetto, but it is not critically important if it is the work of Gadiel himself or any other artist from his group, as it is hardly possible that without Gadiel's organisation and supervision the information and direction signs and symbols of the ghetto's various services would have ever been created. According to contemporaries from the time, efforts to improve the ghetto's aesthetic environment had a positive psychological effect. A unique common work produced by Gadiel and Tory was a three-dimensional book documenting the ghetto's history, an unusual and impressive example of the pop-up technique. A copy is held in the permanent exhibition at Yad Vashem, and the original is kept in the museum's depository.

Witnesses to the history of the Vilnius Ghetto also confirm the importance of public art. In many memoirs, the décor of the sports ground is mentioned (Fig. 9). Without knowing the context, it is difficult to understand the value of these primitive drawings, but as we imagine in what poverty and distress the Vilnius Ghetto inmates lived, this modest attempt to improve their living conditions and decorate the environment acquires extraordinary meaning and significance. The logo of the Vilnius Ghetto, created by Emanuel Lubocki, as well as the famous collection of the ghetto cultural posters, regain a particular meaning and value in this context as well. That has been discussed by many authors before me (Jevgenija Biber, David Katz, Rocha Kostanian, Markas Petuchauskas, Judita Rozina a. o.; also drama Ghetto (1983) by Joshua Sobol based on the history of Vilnius' Ghetto Theatre could be mentioned).

There was a lack of everything in the ghetto: food, clothes and medical supplies. Artistic materials and tools were hardly a basic necessity. In Kaunas it was somewhat simpler to obtain these things, as paint, paintbrushes, canvas, wood and gypsum were needed for the ghetto's production activities. According to the librarian and ghetto chronicler Herman Kruk, in Vilnius artistic materials were supplied to Jakub Szer, who painted portraits and romantic views of the city's Old Town on commission from the Nazis (Kruk 2002: 189, 321). In special cases, paint was provided to other artists as well, for

example to Roza Suckever, who, among other works created the design and illustrations for the memorable Abraham Suckever poem *Un Azoj Zolstu Rejdn Cum Josem* — or *So Tell It To An Orphan* — which was calligraphically written by her on a separate sheet of high quality paper.[11] However, the largest and most significant part of Suckever's surviving artistic heritage are her portraits of the ghetto inmates. It was in line with the general intention of the ghetto's artists to document the ghetto's life and its inhabitants as consistently as possible. During 'richer' periods, Suckever used paint (mainly acquarrel), whilst in 'meagre' periods, she had to do with pencils and sepia. All works of art, even the most modest ones, found a viewer in the ghetto, some of them becoming notable events in the community's life. For example, Suckever's drawings of Jacob Gersztein (Yankev Gerstein) are described in detail by several of the ghetto's chroniclers.

Gersztein was a well-known music teacher, composer and children's choirmaster who was popular with parents and children alike. He passed away on 27 September 1942 after a short illness. His physical state, of course, was aggravated by depression, so for many ghetto inmates the loss of Gersztein seemed even bigger — one more deep injustice which they got to bear. His death is mentioned in many of the ghetto's diaries. It was recorded by Herman Kruk (Kruk 2002: 363-364),[12] commented upon by Grigorij Shur (Šuras 1997: 84) and lamented by the teenager Isaac Rudaszewski who described Gersztein as a beloved and respected teacher, a family friend and a moral authority for young people (Rudaševskis 2018: 104-107). According to the historian of Jewish literature Mindaugas Kvietkauskas who studied and translated Rudaszewski's diary from Yiddish to Lithuanian:

> "The author of the diary emotionally identified with him, because of his personal charm, his sincerity, valour and the values that he naturally imparted to the children. In the words of the fourteen-year-old, these values are named, simply but consciously, national pride, love for the native language, music and poetry. Without these, the teacher could not imagine his and other people's future, thus keeping them alive" (Rudaševskis 2018: 20).

At Gersztein's memorial service shiva held on 4 October 1942 in the hall of a former Jewish bank that had been transformed into the ghetto theatre, Isaac was listen-

[11] This artefact is kept in the collection of Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. The author of the article is grateful to the museum's curators Ilona Murauskaitė and Irina Nikitina for the information. According to Murauskaitė, the authorship was suggested by the researcher of the Yung Vilne group Joanna Lisek.

[12] Kruk recalled the event in detail, pointing out that "a delegation of literati, consisting of Kalman[owicz], Kr[uk], Blacher, L. Rudnicka, and Bergolski" stood at the bed of the dying Gersztein, and the artist Rachel Suckever drew him. That drawing, according to note no 50 in the English translation of Kruk's diary, was reproduced in the first volume of the memoir by Shmerke Kaczerginski *Khurbn Vilne* [The destruction of Vilna] (1947: 80–81). However, this information is misleading, since the reproduction presents the same portrait, which survived and now belongs to the collection of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum in Vilnius. It was created by Roza Suckever a month later after the death of Gersztein on the occasion of his *shloshim.*

ing to solemn speeches, Gersztein's favourite songs sung by the renowned singer Luba Levicka and a new poem in memory of the deceased by the talented poet Abraham Suckever. Also, he was looking at the images of the dead Gersztein created by Roza Suckever (Rudaševskis 2018: 109). There were two of them. "A violinist performs several compositions. I am looking at the portrait of the deceased. He seems to be asleep, lulled to sleep by the melody...." Isaac confessed (Rudaševskis 2018: 109).

The surviving image of Gersztein, a modest drawing in sepia, was created by Suckever for the occasion of his shloshim, the thirty-days-after-burial memorial which was celebrated on 27 October 1942 in the ghetto theatre (Fig. 10). Gersztein's portrait by Suckever is an impressive visual document, based on the sketches drawn from life and addressed to those at time who did not participate in the depicted scene but who desperately needed to feel that they were witnesses of it, and future generations, namely, us. Both then and now, the viewer is stunned by the likeness of the portrait and the portrayed, the image and its model — what German art historian and visual culture theoretician Hans Belting calls 'likeness and presence'.[13] The distance that an artwork provides is very important: it gives particular value to the personality, subject, event depicted in art work, makes it single and unrepeatable. In 1942 and before, there was so much actual death around that it often no longer seemed unique or significant. A work of art helped to realise the uniqueness of the depicted event, and transferred the experience of the daily life to another level, rendering it exclusive, enriching it with meaning and nobility. Certainly, visual art could not offer such intense moments of consolation and joy as music, theatre or literature for people brutally torn off from their usual life and imprisoned in an alien environment, constantly undergoing spiritual and physical suffering, living in poverty, contempt and constant fear of death, but it was also necessary and irreplaceable. Referring to Gersztein's portrait, we can once again underline the importance of the practical use of art in the conditions of the ghetto life.

The collection of posters for the ghetto's cultural events includes an announcement for Gersztein's shloshim, which, as already mentioned before, was held in the ghetto theatre on 27 October 1942 (Fig. 11). It is written in the skilled hand of a professional, obviously one of the ghetto's artists. It is an elegant calligraphic poster, by its form sending a message about the respect of the evening's organisers for the deceased and his work. According to Rudaszewski, who read his school essay about Gersztein during the event, "the hall was crammed with people" (Rudaševskis 2018: 124). The assembled soaked up the speakers' words and listened emotionally to the songs performed by Abraham Sliep's choir. Issac was deeply moved by the prophecy of his teacher, Baruch Lubocki, who said that it was not until after the war that Gersztein's loss would be properly comprehended: "We don't know what life after the war will look like,

[13] See for comparison Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

but we know for sure that the place of teacher Gersztein remains empty and nobody can replace him. And it is not until after we manage to restore our life that we will truly realise how great this loss has been" (Rudaševskis 2018: 125). Music, beautiful and meaningful words, and the feeling of togetherness along with such details as an artistic portrait of the deceased and a beautiful poster inviting people to the event helped the ghetto's inhabitants to feel dignified in the dehumanising reality of life. These artefacts clearly demonstrated that every single human being and every single life was unique, valuable and significant even in a world, which tried to neglect that sentiment.

Gersztein's portrait survived in one of the ghetto's hiding places, where along with other finds discovered after the war it was handed over to the newly created Jewish Museum in Vilnius (Fig. 12). The Museum also had Suckever's pre-war painting *Homeless Boy* (circa 1939), a moving image of a street child, clearly showing that Suckever was deeply concerned about the wrongs suffered by the ill-fated. In the midst of Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign, when the Jewish Museum was closed in 1949, Gersztein's image found itself in the Revolution Museum of the Lithuanian SSR, as it was seen as a visual document, not a work of art, and *Homeless Boy* was given to the Lithuanian Art Museum. These two artefacts by the same artist were reunited in a single collection after 1989, when the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum was founded in Vilnius.

Gersztein's portrait is an excellent proof that an image created by an artist is a kind of memory capsule, bringing us closer to the reality behind the image that inspired its creation. An, image or a group of cognate images, can be easily turned into a personalised story, or at least its rudiment. That is why images have the power to kindle the imagination, which is indispensable in bringing the time of 'others' closer to the present. Photographs are not enough for this purpose. Works of art born in the conditions of dehumanising life are particularly powerful, as we see them as an attempt to withstand the pressure from the environment, to retain personal dignity and identity. No less interesting is the informational layer contained in the images, allowing us to realise the circumstances of their creation — in this case, the reality of the Holocaust victims. In other words, art created in ghettoes is not just art, and it pertains not only to Jewish memory. It deserves to be more visible, more appreciated and more deeply understood. All manifestations and forms of totalitarian domination which humanity faced in the 20th century, either exerted by the Nazis or the communists, including intimidation, restrictions, torture, prisons and labour camps, radically changed the life of both the victims and the witnesses. In other words, art such as this, signals to us about such situations, becomes their authentic proof, and encourages and helps us to revise them.

In the presence of an artwork that was born under the conditions of terror, its aesthetical value becomes less significant and is measured differently, as the very fact of the emergence/birth of a work of art in extremely difficult conditions becomes most important. Yet, the works in which we see a spark of talent and perceive creativity affect us most deeply. It does not necessarily have to be an artist of Felix Nussbaum's

scale. No less powerful are Samuel Bak's childish drawings made in the Vilnius Ghetto or Jacob Lipschitz's modest works from the Kaunas Ghetto. These drawings reflect the double function of art very well; we accept them both as the evidences of artistic talent and the visual documents of particular situation, the time of 'others'.

To take Bak's case, his drawings, first of all, testify to his attempts to escape from reality. They present a talented child's imaginary world, a world in which we recognise visions inspired by the books he read and the impressions of his former peaceful and normal life (Fig. 13). Interestingly, in those rare cases when Bak depicted the actual reality — the ghetto boys in rags, a tattered old woman, a roundup or tenants in a crammed room — his individual style would change (Fig. 14). It seems as if the boy's hand is constrained by the misery and the necessity to look for images yet undiscovered by other artists. An identical phenomenon related to the horror of reality surpassing imagination, and the inability to refer to any iconographic tradition, has been noticed by other researchers of art created in extreme conditions or as a result of traumatic experience (Barskova 2012: 546).

The author of the article would like to conclude with a cityscape by Jacob Lipschitz depicting the panorama of a modest suburb in Kaunas, which became the central part of the ghetto under the Nazis (Fig. 15). The value of this artistically rather insignificant work is created by its documentary value, our knowledge of the circumstances and the context of its emergence. In other words, it demonstrates that the Holocaust artworks are very often not self-sufficient, existing above all as an indexical reference to historical reality which we are unable either to fully comprehend or logically explain. However, there are artefacts, which have power to establish a particularly strong emotional link connecting us with that reality, and not allowing it to drift away.

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Lithuanian Central State Archive, Vilnius

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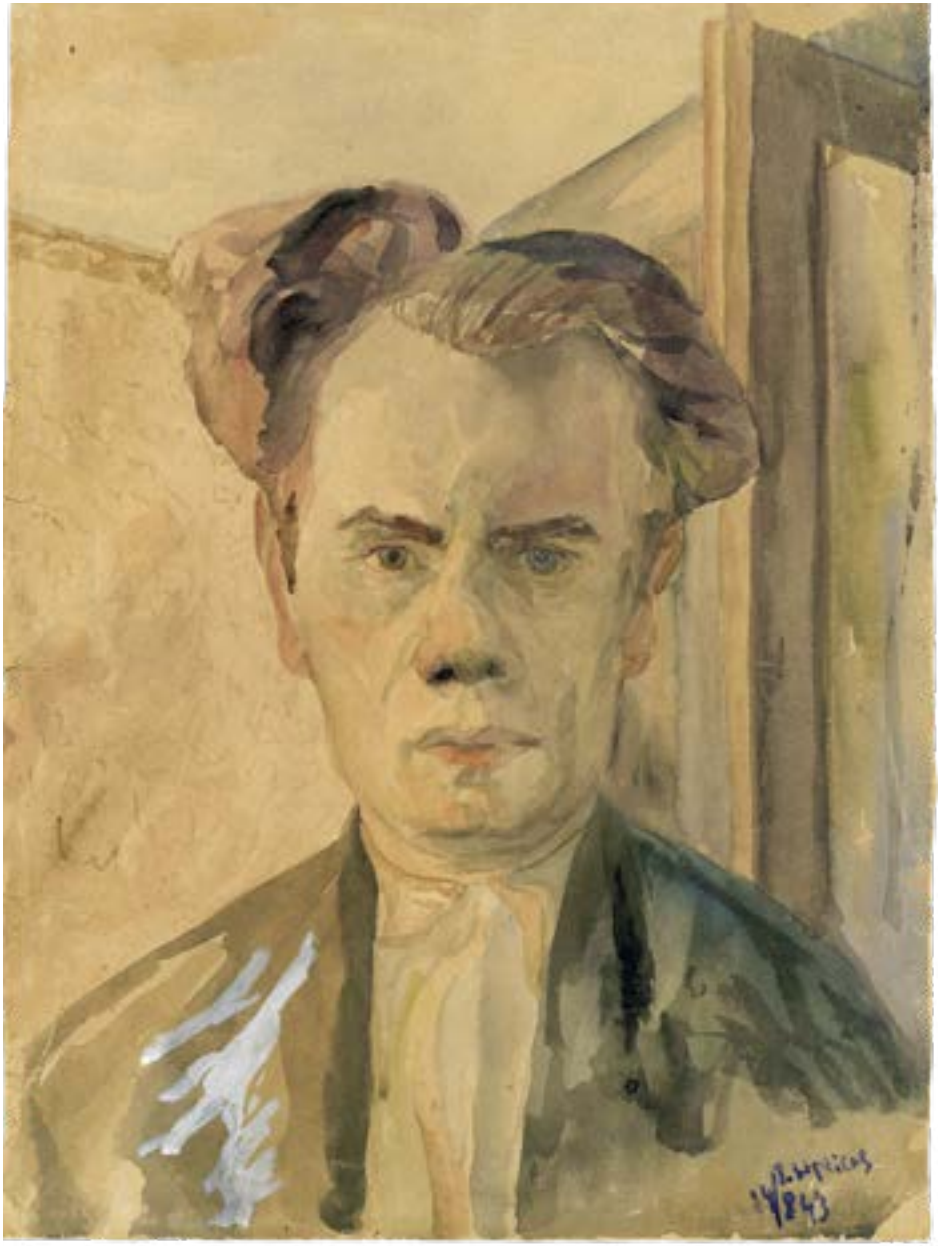
Fig. 3. *Spread of a passport with photo, issued to Fania (later Uma) Olkienicka in 1926 in Vilnius. Lithuanian Central State Archive, Vilnius*



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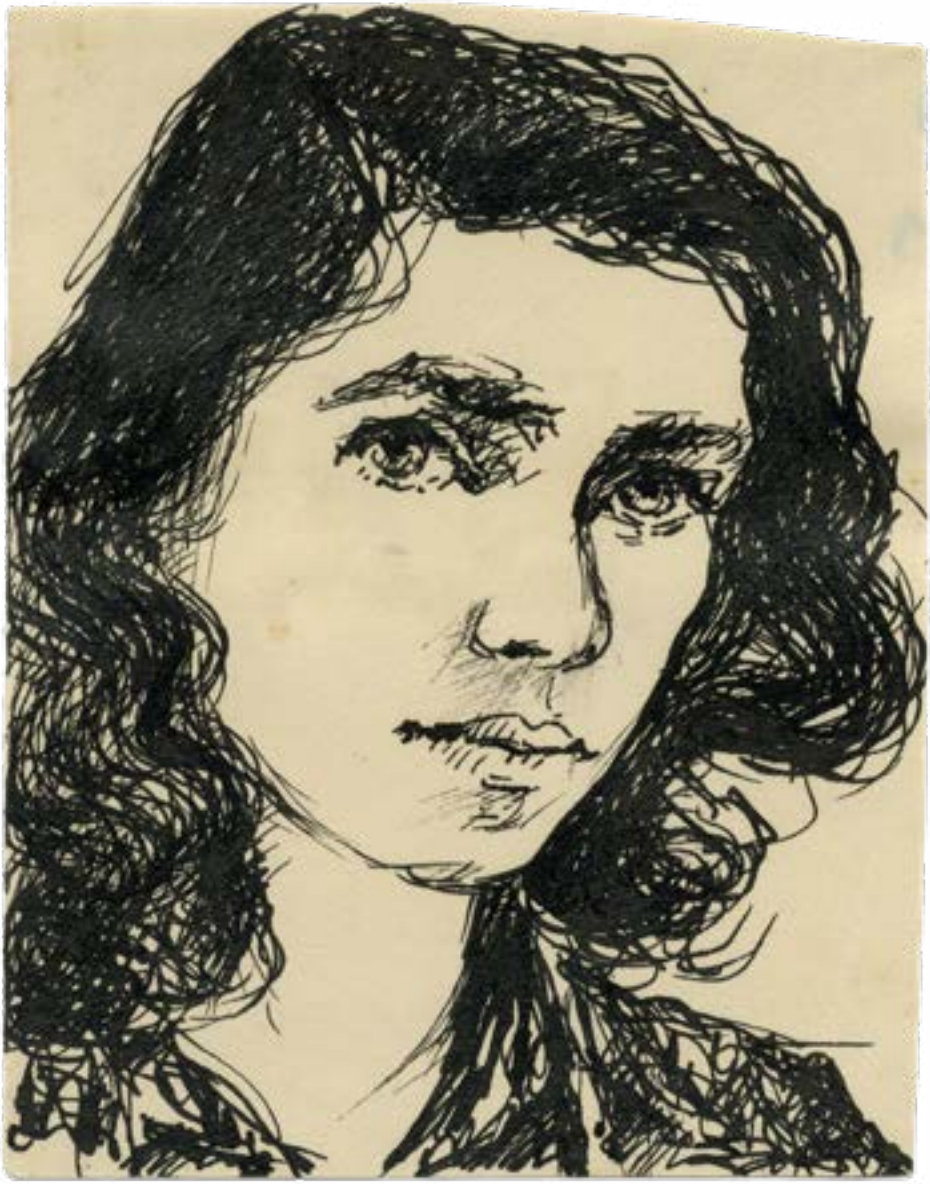

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Vilma Gradinskaite

Visual Art as a Supplementary Source for Holocaust Studies: the Case of the Kaunas Ghetto

Abstract

This article sheds light on the artistic life in the Kaunas — or Kovno — Ghetto (Vilijampolė; Sloboda) from its establishment on August 15, 1941 to its liquidation between July 8 and 13, 1944. It presents the biographies and works of artists who were prisoners, direct witnesses and perpetuators in the Kaunas Ghetto. Art surviving from this period and place consequently led to focus on four main artists — Jacob Lipschitz, Esther Lurie, Ben Zion Schmidt and Josef Schlesinger. The author of the article questions how many artists were imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto, and how many of them continued to create; what were the main goals and reasons of the ghetto artists to create in such inhumane conditions; how many works of art from the Kaunas Ghetto have survived; what themes predominated in the art created in the Kaunas Ghetto; and how the art created in the Kaunas Ghetto changed and differed from earlier work created 'on the other side of the fence'.

Keywords: Holocaust art, Kaunas Ghetto, Jewish artists, Jacob Lipschitz, Esther Lurie, Ben Zion Schmidt, Josef Schlesinger

Holocaust studies include very different kinds of sources and Holocaust-related materials in all formats. Generally, research priority is given to an analysis of primary sources — original historical documents such as the Nazi records, prisoners' diaries

and letters, photographs and film footage. However, supplementary sources such as memoirs and oral history interviews of survivors or liberators, as well as poetry, music, posters and art created in the ghettos and concentration camps contain a lot of valuable information, and expand the boundaries of Holocaust studies.

This article sheds light on the artistic life in the Kaunas — or Kovno — Ghetto as well as the biographies and creative work of artists, who were prisoners, direct witnesses and perpetuators of the Kaunas Ghetto life. The author of the article questions how many artists were imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto, and how many of them continued to create; what were the main goals and reasons of the ghetto artists to create in such inhuman conditions; how many works of art from the Kaunas Ghetto have survived; what themes predominated in the art created in the Kaunas Ghetto; and how the art created in the Kaunas Ghetto changed and differed from earlier work created 'on the other side of the fence'.

To answer these questions, the author explored visual materials — watercolours, drawings and sketches—stored in the collections at the Yad Vashem Art Museum, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), The Art Collection at the Ghetto Fighters' House (GFH) and the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History (VGMJH).[1]

The analysis contains investigation of different types of written documents held at the Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, the Kaunas Regional State Archives (KRSA), the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCSA), the Lithuanian State Historical Archives (Lithuanian SHA), the Latvian State Historical Archives (Latvian SHA) and the Lithuanian National Museum of Art (LNMA). Special attention was drawn to the diaries written by Ilya Gerber, Chaim Jelin, Dr. Avraham Golub-Tory, Tamara Lazerson-Rostovsky, Esther Lurie and others. The author would like to express her gratitude and appreciation to Dusia Lan Kretchmer and Mirjam Lan Davidson, the nieces of the artist Ben Zion Josef (Nolik) Schmidt, for the photographs and rich biographical information.

Although the subject of this article is not entirely new, previously it has been presented in fragments; therefore, it calls for more in-depth research into the artistic life in the Kaunas Ghetto. Jewish artists in the Kaunas Ghetto were presented for the first time in 1997 at the exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto* (ed. Dr. Walter Reich), where the USHMM researchers brought together unique materials from Lithuania, Israel and the United States to reveal a compelling and unforgettable view of Jewish life, loss, survival and defiance in the Kaunas Ghetto during the Holocaust. In Lithuania, artwork by artists from the Kaunas Ghetto was exhibited at the exhibition *The Lost World*, curated by Roza Bieliauskienė in 2004 at the VGMJH. The art historian at the VGMJH Irina Nikitina was the first in Lithuania to systematically

[1] If no storage location is specified in parentheses, the artwork is held at the Yad Vashem Art Museum. If no date is written in parentheses, the artwork is undated.

study the subject of Jewish artists killed at the Ninth Fort in Kaunas. In 2007, she wrote several short biographies of the artists in the exhibition catalogue entitled *Art and Fate of Jewish Painters from Kaunas*. Artwork by these artists was incorporated into a permanent exposition at the VGMJH.

Working at the VGMJH (2005—2020), the author of the article conducted research into art from the Vilnius — or Vilna — and the Kaunas Ghetto, and presented the results in a series of public lectures, *Artistic Life in the Kaunas Ghetto*, *Artistic Life in the Vilnius Ghetto* and *Samuel Bak and His Art in the Vilnius Ghetto* (in 2009, 2010 and 2012, respectively). Some results of the author's research were presented at the exhibition and album *Lithuania in Litvak Arts* (2018), as well as at the international conference *Art and the Holocaust* in 2019 in Riga.

Studies on Holocaust art by the art historians Dr. Ziva Amishai-Maisels and Dr. Pnina Rosenberg had an important impact on indicating the direction of research to be followed. In addition, this article would have been impossible to write without strong research foundation on the establishment, functioning and liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto as well as the statistics of the victims, the structure of the internal administration and anti-Nazi resistance conducted by Dr. Arūnas Bubnys in his fundamental study *The Kaunas Ghetto 1941–1944* (2014).

Discrimination and persecution of the Kaunas' Jews began during the first days of the German occupation of the city. Soon after German forces entered Kaunas, the Kaunas Ghetto was established, which was sealed several weeks later on August 15, 1941 in Vilijampolė (Sloboda). The first months in the ghetto were marked by a period of mass slaughter. Between November 1941 and September 1943, the ghetto was in a state of relative stability. About 17,000 Jews, or about half of the Jews who had lived in Kaunas before the war, remained in the ghetto during this second period. The ghetto became a kind of microstate, with its own government, economy and forms of spiritual and cultural life. In the autumn of 1943, the ghetto was transformed into an SS concentration camp. Between July 8 and 13, 1944 the Kaunas Ghetto was liquidated: buildings were burned, about 1,000 Jews were killed and about 6,000-7,000 Jews were transported to German concentration camps including Dachau and Stutthof. Approximately 500 Kaunas Ghetto prisoners managed to escape during the three years of the ghetto's existence (Bubnys 2014: 29–119).

Many famous cultural figures, including writers, musicians, actors and artists, were forced to move into ghettos in Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Žagarė. Most brought their musical instruments and art equipment with them. From the first days in the ghettos, Jews were faced with a dilemma as to whether it would be appropriate to continue with their cultural activities under such inhumane conditions. Some were of the opinion that it would be wrong to amuse themselves in the context of the killings, and even boycotted the first cultural events in the ghettos. Others were of the opinion that any cultural activity would be good for the spirits and increase the desire to survive.

The Nazis sought to restrict cultural activities in the ghettos in order to break the spirits and the desire to live of those incarcerated. On August 18, 1941, three days after the Kaunas Ghetto gates were sealed, the Nazis carried out the so-called 'Intellectuals Action', during which a total of 534 men from various professional and cultural backgrounds were killed. Afterwards, most musicians, actors and painters were afraid to openly declare themselves as being members of the professional and cultural classes. Only during the summer of 1942, after the first major killing actions had stopped, the cultural life in the Kaunas Ghetto was revived with music concerts, poetry evenings, theatre performances and art exhibitions taking place inside the ghetto's Police House located in the former Slabodka Yeshiva. Daniel Pomerantz, Moshe Hofmekler and the brothers Alexander (Shmaya) and Boris Stupel organised an orchestra of 40 musicians, and a total of 80 concerts were given during the lifetime of the Kaunas Ghetto. During the so-called 'Police Action' of March 27, 1944, only the musicians were spared from being sent to the Ninth Fort. "Though the first concert, which began with a moment of silence followed by *Kol Nidre* (the opening hymn of the Yom Kippur service), featured only serious music, many in the ghetto felt it was indecent to hold concerts in a place of mourning. They considered these concerts to be solely for the ghetto elite and a desecration of the yeshiva. Despite this criticism, most felt that the concerts served a useful purpose in raising the morale in the ghetto" (*The Kovno Ghetto Orchestra*, USHMM).

In spite of all the prohibitions imposed by the Nazis and the different attitudes to cultural activities by the Jews, concerts, literary evenings and exhibitions were held, theatrical groups staged plays, orchestras gave concerts and choirs sang in the ghetto. As the Jewish librarian and writer Herman Kruk wrote in his ghetto diary: "Nonetheless, life is stronger than anything. Life in the Vilna Ghetto begins to recover. It creeps in from under the Paneriai curtain with a hope to live to see a better tomorrow… The previously boycotted concerts are very popular. Audiences crowd to see them" (Kruk 2002: 266).

At least 10 Jewish artists who were active during the interwar period were incarcerated in the Kaunas Ghetto, including the painter and art teacher Zale Beker, who was famous for his social subjects (1896, Leckava-1941, Kaunas), the promising young graphic artist Ana Gurvichiute (Gurvičiūtė, 1921, Kaunas-?, Kaunas), the graphic artist and book illustrator Meyer Chona Fainstein (Fainšteinas, 1911, Kaunas-1944, Kaunas), the great landscape painter Eliya Kivel Kaplan (1912, Marijampolė-1944, Kaunas), the young graphic artist David Kapulski (1921, Kaunas-?, Kaunas), the well-known painter, book illustrator and art teacher Jakov Lipschitz (Lipčicas, 1903, Kaunas-1945, Dachau), the artist Esther Lurie (1913, Liepaja-1998, Tel Aviv), her relative, the painter Gitel Lurie (1909, Biržai-?, Kaunas), the excellent expressionist painter Cherne Percikovichiute (Černė Percikovičiūtė, 1911, Kaunas-1942, Kaunas), the student Ben Zion Josef (Nolik) Schmidt (Šmidtas, 1926, Kaunas-1944, Kaunas), the flamboyant theatre designer Sholom Zelmanovich (Zelmanavičius, 1903, Vilnius-1944, Kaunas) and the young artist Josef Schlesinger (1919, Brno-1993, Prague), who moved to Kaunas following the Nazi oc-

cupation of his native Czechoslovakia during 1938 and 1939. Some of these artists were already mature professionals by the time they were imprisoned in the ghetto. They participated in the joint exhibitions alongside Lithuanian artists, and some of them had their own solo exhibitions — Beker in 1933, 1935 and 1937, Lipschitz in 1940, Esther Lurie in 1939 and 1940, Percikovichiute in 1934 and Zelmanovich in 1925 and 1928. The future creative careers of the other artists were all cut short by the events of 1941.

The years 1939—1945 brought drastic changes within the world of Jewish art and art heritage. With the exception of Esther Lurie and Josef Schlesinger, all of the other artists mentioned here were either murdered at the Ninth Fort or died from disease and starvation. The previously rich and multifarious Jewish art heritage of the interwar period was also lost. The paintings, sculptures, watercolours, drawings, and sketches left in the artists' studios and homes either burned or disappeared, and only a tiny part of their work survives to this day. Some of the above mentioned artists gave up their artistic activities in the Kaunas Ghetto, or the work that they created in the ghetto either did not survive or is yet to be discovered. The art created by others was more fortunate, surviving thanks to the collections of Dr. Avraham Golub-Tory and Jakov Lipschitz that were hidden in the ghetto.

A large part of the Kaunas Ghetto documents, photographs and art was collected and saved thanks to the wisdom and courage of the personnel of the *Ältestenrat* (the Jewish Council of Elders), especially that of its chairman Dr. Elchanan Elkes and secretary Dr. Avraham Golub-Tory. Dr. Elchanan Elkes (1879, Kalvarija-1944, Dachau) studied medicine in Konigsberg, and worked as a doctor and a physician. Following the liquidation of the ghetto he was killed by the Nazis at the Dachau concentration camp. Dr. Avraham Golub-Tory (1909, Lazdijai-2002, Tel Aviv; he added the Hebrew 'Tory' to his Russian surname Golub — meaning 'dove' — in 1950) completed a law degree in Kaunas, and worked as an assistant on civil law at the Vytautas Magnus University in the city. With the help of the priest Bronius Paukštys, Golub-Tory escaped the ghetto on March 23, 1944 and spent the final months of the war hiding on a farm belonging to the Jurkšaičiai family outside Kaunas (Bronius Paukštys was recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations' in 1977, and Juozapas and Marijona Jurkšaičiai in 1990. All were awarded the 'Life Saving Cross').

The *Ältestenrat* was divided into different departments, including a graphics workshop called the *Paint and Sign Workshop* that was headed by Peter (Fritz) Gadiel. Gadiel was born in 1910 in Germany, and was imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto whilst visiting his wife Rene Silverman's relatives. Gadiel, who trained at the Bauhaus during the early 1930s, was well on his way to a promising career as a graphic artist. Both Gadiel and his wife survived the Holocaust. Their three-year-old son, Raanan, who was born in the ghetto, was killed (*Three Members…*, Yad Vashem; Reich 1997: 111–113).

The graphics workshop employed many who were considered 'unfit for hard labour', and thereby it saved many lives. Several cartographers, draftsmen, graph-

ic designers and fine artists worked here, among them Lipschitz, Lurie, Schmidt, and Schlesinger. Together with Gadiel, they created signs for the offices and police in the ghetto, including insignias, logos, armbands, posters, calendars, events programmes, ghetto currency, work cards, passes, coupons, and other documents. They also produced charts, graphs and an annual almanac capturing in excruciating detail the ghetto's demographics, health, work, bureaucracy and dwindling population. Gadiel assigned artists to projects ordered by the Germans, who demanded the copying of artistic masterpieces for their own private collections. In addition, Gadiel employed many Jews for other work that he did for the Germans, thus raising their chances of survival (Tory 1990: 432).

Understanding the importance of documenting ghetto life for future generations, the *Ältestenrat* asked artists and photographers to devote some of their time to secretly document the ghetto life, its inhabitants and events. Among the artists who responded to the call were Lipschitz, Lurie, Schmidt, and Schlesinger as well as the photographer Zvi (Hirsh) Kadushin (1910–1997; after the war he changed his name to George Kadish). Dr. Golub-Tory also took clandestine photographs until his camera was confiscated. The *Ältestenrat* commissioned artists to immortalise street scenes, key events and important persons, and organised the guards while artists were drawing in the streets of the ghetto. As the secretary of the *Ältestenrat* and the ghetto's chief archivist, Dr. Golub-Tory was able to collect and hide hundreds of documents, photographs and drawings. Just before the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto, he buried five wooden crates containing his diary and all the collected items. In August 1944, after the liberation of Kaunas, Dr. Golub-Tory returned to the ghetto in search of the five crates that he had hidden in a bunker beneath an unfinished apartment building. He only managed to retrieve three of the five crates, and took the contents to Poland, and afterwards to Tel Aviv in October 1947 (Tory 1990: xiv). His diary and saved archive materials, including several watercolours and drawings, were used as evidence by investigators against Lithuanian and German perpetrators and served as an extraordinary eyewitness account.

Only the work of four of the more than 10 Jewish artists who were imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto survived World War II and the Holocaust. Today the watercolours, drawings and sketches by Lipschitz, Lurie, Schmidt, and Schlesinger are held in collections at the Yad Vashem Art Museum, the USHMM, the GFH and the VGMJH. Some of the work is also in the possession of private collectors.

Jakov Lipschitz (Lifschitz) was born in 1903 in Vilijampolė. His father, Eizer (born in 1870 in Raseiniai), owned a fruit shop, and was one of the owners of *Trade Enterprises*. His mother, Chase (Kashe) Meer, was a housekeeper. Jakov had a sister, Chana and two bothers, Shloma and Gdaliya (1903, Lithuania Births, Lithuanian SHA; 1939–1940, Tax and Voter Lists, KRSA). Jakov attended cheder and a Russian school before World War I. During the war, the Lipschitz family, as with most other Lithuanian Jewish families living in what was then the Russian Empire, was deported to the Crimea. Later, the family

moved to the Ukrainian city of Melitopol, where the young Jakov saw an art exhibition for the first time. He later recalled: "One artist came and exhibited his works. His exhibition and the artist's own appearance impressed me deeply. [..] I decided to become an artist, and my first experience to paint was in an art studio established by the Bolsheviks in Melitopol" (1936, Lipschitz, LNMA). In 1922, the Lipschitz family returned to Kaunas, which served as the temporary capital of Lithuania during the interwar period.

Between 1923 and 1929, Lipschitz studied painting at the Kaunas Art School and was noticed for his watercolours, woodcuts and lithographs. After graduating, the artist joined the activities of the Lithuanian Artists' Association, and worked as an art teacher in Jewish high schools in Virbalis, Vilkaviškis and Kaunas. He frequently participated in exhibitions, and had his own solo show in 1940 (Jakovo Lipšico... 1940). Art critics praised his landscapes, portraits, still lifes and Jewish-themed work, highlighting its philosophical properties: "Lipschitz's decorative paintings require serious contemplation, and only after contemplation does his work become understandable and unambiguous, and show the ambitions of its creator" (Leikovičius 1940: 7).

During the mid-1930s, Lipschitz married Liza (Lea) Zachrozitzki (born in 1912 in Virbalis), with whom he had one daughter, Pepa (Pepa Sharon). The family lived in Vilijampolė on the territory where the Kaunas Ghetto was later established. The family was imprisoned in their home, and Lipschitz was able to continue to paint secretly in his attic studio. He was assigned to a forced labour brigade, and worked in the graphics workshop together with several other artists.

Just before the liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto, Lipschitz buried more than 75 watercolours and drawings, as well as a few photographs and his so-called 'Final Will and Testament', dated July 5 and 6, 1944, in ceramic pots. Among his final words were:

> "Life in the ghetto froke my spirit forever, and I am unable to return to myself. I paint a little, and I sketch what one finds here. I have not written anything until today, because I wanted to convey my thoughts in creativity and painting in the pictorial arts. [..] The knife of the beast lies at our throat already. Do not leave behind the few drawings of mine which you will find here" (1944, Lipschitz, LCSA).

Jakov Lipschitz was transported to the Dachau concentration camp, and from there to the Kaufering forced labour camp where he died of starvation in March 1945. His wife and daughter escaped from the ghetto thanks to their friends, the Zabielavičiai family, whom they knew from Jakov's teaching days in Virbalis (Juozas Zabielavičius was recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations' in 2002; Juozas and Emilija Zabielavičiai were awarded the 'Life Saving Cross' in 1998). After the war, Liza discovered her husband's hidden items among the ghetto ruins, and donated all of the watercolours and drawings to the Yad Vashem Art Museum when she and her daughter emigrated to Israel in 1957.

Lipschitz's watercolours and ink drawings reflect the ghetto and its inhabitants. The artist often drew panoramas from the studio in his attic, presenting a bird's-eye view of his surroundings. Among these works are the watercolours *Kaunas Ghetto Scene* (1943) and *The Ghetto*. Lipschitz never sought to reflect reality in detail, and neither did he attempt to beautify it. The atmosphere and the internal feelings of the artist were already there. He generalised form by using coloured stains, and created a gloomy mood by using limited, muted colours and soft brush strokes. When analysing Lipschitz's work, the art critics of the interwar period in Kaunas noticed melancholy and sadness in his art, a quality that intensified in the ghetto: "The art by Lipschitz leads the viewer to a horrible melancholy and sorrow. Lipschitz mourns. He mourns for all those with him. The talented child mourns for everyone" (Tarabilda 1940: 6). This tragic note now sounds like a prophecy.

A different vision is presented in the artist's drawing *Mokyklos Street* (School Street), in which Lipschitz drew a cobbled street with rows of impoverished wooden houses on both sides and people going about their daily business. The drawing was executed from a low perspective, as if the artist was hiding in a basement. His drawing *At a Table in the City Brigades Office* (1941) shows a small crowded room, where men with the Star of David sewn on their clothing are waiting for work assignments in order to get through the ghetto gate in the hope of gaining an extra slice of bread. Two drawings, *The Little Market* and *The Market in the Street*, show a group of people, mostly women and youngsters, holding trade pallets with items to sell. These black market traders look around nervously, as trade and re-sale in the ghetto were strictly forbidden.

Lipschitz's sketch *Schoolroom* shows a group of pupils sitting behind benches, with one of the boys standing and answering the teacher's questions. Education had always been a major priority in the ghetto, but it was only during the period of stabilisation that parents could think about educating their children. Two schools were established, with about 200 students in each, but the German authorities had the schools closed in August 1942. "This blow, though severe, did not quite mark the end of education in the ghetto. Illegal private education continued" (Reich 1997: 36).

Lipschitz also produced a number of hastily drawn pencil, crayon and ink portraits. His ghetto portraits gallery immortalised the teachers Eliya Taitz (1942) and Rivka Burstein (1942). Some of the portraits feature the exact date on which they were drawn, such as the portraits of the clerk Bella Berlowitz, drawn on August 15, 1941, the little girl Izia Rosenkranz, drawn on November 18, 1943, the artist's wife, drawn on January 9, 1944 and a self-portrait, drawn on August 14, 1943. Others are yet to be identified, such as *Profile of a Woman* (1942), *Portrait of a Man Wearing a Hat* (1942), *Man with a Tilted Head* (c. 1943) and *Portrait of a Woman* (January 22, 1944). Most of these portraits do not show the official style and formality of usual commissioned portraits, and are drawn using expressive soft lines from different angles. Some of them

are drawn from above, similar to the ghetto panoramic views painted by Lipschitz, and show the tops of people's heads.

Lipschitz's watercolour, *Beaten*, depicts the naked back of his younger brother Gdaliya, complete with scars acquired from a beating by Gestapo guards. Gdaliya's wounded back, with his head bowed, is depicted with an emotion that becomes a symbol of the pain and torture of all of the Jews in the Kaunas Ghetto.

Esther Lurie was born in 1913 in a Baltic seaport of Libau (now Liepaja, Latvia) to a religious intellectual Jewish family. Her parents, Josel Jankel Lurie (Lurje) and Bluma Gordon, married in 1905. Bluma gave birth to six girls and one boy (June 10, 1905, Latvia Marriages…, Latvian SHA). At the beginning of World War I, the Lurie family was forced to move to Riga, because Libau served as a military port.

From her childhood, Esther was interested in drawing and design. Upon graduating from the Riga Hebrew Gymnasium at the age of eighteen, Lurie joined her brother in Brussels. Between 1931 and 1934, she studied theatrical set design at the Institut des Arts Décoratifs in Brussels and drawing at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp. In 1934, Lurie emigrated to Palestine and joined several members of her family in Tel Aviv. She became active as an artist, worked as a theatre decorator and participated in group exhibitions in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. In 1938, she had a solo exhibition, and was awarded the Dizengoff Prize for Drawing.

Shortly before the start of World War II, Lurie visited her relatives in Latvia and Lithuania. She lived in Kaunas during 1939 and 1940, enjoying the company of her sister, Muta Zarchin, and her cousin Gitel Lurie, who was also an artist. Esther improved her painting skills at the Kaunas Art School, where she was taught by Justinas Vienožinskis, one of the most famous Lithuanian artists and art educators. During this time, Lurie had two solo shows in Kaunas, one in 1939, where over 40 paintings and watercolours mostly depicting Palestinian life and nature were exhibited (Esther Lurie... 1939), and the other in 1940, where she exhibited about 30 works in which she portrayed the ballet dancers at the State Theatre in Kaunas (Baletas…1940: 2). Esther and Gitel had a plan to organise an exhibition together, but after the Nazi occupation the entire family was sent to the ghetto. Gitel Lurie was murdered at the Ninth Fort. Muta Zarchin and her family were sent to Auschwitz, where they were killed on arrival. Only Esther Lurie survived, having experienced the brutality and inhumane conditions of the Kaunas Ghetto, the Stutthof concentration camp in Poland and the Leibitsch forced labour camp in Germany.

Lurie returned to Palestine in July 1945, and continued her artistic career. In 1946, she was awarded the Dizengoff Prize for Drawing for the second time for her sketch *Young Woman with Yellow Star* (self-portrait; 1941, Esther Lurie Collection), which was drawn in the Kaunas Ghetto. Lurie married Joseph Shapiro, and they had two children. She exhibited her artwork in group and solo shows in Israel and abroad, and published several albums of her work, including *Kovno Ghetto Scenes and Types* (1958), *Sketch-*

es from A Women's Labour Camp (1962) and *Jerusalem: 12 Drawings and Paintings* (1970). Lurie lived in Tel Aviv until her death in 1998.

Lurie documented life in the Kaunas Ghetto for almost three years, and created a few hundred watercolours and drawings. As deportations from the ghetto to the concentration camps increased, Lurie asked the craftsmen in the pottery workshop to make several large ceramic jars in which she could hide her work, which she subsequently did. In July 1944, Lurie was transported to Stutthof, and in August was sent to the Leibitsch camp. She continued to draw in secret, focusing primarily on portraits of her fellow female prisoners and scenes of her daily life. The portraits that she was commissioned to draw during this time enabled her to barter for food, which ultimately prevented her from starving to death. Following the camp's liberation by the Red Army in January 1945, Lurie moved to a displaced persons camp in Italy. She stayed briefly in Italy, and worked as an interpreter for the Soviet authorities. Lurie met some Jewish soldiers from Palestine who were serving in the British Army, including the artist Menachem Shemi, who was born in Bobruisk in today's Belarus. He helped organise an exhibition for Lurie, and published a slim booklet entitled *Jewish Women in Subjugation: 15 Drawings from the Stutthof and Leibitsch camps* (1945).

After the war, Lurie returned to Kaunas and looked for her hidden work (1945, Lurie's Letter, USHMM), of which unfortunately the majority was never found. More than 200 of her watercolours and drawings were destroyed, probably burned during the ghetto liquidation. The small part that did survive includes 11 sketches and 8 watercolours, as well as 20 photographs of her work that Dr. Golub-Tory hid in secret crates and recovered after liberation. Although most of Lurie's watercolours and drawings disappeared, she never gave up telling the story of the Kaunas Ghetto. The artist spent much of her time reconstructing her ghetto work, drawing them again from memory, or old ghetto photographs. She also used the photographs that Dr. Golub-Tory had taken of her pictures during a clandestine exhibition in the ghetto. In the 1970s, five pen and ink deportation scenes were discovered by a Lithuanian family and returned to the artist (Holocaust Encyclopaedia 2020, USHMM).

A sizable amount of the work that Lurie produced in the Kaunas Ghetto as well as 35 portraits from the Stutthof and Leibitsch camps are kept at the Yad Vashem Art Museum. More of her work can be found among the collections at the USHMM, GFH and VGMJH. Some of the artwork is also in the possession of private collectors. Most of the artwork was donated to the museums by the artist herself. During Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem in 1961, Lurie's art served as testimony, thereby gaining official approval by the Supreme Court for the documentary value of her sketches and watercolours.

Esther Lurie was imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto in August 1941. After seeing one of her drawings, the *Ältestenrat* arranged for her to be temporarily released from her work assignments and commissioned her to draw everything that was happening

in the ghetto. Lurie understood the importance of her task, and immediately set about recording her experiences with the aid of drawn sketches and a written testimony:

> "Everything that was happening all around was so strange, so different from all the ideas and practices of our lives hitherto. I felt that I must report on this new existence, or at least make sketches. I must depict things as I saw them. I began to regard this work of mine as a duty" (Lurie 1958: 9).

The people at the *Ältestenrat* guarded her from the Gestapo soldiers as she drew in the streets, thus allowing her to create many drawings and watercolours of the daily life in the ghetto. The inhabitants of the ghetto asked her to draw their portraits with the intention of immortalising themselves and their families. The Gestapo officers also showed an interest in Lurie's artistic talent, because of her ability to portray people and to copy the paintings of the old masters for them. Her artistic talent came to her assistance, and the commissioned paintings that she produced helped her survive the ghetto.

Like Lipschitz, Lurie often drew the ghetto's panoramas from a bird's-eye perspective, as in her drawing *Ghetto Street Scene* (1943, USHMM), *The Main Gate* (1943, USHMM), *Demokratų Square* (USHMM), *The Jewish Council Building* (USHMM), *Ghetto Buildings* (USHMM) and others. The artist depicted the ghetto environment in detail, recording houses, streets, yards and squares. Most often, the main element of her compositions was the street — sometimes empty, and sometimes busy with people. Wooden houses, trees and electricity poles surround the street. Barbed wire fences dominate nearly every panoramic ghetto drawing that she created.

A few of Lurie's watercolours and drawings were devoted to Paneriai Street that separated the two parts of the Kaunas Ghetto, called the 'Large' and the 'Small' ghettos. Her drawing *Wooden Bridge of the Kaunas Ghetto* (1957 after the 1941 original, GFH) shows a wooden bridge built across the street and fenced in with barbed wire. A row of people cross the bridge. In his 1941 and 1942 ghetto writings, the Yiddish poet and leader of the resistance movement in the Kaunas Ghetto Chaim Jelin noted:

> "The bridge is six metres high, wooden, like an arch bent over the street. It leads upstairs, downstairs, connecting one part of Dvaro Street with the other, with Panerių Street beneath, over which wagons and cars travel. Under the bridge, Christian life goes on. Over the bridge walk the 'criminals'—the Jews" (Jelin 1975: 163; Hidden History…1997: 62).

Several of Lurie's drawings immortalise particularly brutal events in the ghetto. Although it is undated, her drawing *What Was Left of the Hospital* (GFH) probably features the fire at the ghetto's contagious diseases hospital on October 4, 1941. The hos-

pital was deliberately set on fire along with its patients and medical personnel by order of the Commander of the SD (Sicherheitsdienst). After this so-called 'Hospital Action', the remaining doctors and medical personnel tried to hide any connection that they had with the medical profession. A few weeks after this event, the 'Great Action' of October 28 and 29, 1941 took away the lives of almost 10,000 people. Nearly one-third of the ghetto's population was murdered in October 1941. Lurie sketched the ruins of the hospital, with the ghetto houses in the far background. Among the building's mangled carcass and metal bed frames stands a group of confused people. Only a gloomy, naked chimney survived the flames.

Constant hunger and cold were two main problems in the ghetto. Wood for heating and cooking was one of the most necessary and precious commodities. Lurie's *Children Carrying Branches* (1956 after the 1942 original) depicts two children in a field carrying large bundles of thin branches on their shoulders. Lurie drew people waiting in line for food, or searching the field along the River Neris in search of leftover potatoes. Her sketch *At the Communal Kitchen* (after the 1942 original) shows an elderly seated woman with a Star of David on her back eating soup in a kitchen that was opened by the ghetto's Welfare Office on April 8, 1942. The soup kitchen gave free hot meals to the poorest and loneliest people in the ghetto. "I sketched at the Communal Kitchen, where a little thin soup was distributed to old people and forsaken children. These people were quite indifferent to all that was going on around them, and paid no attention to me" (Lurie 1958: 13). To find a living space was also a big problem in the ghetto, especially at the beginning. Lurie drew displaced families trying desperately to set up living quarters. Families even sought space among heavy machinery and industrial equipment in a former school of handicrafts. A few of Lurie's drawings show a courtyard filled with furniture that won't fit into the extremely cramped apartments.

The selections and deportations of people to the Ninth Fort, where thousands of Jews were cruelly tortured and executed, were also recorded by Lurie. *Deportation Near the Main Gate* (1943, Esther Lurie Collection) shows a crowd of wandering people carrying large bags and boxes. In a series of watercolours and ink drawings, Lurie depicted queues of figures passing peaceful suburban houses on the way to their deaths. The watercolour *One Way to the Ninth Fort* (1960 after the 1941 original, GFH) shows the empty road that led to the Ninth Fort. She repeated the same scene several times at different times of the year — with a blue summer sky, with dark autumn clouds, with green spring grass and grey winter snowdrifts. The beautiful road stands in stark contrast to the torture and murder that it led to. Lurie wrote:

> "A subject which I painted many times at all seasons was the road that led from the 'Ghetto Valley' to the Ninth Fort on the hilltop. A row of lofty trees at the wayside gave the road a singular character. The highway to the hilltop remains etched deep in my memory as a Via Dolorosa, taken by tens of thousands of Jews from

> Lithuania and Western Europe on the way to their deaths. There were days when the grey clouds gave this place a peculiarly tragic aspect, which accorded with our feelings" (Lurie 1958: 13–14).

The simplicity of her compositions and palette is common to most of Lurie's ghetto watercolours, but the content that hides behind this external simplicity is heartbreaking.

Most of Lurie's portraits were commissioned by the *Ältestenrat* for its secret archives, as well as by the ghetto inmates and the Gestapo. Just a few of them survive to this day, among them the portraits of Dr. Avraham Golub-Tory (31.10.1942), the head of the Educational Department Dr. Chaim Nachman Shapiro (1942), the physician and deputy chief of the Ghetto Police Dr. Jakov Abramovitz (1943), the commander of the ghetto fire-fighting brigade Moshe Abramovitz (1943), the civil engineer and assistant chief of the Ghetto Police Yehuda Zupovitz (1943) and the director of the airfield department Wolf Lurie (1943). These commissioned portraits are characterised by a professional solid line, and perfectly reveal the facial features and characters of the people that they depict. Lurie's portraits of women inmates are particularly feminine, and are characterised by soft lines, fine-line shading and tender undertones.

Lurie drew a few self-portraits; the best known is *Young Woman with Yellow Star* (drawn in 1941, Esther Lurie Collection, repeated in 1946 and 1957, GFH, and 1958, private collection) in which artist depicted herself dressed in a checked dress with a Star of David patch on the front and back. Lurie was awarded her second Dizengoff Prize for Drawing in 1946 for this image.

Ben Zion Josef (Nolik) Schmidt was born on September 5, 1926 in Kaunas. His father, Dr. Jacob Schmidt (Jankelis Efraimas Šmidtas, 1885, Balninkai-1949, Feldafingen, Germany), was a doctor and a specialist in chemistry and bacteriology who owned the largest laboratory in Kaunas at 28 Gardino Street that carried out medical, agricultural, industrial and even early pregnancy tests. His mother, Mirjam Elkes (1887, Kaunas-1945, Prauste) was a French teacher who later worked with her husband at the laboratory, where she was in charge of its financial and administrative duties. Ben Zion graduated from the Schwabe Hebrew Gymnasium in Kaunas. His older sister, Thea (Thea Schmidt Lan, 1920, Kaunas-2014, Kiryat Ono, Israel), studied at the Kaunas German Upper Exact Sciences Gymnasium, but after Hitler came to power in 1933 she was forced to leave and continue her studies at the Aušra Girls Gymnasium. In 1937, Thea began her medical studies at the Vytautas Magnus University, but the Nazi occupation interrupted it. She was not able to resume her studies after the war, because the occupying Soviets considered her as a hostile element (Kretchmer 30 January 2020).

The Schmidt family was imprisoned in the Kaunas Ghetto on August 15, 1941 (1941, The List of Kaunas Ghetto Prisoners…, LCSA). His mother died of hunger and typhus in 1945 at Prauste, a sub-branch of Stutthof concentration camp. His father and

sister both survived the Holocaust. On July 13, 1944, the last day of liquidation of the Kaunas Ghetto, Schmidt was shot and his body burned. He was just 19 years old. Thea's twin daughters, Dusia Lan Kretchmer and Mirjam Lan Davidson, continue to commemorate and keep the Ben Zion Schmidt name alive to this day.

We can only guess as to whether Schmidt, who was 14 when he entered the ghetto, would have chosen a career as an artist, as the war deprived him of the opportunity of a university education. However, Schmidt worked in the ghetto graphics workshop, and drew scenes of ghetto life. "Nolik was the first artist to join graphic workshop, a very gifted young artist, whose paintings and sketches had surprised even Peter (Gadiel – V.G.)" (Mishell 1999: 79). Although only one of his ghetto drawings has survived, it confirms him as a highly competent and expressive artist. The solitary watercolour entitled *The Expulsion* (1942) which was saved thanks to the collection hidden by Dr. Golub-Tory, now belongs to the Yad Vashem Art Museum. This eloquent and emotional piece of art depicts the tragic day on Sunday January 11, 1942, when the inhabitants living in the Demokratų Square were forced to leave their houses in order to make room for transports of German and Austrian Jews. People had to move their belongings in temperatures of minus 30 degrees. Some found a place to live with friends and relatives. Others had nowhere to go, and stayed on the streets. "At 12 o'clock noon, the chairman of the *Ältestenrat* was given an order to vacate the Demokratų Square by 4 o'clock p.m. for German Jews who were to arrive. The *Ältestenrat* chairman Dr. Elchanan Elkes and representatives of the Women's Committee waited for the deportees all day at the ghetto gate… We made hot coffee, and prepared the words of consolation for the deportees, but they never came". This note was written on January 11, 1942 in the yearbook *Slobodka Ghetto 1942*, which was compiled by Dr. Golub-Tory and contains an almost daily record of events in the Kaunas Ghetto during that year (Reich 1997: 151, 167).

In his drawing, Schmidt perfectly captured the atmosphere of panic and fear spreading across the ghetto. Dr. Golub-Tory remembers:

> "I was looking and thinking how to immortalise this moment for future generations. Suddenly I remembered the young artist Ben Zion Schmidt. I pulled him out of the house and ordered him to draw. Nolik (as we called him lovingly) warmed his frozen fingers with his breath and continued to draw. I was on guard and kept rushing him because a 'grey' (the colour of the Gestapo uniform) might appear any second. Every second could be the last for him and for me… That day the German and Austrian Jews were sent directly to the Ninth Fort and executed" (Голуб-Тори 1990: 4).

The historian Dr. Arūnas Bubnys and the head of the Archive at the Ninth Fort Dr. Kęstutis Bartkevičius confirmed that no official documents have been found recording

the deportation and execution of German and Austrian Jews on this date. The massacres of German and Austrian Jews in Lithuania took place in November 1941, approximately two month earlier. It is more likely that by giving this false order to the *Ältestenrat*, the Gestapo wanted to sow panic and fear in the ghetto. According to official deportation documents, a train with 1,000 Jews left Vienna on January 11, 1942, and just 31 of them reached the Jungfernhof concentration camp in Latvia four days later (Wolfgang 2003: 409). There is a possibility that initially there was a plan to send these Jews to the Kaunas Ghetto, as trains full of German, Austrian and Czechoslovakian Jews ran regularly to Latvia between November 27, 1941 and October 26, 1942.

Josef Schlesinger was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1919 to Louis and Elsa Schlesinger. He grew up in a wealthy family, received a good secondary education and studied at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts. Following the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Schlesinger moved to Kaunas, where he married Sara Siegel. Soon after the occupation of the city in June 1941, the Schlesingers were deported to the Kaunas Ghetto. Together with Ben Zion Schmidt, Josef Schlesinger worked in the ghetto's toy-making workshop, which produced dolls. He painted wooden toys and stuffed animals for German children (Reich 1997: 168–171; Mishell 1999: 103). Schlesinger was transported to the Dachau concentration camp during the ghetto's liquidation. After the liberation of the camp in April 1945, Schlesinger returned to Prague, where he was active in the city's art scene. His artwork was shown in numerous exhibitions. He served as the Director of the Central-Bohemian Galleries in Prague, and died in the city in 1993.

A few drawings of events in the Kaunas Ghetto and 26 portraits of its prisoners by Schlesinger have survived thanks to Dr. Golub-Tory's buried containers. After the war, this whole collection was donated to the Yad Vashem Art Museum. Some drawings by Schlesinger are held at the USHMM and the GFH. Several other works of art are in the possession of private collectors.

At the request of the *Ältestenrat*, Schlesinger was asked to concentrate on producing portraits. He created a unique gallery of the ghetto police officers, administrators, doctors, lawyers, teachers and other professionals, although only the portraits that he created in 1943 have survived. As if sensing the further fate and eventual liquidation of the ghetto, Schlesinger drew a set of pen and ink portraits on paper in 1943 in which he immortalised the chairman of the *Ältestenrat* Dr. Elchanan Elkes (USHMM), the commander of the Ghetto Police Michael Kopelman, the deputy commander of the Ghetto Police Moshe Levin, the Ghetto Police officer Yehoshua (Ika) Greenberg, the head of the Sanitation service Dr. Moshe Brauns, the head of the Health office Benjamin Zacharin, the head of graphics workshop Peter (Fritz) Gadiel, the head of the interior workshop and leader of the underground communist organisation in the ghetto Dr. Rudolf Volsonok, the jurist and teacher Zvi Hirsh Brik, the chief physician for the Labour Office Dr. Jakov Nochimovski and the administrators of the *Ältestenrat* workshops Moshe Potroch

and Herman Fraenkel. For most of them, it was their last portrait. Schlesinger also added a self-portrait to the gallery. Most of the images were commissioned, and were formal in style with those depicted sitting at an angle to the artist. Schlesinger's portraits serve as a testament to his effort to document the ghetto's inhabitants in a way that would allow the easy identification of the subjects. The artist paid great attention to detail. It was important for him to depict suits, ties and hats as well as signs and armbands, which showed the individual status of each sitter. He also drew commissioned portraits of Gestapo officers, and the food that he received from them in return helped him to overcome his constant hunger.

At first glance, the boy depicted in Schlesinger's drawing *Portrait of an Unidentified Boy* (1943, USHMM) appears to be dressed as a schoolchild. He wears a sports shirt and shorts to the knees. A peaked *kartuz* hat covers his head. The boy holds a folder containing drawings or other large pieces of paper, and looks calm. Just the Star of David sewn onto his clothes indicates his position. The portrait is informal, and looks much more alive and warm than Schlesinger's official ones.

The events after the reorganisation of the ghetto into a concentration camp in the autumn of 1943 seemed to indicate that its days were numbered, especially after new 'actions' against the ghetto's children and its elderly population were carried out. In October 1943, deportations to labour camps in Estonia began. A particularly chilling drawing by Schlesinger, *The Deportation* (1943), depicts a huddled family waiting to be deported, probably to Estonia. Men and women sit and lie on the ground. Their tormented faces, with big frightened eyes, sunken chests and exhausted bony bodies 'scream' that they no longer have the energy to move. In the background there is a crowd of people and a carriage loaded with dead bodies being dragged by two ghetto prisoners, who are guarded by a soldier. An atmosphere of prostration and apathy glides in the ghetto. People no longer have the strength to fight. Almost nobody bound for the Estonian labour camps survived.

The best known and most shocking of Schlesinger's drawing is *The Hanging of Meck* (1942), which dates from November 18, 1942 and that commemorates the execution of the ghetto inmate Nahum Meck. Meck was publicly executed after firing a gun into the air after he was caught trying to escape from the ghetto. Although no one was injured, the Nazis ordered the Ghetto Police to hang Meck in the public square next to the *Ältestenrat* building, and that his body should be left for 24 hours as a deterrence against future acts of resistance. The following day, Meck's mother and sister were taken to the Ninth Fort and killed (Reich 1997: 177). Schlesinger's drawing is particularly touching due to its symbolism. The artist drew the hanging Meck in contrast to the life continuing around him. Children stare curiously at the hanging body. Adults pass by, and a dog runs around. Life stands in stark contrast to death. Ilya Gerber also drew the scene in his diary, in which he depicted a human skeleton next to Meck, and a guillotine holding a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other. Above Meck's head, Gerber

drew a skull with two crossed bones, and wrote: "Today, coming back with the brigade through Varnių Street, we saw Meck hanging near the *Ältestenrat*" (Gerber 18 November 1942: 574, VGMJH). His simple pen drawing shakes the depths of one's heart.

When analysing ghetto art, we must bear in mind that the artists had different lives before they were imprisoned. "Each of the artists brought with him his own cultural background, previous knowledge and often even practice of art" (Amishai-Maisels 1993: 10). Despite the artists' different aesthetic values, they were united by a common idea and goals. Summarising the style, technique and themes of the art created in the Kaunas Ghetto, we can conclude that most of the paintings, drawings and sketches were small, realistic in style, simple in composition and obscure in colour. Artistic materials were very limited. The most common media were pencil, pen and ink, crayons and watercolours.

Themes were also limited. The Kaunas Ghetto artists had no desire to change or beautify the harsh reality around them. They drew common subjects reflecting their daily environment 'here' and 'now', and did not try to escape to the world of fantasy and imagination (as did, for example, the artists Samuel Bak in the Vilnius ghetto and Amalie Seckbach in Theresienstadt). Four main themes emerge in the art of the Kaunas Ghetto: panoramic views, portraits of inmates, depictions of daily activities and scenes of tragic events, such as killing and death.

The panoramic views of Lithuania changed dramatically in Jewish art after the establishment of the ghettos. Before World War II, Jewish artists loved to paint wide landscapes, historic cities and romantic views of their native *shtetls*. Starting in 1941, these open spaces were restricted to the confines of the ghetto territory. In addition, the panoramic views of the ghetto narrowed with each passing day due to the constant 'actions' and the subsequent reduction of the ghetto territory.

Lithuania was divided into two parts: one, which was 'here', and the other one, which was 'on the other side of the barbed wire fence'. Jewish artists could only see and depict the few streets, houses, barbed wire fences and watchtowers that together made up the ghetto. The barbed wire fences dominate nearly every panoramic ghetto drawing by Lurie and Lipschitz. "No painter in his artistic imagination could conjure up the combination of a fairy tale — a pastoral landscape with a barbed wire fence" (Tory [May 4, 1943] 1990: 318). The poet Chaim Jelin described it in his diary: "There are exactly 20 centimetres between one parallel wire and the other, and there is one metre between the vertical wires" (Jelin 1975: 162). Tamara Lazerson-Rostovsky sketched the barbed wire fences with the same measurements in her diary. She wrote in Lithuanian on the ghetto gate: "We are in captivity" (Lazerson-Rostovsky, August 15, 1942, USHMM). The barbed wire fences have become a major motif in ghetto art, and a symbol of the Holocaust, which symbolise captivity and being cut off from the outside world and society.

Portraits of inmates make up a great part of all of the art that was created in the ghettos. According to the art historian Dr. Pnina Rosenberg "portraits comprise

one quarter of all paintings and drawings produced in the camps" (Rosenberg 2009: non-paginated). In the case of the art produced in the Kaunas Ghetto, portraits compose about half of the total output. The Kaunas Ghetto portraits confirm a unique feature that unites all the ghetto and camp art, namely a close relationship between text and images. Many ghetto portraits include not only the names of the artist and the sitter, but also the exact day, month, year and place where an image was created, and, in some cases, a dedication as well. And not only these portraits betray the places in which they were created with the addition of a Star of David sewn onto the sitter's ragged clothes, but more information is given away by the expressions of sadness on the lean faces of the imprisoned. Ghetto artists turned portraits into reliable historical documents and Holocaust witnesses. Looking at them, we face terrible social and personal stories as we learn about identities of the victims and trace their various fates.

The phenomenon of commemoration through drawing and painting portraits was extremely common in the ghetto. Many inmates commissioned artists to draw their portraits, and those of their sons and daughters in particular, in the belief that this might be their last chance to leave the sign of their existence. The art historian and Holocaust art specialist Dr. Ziva Amishai-Maisels noticed: "The portrait affirmed that the individual human being depicted has existed, even though he died among a mass of nameless victims" (Amishai-Maisels 1993: 5). The art historian Dr. Pnina Rosenberg confirms: "Portraiture had almost magical powers, for it granted the subjects a feeling of permanency, in contrast to the extreme fragility of their actual existence" (Rosenberg 2009: non-paginated). The popularity of commissioned portraits also determined the fact that cameras were strictly prohibited in the ghetto. In some cases, artistic talent came to the artists' assistance, helping them make a living because food was a never-ending problem. Artists were able to exchange commissioned portraits for a slice of bread, but in most cases, it ultimately did not help them survive the Holocaust. The commissioned portraits created by Lipschitz, Lurie and Schlesinger are more official and less emotional than the private ones. They are more scenic and goodly. The main attention in commissioned portraits is given to external similarity and facial features, so that we could easily identify the person being depicted. The private portraits are more emotional and freer. These portraits are not embellished with ashy, skinny faces, big frightened eyes, cracked lips and shabby clothes adorned with a Star of David. Sometimes, the inmates look extremely melancholic as if lost in their own thoughts. The portraits of small children are especially heartbreaking, due to maturity beyond their years. Self-portraits were also popular, and played an important role in the artists' lives. Lipschitz, Lurie and Schlesinger immortalised themselves in the ghetto. All of their self-portraits are dated, and each one features a Star of David on their clothes. Self-portraits were a link with the artists' former identity, and a reconnection with their past.

The depiction of daily life allows us to understand the ghetto life, its problems and daily routines. Before World War II, Judaica subjects of praying Jews, Torah and Talmud

studies, Jewish holidays, synagogues, *shtetls*, marketplaces, klezmer bands, wedding and funeral motifs as well as Lithuanian landscapes and still-lifes dominated Lithuanian Jewish art. All of these topics disappeared from the art created in the Kaunas Ghetto, because the main goal for artists became to document reality for the future. A rare exception can be found in the diary of Ilya Gerber, in which he depicted Hanukkah with two lighted candles, a praying Jew and a performing klezmer band (Gerber 1942: 560, 569, VGMJH).

The imprisoned artists began to sketch the new reality. The lack of food, firewood and living space dictated the choice of subjects. Artists presented mundane activities, such as waiting in the line for food, eating in a communal kitchen, searching fields for leftover potatoes or selling small items on the black market, as well as children carrying branches for fire, and inmates burning fences and furniture in order to keep warm. Artists drew crowded rooms with people lying or sitting on beds, surrounded by bundles, suitcases, furniture and kitchen utensils. It was not easy to adapt to collective living without privacy. The concentration of people under appalling sanitary conditions also led to sickness, disease, epidemics and death. Artists pictured inmates engaged in cleaning and washing, as regular daily activities helped them not just to survive, but also kept their spirits alive.

The personal space of the past has been erased in these drawings. Artists depicted cluttered scenes of communal living, not only as a documentation of the daily reality of life in the ghetto, but also as a way of showing the complete desecration of the norms of human society. However, more private scenes such as body-washing or going to the toilet, which appear in the art of the concentration camps, are not typical for the art of the Kaunas Ghetto. Later however, after Esther Lurie was interned in a concentration camp, she depicted a scene featuring naked women washing their bodies and their hair outside, whilst Nazi soldiers stood ogling at the spectacle.

Scenes of tragic events, such as deportations and killings, were an integral part of the ghetto life. Every 'action', every tragic event was immortalised on an almost daily basis. "This series is the entire chronicle of their lives in ghetto, and a vision of the new upside-down world" (Nikitina 2007: 11). The deportation scenes depicted by artists show faceless masses rather than individuals being sent on their last journey, facing spiritual and physical death. Lurie transformed a deportation scene into a symbolic image of an empty road leading to the Ninth Fort with its barbed wire and watchtowers. Another drawing by her shows not the process of deportation, but the result of it. An empty room with scattered books and household items on the floor, family photos left behind and a portrait of a Jewish sage hanging on the wall. The chaos and emptiness of the room reveal the swiftness of the deportation and the devastating fate of its inhabitants.

The 'Great Action', the 'Intellectuals Action', the 'Hospital Action', the 'Children's Action', the 'Police Action' — every 'action', every crime, every massacre echoes

art, poetry and diaries of the Kaunas Ghetto. Each 'action' and tragic event was accompanied by art. Gerber drew a *maceva* to record the date, October 13, 1942, when 300 workers were taken to a labour camp in Riga (Gerber 1942: 514, 536, 574, VGMJH). One of the most resonant events was the public hanging of Nahum Meck on November 18, 1942. Schlesinger and Gerber both recorded this tragic event with a drawing.

A detailed scene of death was depicted by the labourer Anatoli Garnik-Gran at the Ninth Fort. His drawing entitled *Burning of the Corpses at the Ninth Fort* (1943, Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum), immortalises how the Nazis tried to eradicate all evidence of their past crimes. The drawing shows two prisoners with a wooden stretcher carrying two naked bodies to burn in a flaming bonfire. An armed soldier follows their every move. Garnik-Gran was one of two prisoners who took part in an escape from the Ninth Fort without being captured (Faitelson 2020: 38).

Documentation is a major element of ghetto art, but the means of visual expression and artists' emotions must also be taken into consideration. Ghetto art is important, not only in the documentary but also in the artistic sense. During a very short time, the ghetto artists found the means to express their individuality, emotions and viewpoints. "Pictures are both eye-witness documents and a memorial for the lost souls" (Lurie 1945, USHMM). The art of the Kaunas Ghetto is simple in composition and limited in colours, but rich in emotion and empathy. An atmosphere of horror, suffering, pain and desperation unites all of this work.

The act of painting and drawing provided an opportunity for the artists to keep their spirits high, to prove the fact of their own existence as individuals and to leave their personal stamp on the world, an illusion that connected them in some way to their past lives as artists. They sought to use their work as a means to make contact with the outside world, and to let people know what was happening 'on the other side of the fence'. Unfortunately, those still living 'on the other side of the fence' could no longer visit the exhibitions, concerts and plays previously painted, composed and written by Jews (Lithuanian and Jewish group exhibitions and concerts were very popular during interwar period in Lithuania).

Documenting ghetto life at high risk, the artists kept the hope alive that their watercolours, drawings and sketches might one day serve as evidence to bring the murderers to justice. Thus, ghetto art must be considered as the art of testimony, produced in order to record Nazi crimes for posterity. Ghetto art became an important tool of evidence, as for example Esther Lurie's drawings that were used during the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961. Sometimes, art can reveal more than words. Ghetto art is a valuable supplementary source for Holocaust studies. When studying ghetto art, we learn about the inhumane conditions in which thousands of people were held, of the killings and deaths, and of the optimistic plans of resistance and the courage to survive.

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Eleonora Jedlińska

Photographic Archives in the Works of Contemporary Art. Using the Stroop Report as a Source of Artistic Expression

Abstract

Jürgen Stroop was a German SS commander during WWII, who served as an SS and police leader in the occupied Poland. He led the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and prepared the so-called Stroop Report, a book-length account of the operation with 53 pictures contained in a report produced by Stroop and Franz Konrad. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising cost the lives of over 50,000 people. The subject of this paper is devoted to the photos from the Stroop Report. One of the images from the Stroop Report is often described as the famous Holocaust image. Four artists are discussed in this article: Wladyslaw Strzeminski, Samuel Bak, Gustav Metzger and Nir Hod. The author addresses the use of original photos from the Stroop Report in the artists' works analyzing how the artists have transformed and manipulated the photos, which present the victims and witnesses of the Holocaust in Poland.

Keywords: Holocaust, contemporary art, documentary photography, the Stroop Report

Creative people who address the subject of the Holocaust explore sources of its remembrance. One of the most important of these sources are registered recollections, a history handed down by those who had survived, as well as documents preserved in various archives (often private and informal), including visual records such as pho-

tographs and films. Because it is believed that photographs are objective records of events due to the mechanic reproduction, they are considered useful instruments of reporting.

The administration of the Third Reich had a "strongly rooted habit of registering every kind of bureaucratic narcissism, to save and to photograph everything" (Didi-Huberman 2008: 30).

Photographic registration, from a practical point of view so easy to make yet so rich in information, enters into a complex relationship with the fact, the document and the recollection. Documentary images of the Holocaust were usually the 'works' of its perpetrators. Photographs and films on which war crimes have been recorded are becoming broadly available online.

Materials of different quality, repeatedly copied and sometimes retouched, are now being organised, catalogued, tagged and made available online as parts of various databases. Documentary photographer Janina Struk writes: "Archives are not neutral places, they give photographs their own meaning" (Struk 2004: 30). The use of photographic images depicting the Holocaust in works of art has become commonplace. However, the scope of the presence of the photographs from the album attached to the Stroop Report is exceptional. This article is dedicated to this subject.

The Stroop Report, titled *The Jewish residential district in Warsaw no longer exists!*, was intended to be seen by the highest dignitaries in the SS—Heinrich Himmler, and Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger. It was produced to provide information about the definitive elimination of the Warsaw Ghetto and the suppression of the Jewish uprising. The Report, compiled by General Jürgen Stroop, the head of the SS and Police Leader of the Warsaw District, who also led the operation, consists of three parts. The attached photography album containing fifty-three prints is the third part of the Report. Stroop picked thirty photographs himself. One of the recognised authors of the photographs is Stroop's chief of staff Max Jesuiter who was present at the side of his superior (Wulf 1984: 283).[1] "The size and order of the photographs differ. [..] three photographs present identical scenes, but they were taken a few moments apart and at a slightly different angle (photographs 7, 15 and 17)" (Rousseau 2009: 76). In September 1948, during an interrogation in Warsaw, Stroop explained:

> "After the end of the *Aktion*, according to Krüger's wishes, three copies of the report were made: one for Krüger, one for Himmler and the third for me. The manuscript was stored at the SS and Police HQ in Warsaw by Stabsführer Jesuiter" (Kunicka-Wyrzykowska 1984: 283).

[1]Another 'photographer'— according to the Internet sources—of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto was Franz Konrad. He was an Austrian mid-level commander in the SS-Hauptsturmführer and an administrative officer of Nazi Germany. See Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust—http://www.lamoth.info/index.php?p=core/search&subjectid=8213;https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Konrad (09.02.2020)

One of the copies of the Report is kept at the Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem. The copy shown during the Nuremberg Trial has been considered a 'duplicate' and is held at the American National Archives in Washington D.C. The copy that the Nuremberg Judges considered to be 'one out of three' is kept at the Institute of National Remembrance, in the archives of the Central Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation. The third copy has not been found. More than one hundred additional photographs were compiled at Stroop's house in the German city of Wiesbaden. Currently, these photographs, known as the Stroop Collection, can be found in the National Collection in Washington D.C..

The black and white photographs registering the extermination of the 'Jewish quarter' remain a testimony to events whose consequences reach 'outside the frame'. The meaning of the images — their messages — is associated primarily with perception. "To read the last (or first) level of a picture, knowledge based on our perception is needed," notes Roland Barthes (Barthes 1980: 272). An artist processes documentary materials, and the interpretation of these materials creates an additional layer of meaning. In the case of 'processing' documentary materials in a work of art, materials such as the photographs from the Stroop Report or photographs showing the Holocaust in general, the artist confronts the viewers and himself with historical records. Photography serves to confirm the truth. Artists, using photographs, "the medium to transport us into the land of absence [..] exorcise death. The photographic image is always and only death and cannot show anything except the world that is no more, then (according to the reception of Jacques Derrida) such a photographic death never happens once" (Michałowska 2009: 709).

Further in the text I will discuss the work of four artists, for whom the documentary photographs contained in the Stroop Report were the key sources of inspiration.

Already in 1945 or at the beginning of 1946, Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952), one of the most important artists of the Polish avant-garde, began to work on a series of collages dedicated to *My Jewish Friends*. The works were not dated by Strzemiński, and are not signed either. The collection consists of nine drawings or collages made with ink on white, grey or yellow paper. "Strzemiński's technique of a double collage, drawing on images from the press and his own work, commands us to see the cycle *My Jewish Friends* as an attempt to express the artist's entire wartime experience in connection with the tragedy of the Holocaust" (Turowski 2000: 228). A photograph that Strzemiński used for a collage entitled *Ruins of Pulled Eye Sockets. The Stones, Like Heads, are Paved*, shows a man — the 'last' inhabitant of the dying Warsaw ghetto, at the moment of being found in his hideout [Fig. 1.]. Although this photograph is not in the Stroop Report, we may think that it belongs to the set of photographs taken at the time. Viewers are confronted with these faces, pictures bearing the tragedy of the survival of a lonely man. Three figures in the photograph (the victim and two soldiers) are opposite the photographer's lens. He places these people as witnesses to the crime of which he was the perpetrator.

One of the best known photographs from the Stroop Report can be seen in the 1995 series *Historic Photographs (The Fields of Death and Terror and Oppression)* from 1995 by Gustav Metzger (1926-2014)[2] [Fig.2]. The artist tries to force viewers to re-engage with the known scene. He has blocked the picture with a construction made out of rubble, transforming the process into a more immersive and frustrating experience. Metzger takes archival photographs that he finds disturbing and tries to deal with them. Concealment was a remarkable mechanism in Metzger's *Historic Photographs*. The artist expects an active posture, and reminiscences to be discussed. According to Metzger's words, in the work entitled *Extinction of the Warsaw Ghetto, 19 April — 28 days, 1943* the artist presents in the viewer's mind a significantly enlarged photograph from the [Stroop] Report.[3] The photo is marked with number 14 and Stroop's comment: "Bandits pulled out of the bunkers."[4] [Fig. 3]

This photograph is in both existing copies of the Stroop Report. The well-known photograph presents a scene of the evacuation the ghetto population. According to the research carried out by Rousseau, the location seems to be confirmed by the presence of the SS officer Josef Blösche[5] in the photograph. Blösche also appears in other photographs included in the Stroop Report. The punctum of the photograph is the figure of a small boy, visible in the foreground. The child, raising his hands under the threat of the German soldiers' rifles, is wearing a coat and a cap with a visor, and has a rucksack on his shoulders. The boy is in a group of adults and children of all ages. Metzger's life-size enlargement of the photograph makes the viewer become one of the people in the scene. Planks and scattered debris that cover the lower part of the work give it a three-dimensional 'casing', so that a sculptural form is created. A curtain provokes you to look behind it, to make the picture 'complete' with what the memory tells you. The futile attempts to see what is hidden leave the viewer convinced that the meaning of the photograph is still not revealed. The readability of the image has been disturbed, the viewer cannot reach the whole picture, an element of uncertainty has arisen, but this uncertainty is the result of the artist's intentions. In an auto-commentary to his

[2]Gustav Metzger was born in Nuremberg in 1926 to a Jewish Orthodox family with origins in Poland. In 1939, he was sent to Great Britain as part of the Refugee Children's Movement and thus survived the tragedy of the Holocaust, which claimed his relatives. To this day he lives a stateless existence—he never claimed any citizenship. The 'travel document' he uses contains an entry reading 'Polish nationality'.

[3]Alison Jones: 'Did you have an ethical problem using Holocaust photographs for artistic purposes?' Gustav Metzger: 'No, because I can fully justify their use; after all, I obviously do not use them. I present them in the mind of the viewer' (Zachęta National Gallery of Art 2007: 43).

[4]The photograph and its post-war history, depicting a Jewish boy with his arms raised, is widely discussed in the book: F. Rousseau *L'Enfent juif de Varsovie. Histoire d'une photographie*. Paris: Le Seuil 2009 (*Jewish child from Warsaw. The history of a certain photograph*).

[5]Josef Blösche 'operated' in the Warsaw Ghetto from autumn 1941 to May 1943. Accused of numerous crimes committed during the war and of criminal participation in the suppression of the Ghetto Uprising in April-May 1943, he was tried by a Court in Erfurt and sentenced to death on 30 April 1969. Josef Blösche was executed in Leipzig on 29 July 1969.

concept, Metzger said: "One aim of the *Historic Photographs* series is to put a photograph down: to indicate that we do not need its all-pervasive presence. The series gives a new lease of life" (Metzger 2007: 20). Historical photographs present not only one fragment of our history — they also tell us "about the inhuman treatment of some people by others. They spare us nothing. They are unbearable from any point of view" (Metzger 2007: 21).

In another version of this project, Metzger, by placing the picture behind a curtain of wood and stone rubble on the floor, makes the face of a young girl the essence of the work. The child is wearing a coat, and has a bag over her shoulder and a handkerchief on her head. With raised hands, she walks in a column of adults carrying luggage. In Metzger's work, the silhouetted girl comes out from behind the wooden curtain: her face is visible, one hand raised, the adults are presented in a fragmentary way.

By manipulating the photograph, by framing the portrait of the girl's face and causing the child to look in the direction of the 'photographer', thus making the unfolding drama current, viewers become witnesses to the event of the time. In this version, the girl's character becomes the punctum, which Barthes wrote about: "The punctum of a photograph is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (Barthes 1980: 42–50). The artist, by framing the girl's face out from the group of people, individualises her experience and differentiates the experiences associated with the perception of this image.

The same photograph depicting the boy from the Warsaw ghetto was also of interest to Samuel Bak (b. 1933), an American painter with Jewish-Polish roots.[6] As a child, Bak miraculously escaped from the Vilnius Ghetto during its liquidation. He saw the picture from the Stroop Report for the first time in Israel in the early 1950s. This is an important note, because at the time the issue of the Holocaust was embarrassing in the newly created state—in Israel, the Holocaust of Europe's Jews was a silent shame. According to Bak:

> "this photograph is a masterpiece of composition [..]. In this photograph, in addition to the structure and richness of details, the depth of narrative material is extraordinary. We have a group drama and the drama of a small boy, an individual. It concentrates everything that happens in terrible loneliness. [..] In my opinion, the boy from Warsaw represents a Jewish crucifixion. When I was in the Vilnius Ghetto, I was about the same age, and I was very similar to this boy" (Rousseau 2009: 146–147).

The artist's work became a series of paintings based on the photographs of the Warsaw child [Fig. 4]

[6] Samuel Bak was born in Wilno/Vilnius in 1933 (the city was part of Poland during the interwar period).

According to Bak, the photograph has been trivialised. His task was to protect the image of the child, to let the worship of life not be threatened. The painting responded to the needs of figuration and individualisation that many people demanded "to give some face to the murder of nearly six million human beings guilty of simply having existed — the crime, due to its vastness, is unfathomable" (Rousseau 2009: 146—147).

The last work discussed here is a series of paintings made as a provocation by the Israeli-born artist Nir Hod (b. 1970). He describes his biggest obsessions: beauty and death. His sultry works with these themes — along with gender, stereotypes, archetypes and his own good looks — have made him a pop culture star in his native country. For his solo exhibition *Mother* at the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York in 2012, Hod created a series of paintings that refer to the iconic photograph *Bandits Pulled out of the Bunkers*. The image of a woman with raised hands has been isolated as the central figure in the *Mother* series [Fig.5].[7] Hod features nine near-identical paintings of her in a row, plus one large one on the back wall, each rendered in a different tone. Stylistically, *Mother* can be traced back to other photograph-based paintings of tragic beauties caught in the sweep of history, such as Andy Warhol's Jackie Kennedy, or Gerhard Richter's semi-glamorised terrorist Ulrike Meinhof. But Hod's goal is distinct. In his series, he is revisiting some of his obsessions, but on sacred ground. Summoning his boldness, his canny fashion sense, and his close study of Andy Warhol and Gerhard Richter, Hod has turned the Holocaust into a fashion plate.

The series of paintings by Nir Hod, depicting a young woman with raised hands and an elegant bag on her shoulder looking towards the soldiers, became the subject of discussion between American audiences and critics. The work was shown in New York in 2012. From a European viewers' perspective, the paintings are immediately recognised as an isolated frame of photograph No 14 from the Stroop Report. Hod uses this documentary photograph as a mass product. By manipulating the image on a computer, he intentionally incorporated a Nazi war crime document into the field of pop culture. The woman's gesture has become ambiguous. We do not see anyone else. There are no soldiers aiming at the group of people. We do not see the crowd gathered on the street. Here, the photograph works outside the time in which it was made. According to the artist Noah Becker, American viewers read Hod's work as a response to the aggressive advertising of fashion designers. The leather bag, visually enhanced in Hod's paintings, was associated with the legendary expensive bags of Louis Vuitton. On the question posed by Noah Becker: "Upon visiting your studio a few weeks ago I found myself among this series of emotionally charged works painted in a repeated Warholian manner. I immediately knew this image of a woman with her hands in the air as being

[7]American critics (no names are given) reporting on the Nir Hod's exhibition Mother point to Franz Konrad as the author of photograph No 14 ('Bandits pulled out of the bunkers') from the Stroop Report: http//asmingallery.com/exhibitions/2012-03-28_nir-hod; http://artis.art/edition/mother/; http://artis.art/2015/02/10/xxx/ (09.02.2020);

part of a historical photo of Jews during the Holocaust." Nir Hod answers: "Yes, you are the first person to recognise that" (Art Observed 2012: np).

Processed and subjected to fragmentation, photographs from the Stroop Report — one of the most recognisable series of Holocaust images in visual popular culture — do not deny the facts, but they can build a different, 'alternative' story. This narration is created by recipients who, equipped with the potential of knowledge and sensitivity, may notice that the power of documentary photography re-interpreted by an artist can testify to the versions of events witnessed (Strzemiński). Metzger returns in his work to the events he escaped. Samuel Bak saw a picture of society in the early 1960s in Israel. Nir Hod who weaves the 'photo-documentary' of World War II and the extermination of Europe's Jews into modern times, refers to the consciousness of the mass culture recipient who does not seem to distinguish an image of Elizabeth Taylor or Marilyn Monroe from one of an anonymous woman at the *Umschlagplatz*. The photography in this work no longer tells the story of the Warsaw Ghetto or the history of extermination. This realisation reveals the artist's personal dilemmas on the one hand, and how popular culture penetrates into consciousness on the other. It displaces the drama of events from the past to the sphere of the recipient's perception. The process of blurring the past turns out to be inevitable. In order for the viewer to understand the sense of the work, commentary from both artists and critics is necessary. The selected artworks referred to above create different narratives about an event that really took place. Photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto from 1943 are known. Contemporary artists dissect the image of the Holocaust, and try to 'transfer' experience into performance. There is a special process of contemplating the nightmare of the past and analysing the images of 'involuntary memory' that arose in our consciousness under the influence of the media.

Rousseau asked whether, after all these modifications and shifts, the photographic trace is still a testimony of the truth. To be meaningful, images require precise and methodical contextualisation — only under this condition can they remain as historical documents. The task of art historians and critics is to go beyond the emotions behind Holocaust photographs, to focus on analysis and to strive to understand historical processes and carefully follow alterations. Of course, one cannot preserve traces of history in an absolute way. These traces of history — documents, photographs — cannot be read unambiguously. The work of the artist is to use this ambiguity within the document that allows to cross the boundaries of documentary, so that we can find the truth of the document and the knowledge about ourselves throughout what has been blotted and fragmented.

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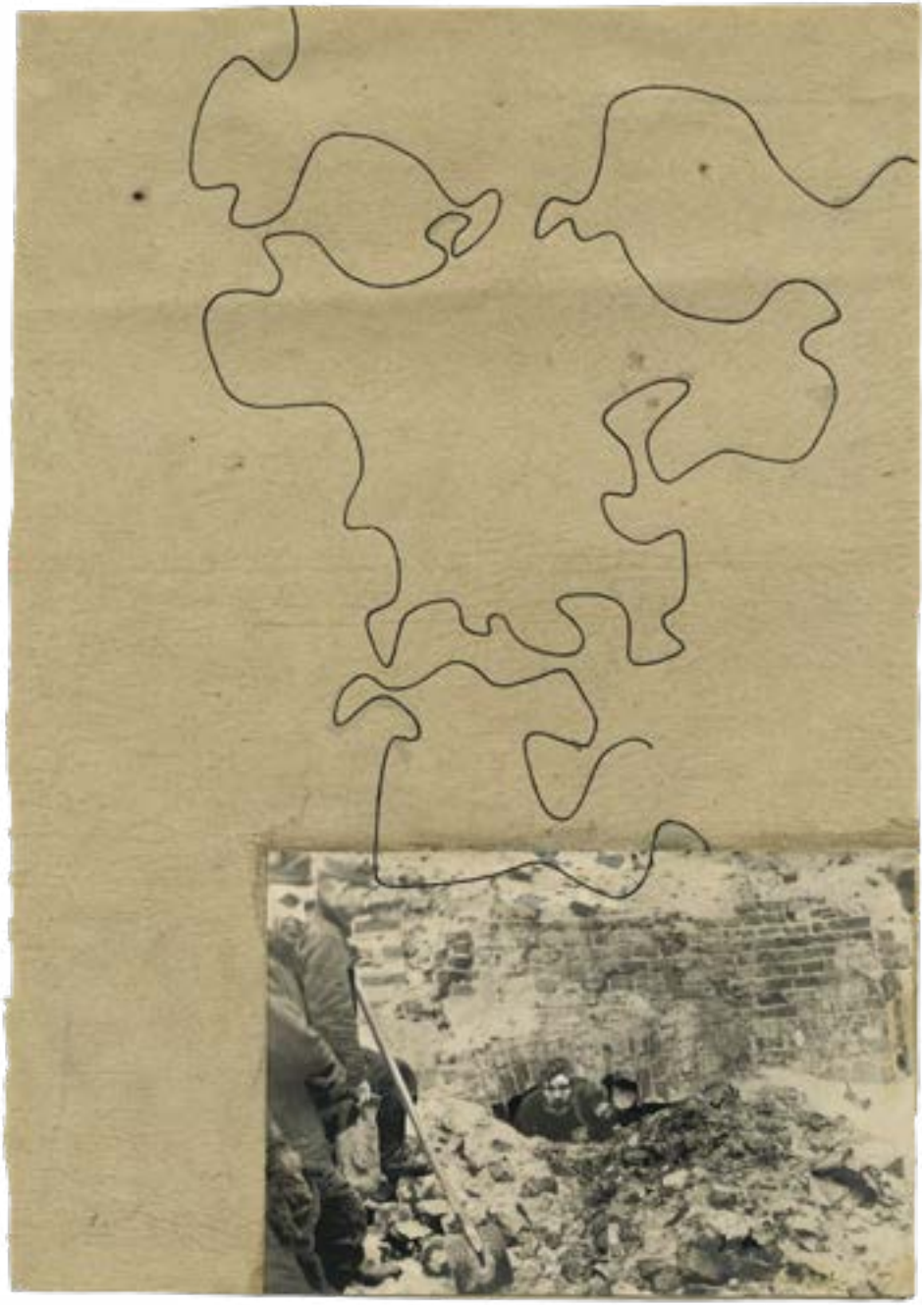

Fig. 1. *Władysław Strzemiński, from the series My Jewish Friends - Ruins of pulled eye sockets. The stones, like heads are paved, 1945, collage. (Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem).*

Fig. 2. Photograph Nr 14 from Stroop's Report. – "Bandits pulled out of the bunkers" (public domain, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem).

Fig. 3. Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: No. 1: Liquidation of the Ghetto, April 19-28 days, 1943*, 1995/2011, black-and-white photograph mounted on board and rubble, Warszawa Zachęta National Gallery, New Museum New York. https://www.artsjournal.com/artopia/2011/06/gustav_metzger_the_remix.html (5.2.2020)

Fig. 4. *Samuel Bak, Crossed Out, 2007, oil on canvas. http://ajwnews.biz/iconic-photo-of-boy-in-warsaw-ghetto-inspires-samuel-bak/(3.2.2020).*

Fig. 5. *Nir Hod, Mother, 2012, photograph, paintings (multimedia) – pigment print with hand-colored pastel and pigment powder on paper. https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=nir+hod+mother&qpvt=nir+hod+%22mother%22&FORM=IGRE (5.2.2020).*

Eckhart J. Gillen

The (Im)probability of the Shoah Images: the Case Study of Boris Lurie

Abstract

The article discusses the question of representing and analyzing the Shoah by images or only by words. Claude Lanzmann categorically rejected pictures of the Shoah since there is not a single photographic document of death in the gas chamber. However, Alain Resnais used photographic documents of the Shoah in his film *Night and Fog* in 1956. Lanzmann used solely the words of witnesses in his film *Shoah* in 1985, because the images are *images without imagination*.

Georges Didi-Huberman defends images as a legitimate medium for remembering the Shoah experience in his book "Images in spite of it all" about four photographs taken by a Jewish member of the *special command*.

The article analyses the example of the artist Boris Lurie: his pictures as testimonies of the truth come before words and are at a higher philosophical level. It is a matter of fact in therapeutic practice that traumatized people are able to visualize forgotten experiences long before any verbal formulation.

Taking the example of the artist Boris Lurie, the article will show that the images in his artwork were first steps in facing his trauma. It took more than 20 years after the events before he was able to return to the scene of the crime in Riga in 1976 and begin his literary confrontation with the Shoah.

Keywords: Boris Lurie, Rumbula, Riga, memoirs, memory, art of the Shoah.

French filmmaker and writer, chief editor of the journal *Les Temps Modernes* Claude Lanzmann (1925-2018) categorically rejected pictures of the Shoah since there is not a single photographic document of death in the gas chamber. Thirty years after the documentary *Night and Fog* (1956) by Alain Resnais who had used photographic documents of the Shoah, Lanzmann had principally decided against the use of archived Shoah pictures in his film *Shoah* (1985). Solely the words of witnesses stand for the memories of the Shoah, because the images are "images without imagination" (*images sans imagination*). Lanzmann writes:

> "They stifle our thinking and deaden any power of imagination. It is incomparably better to direct all energy towards generating a memory of what happened – as I have done [..] Favoring the film archives over the words of witnesses as if the archives were superior actually amounts to further disqualification of the human word in searching for the truth" (Lanzmann 2001: 274).

In the dispute with Lanzmann, philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman (b. 1953) defends images as a legitimate medium for remembering the Shoah experience in his book *Images malgré tout* (2003) [Images in spite of it all] (German: *Bilder trotz allem*, München 2007).[1] This book is about four photographs a Jewish member of the 'special command' was able to make from the crematorium V in Birkenau in August 1944 having to get the corpses from the gas chamber and taking them to the crematoriums. The photos show the burning of naked corpses and a group of naked women being herded to the gas chamber. According to the book, it is precisely the will of the Jewish victims to hand down a visual testimony that were to make the photos so valuable. They had been developed by Polish resistance fighters in Warsaw and passed on, although they are *de facto* not very meaningful, argues Didi-Huberman. Against the Nazi regime's plan to eliminate any means of testimony (strict ban on taking photographs), the act of photographic resistance is successful. It is only in 1947 that the photos appear in Cracow in the course of a lawsuit where they are, however, not accorded any evidentiary value. In 1956, they are part of the picture material for *Night and Fog* by Alain Resnais; in 1960, they are shown in Schönberner's volume *Der gelbe Stern* [The Yellow Star of David] – although their black borders are trimmed. They remained surrounded by the aura of hallowed horror; they did not turn into objects of science.

In France, but also in the German remembrance and memorial culture, the dogma was 'Sufferings and crimes inflicted in the National Socialist concentration and extermination camps are unimaginable and therefore also undepictable'. In contrast, Didi-Hubermann insists on the photographs' claim of marking a point of contact with reality:

[1]The first part of the book was done for the catalogue of the exhibition *Mémoire des camps. Photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis (1933–1999)*, taking place in Paris in 2000.

> "But precisely because the picture is not everything, it remains legitimate to say: There are pictures of the Shoah; and even if they do not tell it all – and comprise a lot less than 'the whole' – they still deserve to be viewed or considered and queried as a particular matter of fact, as testimony and part of the whole of this tragic story" (Didi-Huberman 2007: 100).

As testimonies of the truth, pictures come before words which are at a higher philosophical level. It is actually precisely in therapeutic practice that traumatized people are able to visualize forgotten experiences long before any verbal formulation. Psychoanalyst, founder of psychotraumatology in Germany, Gottfried Fischer (1944-2013) states:

> "Images are closer to the right brain hemisphere which is assumed to be able to store traumatic memories which are not yet accessible to the verbal representation of the left hemisphere" (Fischer 2000: 19).

In this respect, art proves to be a unique medium for the visualization and processing of traumata. The best chance a traumatized person has of restoring the broken bond with his inner self is to try to strike up a creative dialog with the trauma. An artist will do it symbolically by trying to objectify his trauma in his work of art. Artistic work mobilizes one's intellectual, imaginative, integrative and manual skills, it counteracts the tendency to inner disintegration. Thus, the road to the past, to the center of pain, will go via the images, which will help the traumatized person to again "develop a feeling for his identity, autonomy and his self-worth" (Dannecker 2000: 31).

Through the example of Jewish artist Boris Lurie (1924-2008), we will see that the images in his artwork which he had wrested from his own repression and forgetting were first steps in facing his trauma. It took more than 20 years after the events before he was able to return to the scene of the crime in Riga in 1975 and began his literary confrontation with the Shoah.

Rumbula memorial

This memorial was first established towards the end of the Soviet empire and dedicated to the dead Jews of Riga. In the 1960s, they were not even acknowledged. Lurie notes:

> "There is one misleading marker: '50 000 people of various nationalities, Soviet citizens, war prisoners, and others have been cruelly martyred here by Fascists.' The 'others' refers to the 40 000 murdered Jews" (Lurie 2019: 92-93).

Lurie there reflects on the borderlines of linguistic and visual memory when, for the first time, he has a close look at the hidden place where his family was shot to death (with the exception of his father) in the forest of Rumbula:

> "How will I be able to incorporate this Rumbula into my life, now that I have actually seen it? It is even worse in its real physicl smallness than in the *Götterdämmeurng* that lives in my imagination. How?" (Lurie 2019: 88)

He makes a reference to the memoirs of the sole survivor of the executions on November 30 and December 8 – Frida Michelson – and says that her book is very long, "but strangely the Rumbula execution sequence occupies only a very few pages! It is too complex, too compressed in time and space and eternity to be described by words. Maybe here another medium is needed – one not yet discovered [..]" (Lurie 2019: 92).

Boris Lurie

Boris Lurie was born in Leningrad – St. Petersburg today – on July 24, 1924 as the youngest child of the dentist Shaina and the entrepreneur Ilja Lurie. With Lenin's death and the beginning of Stalin's rule, his father abandoned his businesses in Leningrad in the same year and moved to Riga, the capital of Latvia. The family followed him in 1925. There, Boris Lurie attended the German-language Jewish private Ezra high school where he also learned English. He was also fluent in Russian and Latvian.

After Riga had been occupied by the German armed forces on July 1, 1941, persecution of the Jewish population began – with 43,672 among the 385,063 inhabitants of the city, the Jewish population made up 11.34 % (Smirin 2008: 73). Aside from the physical elimination of the Jews, the German military occupation regime had also planned the economic exploitation of the productive Jews as slave laborers. During the first raids, burning down the synagogues, more than 400 Jews burnt to death in the large choral synagogue alone, at Gogola Street 25, on July 4, 1941 (Smirin 2008: 78). A unit of the Latvian auxiliary police was placed under German supervision and helped in the raids under the command of Viktors Arajs (Smirin 2008: 74). On July 25, the reporting obligation for all Jews was introduced in preparation of setting up a ghetto which was fenced in on October 25 and locked by gates which were guarded by the Latvian special police. On November 27, a block of four streets was detached as the 'small ghetto' for approximately 4,000 to 5,000 Jews selected as being the so-called 'able to work'. In the 'large ghetto', inhabitants were ordered to gather in groups of 1,000 each for 'evacuation' from the ghetto. Room was thus supposed to be made for the first transports of Jews from the German Reich.

Since September, Lurie's family lived in the ghetto on 37 Ludzas Street:

> "Yellow and glowing in the afternoon sun. It is the only four or five-story building set amidst lower houses. [..] My stoic mother made up father's mind: it was her decision. She, my sister Jeanne, and my old grandmother will go with the evacuation. My father and I will go to the *Arbeitslager*"[2] (Lurie 2019: 79).

At the juvenile age of 17, Boris Lurie had to witness how his mother Shaina, his grand-mother and Jeanne, the younger one of his two sisters, waited in the 'large ghetto' for their 'evacuation' – which, in reality, was a deportation into the Rumbula woods, ten kilometers in south-easterly direction on the road to Daugavpils. There, they all had to undress until naked on December 8, 1941 in the middle of winter and they were shot in excavated pits. Among them, Boris Lurie's juvenile love, Ljuba Treskunova, was also killed. It was, after November 30, the second 'action' which resulted in the murder of a total of more than 30,000 Jews in Latvia – even before the death factories in Auschwitz, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka had started their 'operation' in the spring of 1942 (Wronoski, Lurie 2014: 60).

Boris Lurie was not only very lucky to survive the ghetto in Riga and four concentration and labor camps between 1941 and 1945, but it was also thanks to his physical fitness that was appreciated by the German occupying forces, consequently making him and his father work for them. Against all probabilities, Boris Lurie was successful, together with his father Ilja, to survive for the following four years until the end of the war. They were first in the 'small ghetto', in the labor camp of the Lenta factory; then, in 1944, with the advance of Soviet troops, they were for two weeks in the concentration camp Salaspils; when the Germans retreated from Riga, they were in the transit camp Stutthof near Danzig and finally in a satellite camp of the Buchenwald concentration camp in Magdeburg, where forced laborers for the Polte ammunitions factory were housed. Lurie recalls:

> "My family was killed upon German orders; actually, the Latvians had done it, the Latvian fascists. What happened there was, for me, all like a horrible dream. I wasn't interested in the details. Later, it all came back to me. But that was much later" (Lurie 2007).

After the liberation from the Buchenwald satellite camp in Magdeburg on April 18, 1945, Lurie did not see himself as a humiliated KZ-prisoner:

> "My brother-in-law from New York [the husband of his sister Asja, who had gone to Italy in the 1930s and, before the war, had emigrated with him to New York]

[2] In the small ghetto [E. J. Gillen].

had found us and had taken me with him, and I had a position as an interpreter. I was doing very well. I was with the victors, I was not the surviving KZ-prisoner. My father was already successful as a business man, he did not want to leave at all [from Germany]" (Lurie 2007).

Lurie emigrated against his will to America in 1946 because his sister lived in New York. He did not feel at home there until the end of his life and also rejected the American way of life – driven by his profound conviction. After his arrival in New York in 1946, Lurie used pencils, chalk/crayons, charcoal pencil and drawing ink to capture, in sketches, memories, impressions, figures, scenes, portraits of the time in the ghetto and in the camps; among them a series of drawings which he called *War Series*. They are supplemented by larger formats of pastels, gouaches and oil paintings. One of the first drawings was his self-portrait *Boris Lurie, Untitled (Self Portrait), approx. 1946,* which depicts him with a grim face.

Among this *War Series* is also found a painting entitled *Portrait Of My Mother Before Shooting* (1947, oil on canvas, 93 x 65 cm). Lurie paints his mother like an apparition in a dream from a different, far-away world. Her eyes are absent as if she were already in the hereafter. In May 1996, he writes a poem with the subject of his pain over the loss of his mother:

"Where should we
fill anxieties
if mother bones are
splintered such."[3]

After his arrival in New York in 1946 (Lurie 2003: 119), the autodidact was successful – in the tradition of Alfred Kubin, James Ensor, Ludwig Meidner – in presenting impressive scenes from the camps' hell, such as *Back From Work - Prison Entrance* (1946/47, oil on canvas on fiberboard, 45 x 64 cm). The painting shows a stream of panicky prisoners who, accompanied by flame-like phenomena of light, are pulled as if by a current into the camp gate which at the same time looks like the mouth of a cremation furnace. "The world stopped to exist in this painting. Violent engulfing is the only reality" (Knigge 2003: VIII). The presentation is reminiscent of baroque paintings of hell, for instance, in the anonymous piece of folk art *Manger in the Hofburg Brixen*, showing Herod driven by devils into the gates of hell.

In another painting *Russian Prisoners Being Punished in Stutthof (Entrance)* (1946 (1940-55), oil on cardboard, 102.8 x 76.2 cm) two guards are set up at the entrance of

[3] "I stayed here (in New York), mainly because of the art. My sister lived here, otherwise I would not have gone to America at all" (Lurie 2007).

camp barracks, like sentries wearing upended waste pails as helmets and shouldered broomsticks as rifles. The prisoners called harem masters who had already given up on themselves are shown in soft, flowing forms and are dipped into a magic twilight. All these studies – still in the style of paintings of representations with surreal hints – were private paintings for Lurie which he had not wanted to put on exhibition during his lifetime. "Very briefly, I had wanted to do these illustrative memories; but then, after I learned a little in art history, I found out that illustration is not the proper art" (Lurie 2007). Instead, Lurie preferred not to transfer his experiences and memories into dramatic, theatrical scenes; thus, not historizing, namely, transferring them into symbolic imagery – as the builders of mangers do it with bad Herod who is carried on a sedan chair to the depth of hell.

Lurie attends courses in 1948 at the Arts Students' League with Reginald Marsh, a social realist, who had participated, in the 1930s, in the programs of the Federal Art Projects. George Grosz was also still teaching there at the time. But even the extreme means of expression of verism of the 1920s proved to be unsuitable to express the horrors of the camp. Lurie remembers:

> "I then[4] painted the dismembered women.[5] For me, they were all a symbol of New York – that they all are really that fat, really cut up. [...] That surely had something to do with the past, but I had not understood, at the time. Intellectually, I had not understood at all" (Lurie 2007).

Lurie's artistic work was not taken seriously by his father, sister and their friends. Lurie aptly describes the precarious existence as an artist and the ambivalent reaction by the environment:

> "Anybody who wanted to be an artist was considered to be crazy by the immigrant community – a foolish idealist who had botched his life – but nonetheless with respect because he also became a standardbearer who felt already the futility of the consumer society. Even if you had nothing, you were able to proudly say: 'I'm an artist.' First, one had to break with the bourgeois society and move to the poorest areas [..] The worse they were, the better for you [..] Reputations were not made or produced by 'investors' but rather by colleagues [..]" (Lurie: 129).

Fourteen years after the liberation in 1945, the traumatic events of his detention in the camps are deposited for the first time in his painting *Liberty or Lice* (1959/60, oil and collage on canvas, 166 x 212 cm, Israel Museum, Jerusalem). The title of the

[4]As of 1949 [E. J. Gillen].

[5]See, for example, *Dismembered Woman: The Stripper* (1955, oil on canvas, 165 x 109 cm).

painting *Liberty or Lice* may be understood as a sarcastic comment of his inner conflict between lice as a mortal threat in the camp and the promised 'Liberty' in the new, yet alien homeland of America. Present and past are here inescapably overlaid. The painting was shown in the *Les Lions* exhibition (1960). For the first time, he was able to let the stream of pictures flow freely from the past. Thus, a new form develops – unplanned – to record the flow of memories, to provide it with imagery and design.

In his memoirs *In Riga*, Lurie writes that this "painting in which you ruthlessly superimposed alternatively your past history and the experiences of the American reality of the late 1950s and early 1960s until all these disparate little chapters, covered over and extinguished in the process, jelled into a unified work [..]", inaugurated, for him, "a new art form of full and reckless and conscious sincerity and openness" (Lurie 2019: 296).[6] This new artistic method for him was arrived at "by 'unconscious' action, gesturing [triggered] by instantaneous projections of the mind, immediately fixed on canvas; and that was art, not dada or anti-art" (Lurie 2019: 296).

In the painting certain dates are mentioned. 'December 8' for the second deadly action in Rumbula against his mother, sister and lover in 1941, and 'April 18' for the day of liberation from the satellite camp in Magdeburg in 1945. In between, the name of his sister 'Jeanne' can be read. Photos are seen, for example, one of the ghetto in Riga, newspaper clippings, photographic renditions of his paintings – among them one of his *Dismembered Women*; a passport photo of the artist; the star of David on an orange-yellow patch with color gradients, such as it had been introduced by the Nazi regime, as of September 1941, as a mandatory designation of the Jews; and the photograph of his lover and wife Béatrice Lecornu, from whom he had just separated after ten years while this painting was created. All of these pieces are connected to a chaotic assemblage. These scraps of memory of the traumatic past are embedded between advertising shreds and high-heeled shoes which are reminders of an erotic shoe fetishism (as Rudolf Schlichter had made it an issue in his paintings) but which are also reminders of the collections of shoes and other belongings from prisoners in the death camps' exhibit rooms.

Souvenir pictures and consumer objects are literally mixed together in swirls of the colors white, blue and red to provide an undigested *Salad* – the title Lurie ironically provided for a collage from 1962 (oil and paper collage on canvas, 115 x 90 cm). Using the means of assemblage, Lurie picks up the new techniques of Pop Art, similarly to the way Robert Rauschenberg uses them (painting *Black Market*, 1961). Lurie incorporates everyday objects in his paintings and lets them appear like a piece from daily life and

[6] "Ruthlessly superimposed alternatively your past history and the experiences of the American reality of the late 1950s and early 1960s until all these disparate little chapters, covered over and estinguished in the process, jelled into a unified work. [...] That painting, I dare say, opened you and your art into conscious understanding of self, while also inaugurating an art form of full and reckless and conscious sincerity and openness, but arrived at via ‚inconscious' exercising, gesturing, of instantaneous projections of the mind immediately fixed on canvas; and this was art, not Dada or anti-art" (fragment from unpublished material, editor Julia Kissina).

not like serious art. Lurie welcomes these practices, as they correspond with his intention to leave the brutality of his experiences raw and undigested, and not sublimating or idealizing them.

Long before his first trip to the crime scene Riga in 1976 which was to become the trigger for the immense and impressive literary processing of the past, the initially 'unconscious' handling with pictures is already the second step to a 'conscious' understanding of his own self in his subsequent literary work. In the dream vision, visual logic of the picture is replaced by the work of compression and displacement (Didi-Huberman 2000: 153). Lurie changes the set pieces of his memory – and the images found which support and control this memory – and comes to a quest of finding new images and to a novel and unique synthesis. Reminiscing as a somatic, artistic activity is less of a reconstruction of times past but rather invention, revival, recovery, quests, reviewing, discarding, searching for traces – to observe what will emerge or crystallize and in the end a structure as a speculative assembly with an open-ended outcome, as we have seen with the example of his assemblage *Liberty or Lice*.

Lurie wanted his art to have an impact, be a driver for change, and he wanted to better understand not only his own situation, but also America, New York, his new home. As a political artist, he rejects the American imperialism. For him, that means coming to terms with the past and also the present, at the same time, in his American exile; and especially, it would mean to grapple with the 'New York Art Work Concentration Camp' (Lurie 2019: 310–312). He fights against the octopus of the art market and refuses any art practice which degrades art to a consumer good. Lurie does not want any anti-art in the sense of overcoming and dissolution of art into life; for him, art is much rather a medium for survival, a survival art or a means of life – like foodstuff.

As a survivor of the Holocaust, Lurie comes to the realization of living irrevocably in another world, on another planet, in another value system. Any understanding seems virtually impossible with contemporaries who had not experienced the Nazi camp system on their own mind and body. Possibly, it is just art alone which can build a bridge to the other side. Instead of leaving the United States,[7] Lurie – in the early 1950s still on his way to a career as a gallery artist[8] – established, together with Sam Goodman

[7]He was harboring the idea to go to France or Italy.

[8]In 1950, Lurie had his artistic 'Coming out' at New York's *Creative Gallery* with close to twenty 23 works, among them already a few of his *Dismembered Women*. Another exhibition followed, that same year, at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel. In 1952, he had another exhibition there (Wronoski 2014: 116). *The New York Times* wrote May 15, 1952: "The current show of paintings at the Hotel Barbizon Plaza contains a wide variety of work, all by one artist, Boris Lurie. His still is totally abstract though tempered at moments with visual reminisence, and he will jump from small water-color of the slow stain variety to a huge canvas that must be 15 by 10 feet and is filled with capering geometrical shapes. Color is restricted to a small number of pure tones emphasizing their strong contrasts, and forms are everywhere decisive." The article accompanied a photo of the 28-year-old Lurie in 'formal dress' with suit jacket in front of the painting *Composition* of 1952. Apparently, at that time, Lurie was on his way of becoming a quite normal, avantgarde East Coast artist "who knew how to combine willfulness and success in society" (Knigge 2003: X).

(1919–1967) and Stanley Fisher (1926–1980), the 'NO!art' movement against Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, and adamantly refused to be a part of the art market. Their exhibitions took place in the March Gallery in 10th Street – a sort of artist cooperation. For this show they published the manifesto *NO Show: Manifesto, October 8 to November 2, 1963*: "We joined forces because we felt stronger in the group. Everybody pulled another one along in the fight against the inhuman business" (Lourie 1995:49). Highlight and end of the group was the *'NO-Sculptures'* exhibition from May 12 to 30, 1964 at the Gertrude Stein Gallery with another manifesto *NO! Sculpture (Shit Sculpture), 1964, Boris Lurie Art Foundation*.

On exhibition there were piles of shit made of wire and plaster as joint works by Sam Goodman and Boris Lurie who had naturalistically painted the excrements. Each pile of shit was bearing the name of a gallerist: "Shit of Castelli", "Shit of Sonnabend".

The unexpected death of his father, Ilja Lurie, in 1964 and the end of group exhibitions of 'NO!art' effected in May of the same year, was the beginning of Lurie's withdrawal from the New York art scene: "Now, we had blown up all the bridges behind us" (Lurie 1988: 72). At that point in time, the decisions that he took as an artist were made for the rest of his life. He would never again sell any of his works; much rather, he would buy them back. He was now living from stock market speculations. "Art is art; money is money; stocks are stocks. The amalgamation of art and money is betrayal of the art" (Knigge 2003: XI).

One of Lurie's most shocking and harrowing collages is *Lolita* (1962, collage, oil on paper on canvas, 142 x 102 cm). A torn-off piece of the poster for Stanley Kubrick's movie can be seen, which was released to cinemas in early 1962. The portrait of Sue Lyon[9] is tilted by ninety degrees and rests on the bottom-most edge of the canvas. Her gaze is oriented towards a black-and-white photo glued onto the canvas in the upper left-hand corner. The photo shows dead people in barracks which had been set on fire before giving up the camp so that the inhabitants perished in the flames, while trying desperately and in vain to find a way outside from underneath the barracks wall. In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt reported that a prison guard had lent Eichmann the novel by Vladimir Nabokov for relaxing. Eichmann returned the book with the remark that *Lolita* was a 'very unpleasant book'. We do not know whether Lurie knew that story but "it refers, like his own works, to the shift which had enabled people like Eichmann (but not only him) to present himself as an 'orderly citizen' who turns away in disgust from nudity and presentations of sexual acts, yet, at the same time, tolerates crimes of an unknown extent, or participates in them or actively effects them" (Sterngast 2016: 132).

In the United States, everybody had actually seen, at one time or another, after the war, the horrible photos by Lee Miller or Margret Bourke-White in *Life* or other maga-

[9]Boris Lurie added a sadomasochistic scene between his alter ego Bobby and a girl the same age as Lolita as chapter 57 ½ of his novel *House of Anita*, see pp. 327–333

zines, photos which had usually been placed right in the middle of advertisements by the consumer industry. After that, these photos had been forgotten again until the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961, which again turned the media attention to the genocide of European Jews. It was in that context that Susan Sontag talked about a 'certain degree of saturation' having been noticeable after the initial publication of photos from National Socialist Concentration Camps in 1945. According to her, 'empathetic' photography had "done at least as much to deaden our conscience as to stir it up" (Sontag 1980: 26).

Lurie picked up on precisely this phenomenon with his title and the collage *Saturation Painting (Buchenwald)* (1959-64, collage, photograph and newspaper on canvas, 91 x 91 cm). It shows in the center of a soiled canvas removed from a stretcher frame, a photo by Margaret Bourke-White, which she had taken on behalf of *Life* magazine after her arrival at the Buchenwald camp on April 13, 1945. The photographs were published in the magazine on May 10, 1945 for the first time. They showed prisoners in Buchenwald behind barbed wire during the liberation of the camp. The iconic picture then appeared in the *Time* magazine under the title *Grim Greeting at Buchenwald* on December 26, 1960 (Wenzel 2016: 132). Lurie had cut it out from the magazine. The photo is framed by twelve pornographic pin-up photos of a model in various poses. As if he had wanted to bring the cynicism of the American 'affluent society' – for which all needs such as love and human closeness and all pictures, irrespective of their moral significance had become products – to terms and to a concept.

The word 'saturation' targets a flood of pictures which is to stimulate wrong needs and wishes. Lurie wants to intentionally disturb in aesthetic terms the beholder of his assemblage – in the middle of an art operation which, due to its commercialization, constantly devalues the contents of artistic work which is important for its survival. The destruction of bodies in the Nazi KZ-system is propagated in the devaluation of beauty, sensuality and sexuality of women in the capitalistic process of exploitation which subjects everything to the laws of profit. Lurie brings this context here to the point long before Pier Paolo Pasolini's criticism of liberal democracy when he contended that the Italian clerical fascism had developed into a consumeristic and permissive capitalism or, respectively, a hedonistic fascism (Pasolini 1998). Analogously, Joseph Beuys had also compared Auschwitz with the subtle destruction of creativity and individuality in capitalism.[10]

In parallel with the famous exhibition *The Art of Assemblage* (MoMA, October 2 to 12, 1961), for which Alfred Barr, Jr. and his curator William Seitz had already selected works by Lurie which were finally not even shown, the probably most disturbing work was created by Boris Lurie *Flatcar, Assemblage, 1945, by Adolf Hitler* (1961, offset print, 41 x 61 cm). Lurie here used an anonymous photo, which had long been

[10]Cf. Tisdall, Beuys (1979: 21).

ascribed to Margaret Bourke-White, with the photo caption indicating Adolf Hitler as the author of an assemblage consisting of naked corpses thrown pell-mell one over the other onto the open flatbed of a trailer. The photo as an offset print remains unchanged in its art work; Lurie's only intervention is the title. Lurie treats the photo as a find, a ready made.

Around 1960, at a point in time in which autonomous art increasingly threatened to dissolve in action or performance art – which, in the 1960s, aimed at the cancellation of the difference between art and life – Boris Lurie declared Adolf Hitler as the greatest performance artist. Because – if art is to be transferred to life – then Hitler had been the greatest and most powerfully efficient artist, the artist with the most far-reaching consequences. With his example of extreme conceptual art, Lurie demonstrates the fatal consequences of a political avantgarde of the 1960s which demanded action instead of analysis.

In his work *Railroad to America* (1963, painting/collage, photo on canvas, 55,5 x 68 cm), Hitler's assemblage is being commented by Lurie, so to speak, by the confrontation of the catafalque with a pin-up photo pasted over it which shows the rear of a young woman who is about to take off her panties. The beholder is speechless in disbelief in front of this collage – this confrontation of life and death which is in the tradition of the baroque vanitas symbolism. Is it a commentary to the brutal, thoughtless combination of the Shoah documents with advertisements in magazines during the post-war period?

Another Lurie's work *Hard Writings (Load)* (1972, collage, photograph and adhesive tape on paper on canvas, 60 x 88 cm) operates with the aesthetics of advertising signs, shop window decorations.

Theodor W. Adorno researched exactly this kind of cynic culture industry. After his return to Frankfurt am Main, Adorno refused – as is well-known – any reconciliation with the past and demanded an uncompromising negation of the conditions or circumstances which had made Auschwitz possible. From artwork, he expected that it "always and rigorously sounds out the meaningful context" and turns "against this meaning and against meaning at all" (Adorno 1970: 229).

Boris Lurie also used all his energy not to give meaning to his experiences with the Shoah, and instead snatch it from oblivion and spread it, before his audience, in his collages without any principle of order – to thus present it in its overall brutality and atrocity. History is not being clarified here to come to any conclusion; instead, history will be short circuited with the present:

> "In that world, there was sublimation just as little as there had been any idea of love which – irrespective of the marketing of (female) bodies and lust or desire – would still be conceivable. Art was [..] destruction, was self-destruction with its own means, and therein, at the same time – paradoxically – self-assertion" (Knigge 2003: VIII).

In a poem of February 1985, Lurie brings this insight to the point:

"Three separate lines - -
what beautiful is ugly, what ugly is still beautiful!
oh give me a little bit of time for pain!
I love the Parisian prostitutes" (Lurie 2003: 13).

In his *Involvement Show Statement* to the *Involvement Show* at the March Gallery of April 1961, Lurie makes it clear that 'all aesthetic standards' are without any significance for him. "At a time of wars and destruction, any aesthetic exercises and decorative punctuations are inappropriate" (Lurie, Krim 1961: 39). Lurie declared very precisely:

> "We want to create art, not destroy it, but state clearly what we mean – and that at the cost of good manners. Here, you will not find any secret languages, no refined excuses, no quiet discretions, no messages addressed to select listeners. Art is a tool of influences and warnings. We want to speak, shout, so that everybody can understand it. Truth is our teacher. We want no platitudes and sophistries, deception, conceit, lies" (Lurie, Krim 1961: 39).

Lurie wants to save the hidden, that which is seemingly already deleted, lost or forgotten in our memory.

In another, third step following the illustrations of his memories around 1946/47 and the collages since 1959, Boris Lurie is successful in the transformation of traumas into the language of literature – triggered by his first visit *In Riga* in 1975,[11] namely, the encounter with the site of his humiliations and nightmares. In the 1990s until his death in 2008, Lurie was working on his novel *House of Anita* which was published posthumously in English in 2010.[12] The story unfolds in New York in a domina studio which is, at the same time, a posh, high-class gallery. There are four dominas and four slaves. The house is no prison, everybody is voluntarily a part. Anita, the boss, is a gallerist at the same time. Gallerists are dominas, the artists are slaves who are subjected to the gallerists. Among them are the Germans Hans and Fritz, who can remember – although reluctantly – their childhood in Hamburg and Posen; the air raids on the metropolis on the river Elbe, and the escape from Poland. As opposed to the two Germans, Bobby is

[11] Cf. *House of Anita*, New York 2016.

[12] Boris Lurie, *House of Anita*, New York 2016. See: Wolkenkratzer, Klagewände. Boris Lurie's pornographic novel *House of Anita*, compiled by Julia Kissina. Collaboration Norbert Wehr. With contributions and translations by Ingolf Hoppmann, Julia Kissina, Olga Kouvchinnikova, Boris Lurie, Stefan Ripplinger, Joseph Schneberg and Geraldine Spiekermann (2018: 119-154). A Russian edition of the book exists; German and Latvian editions are planned.

an alternative concept – Lurie's alter ego. A trauma wiped out his memory of 'who he is and where he comes from'. Then, there is Aldo, the kapo:[13]

> "Our fourth man who was drafted to service. Aldo, he was very different from all of us. He was wearing women's clothes and could move freely around, by day and night in the entire apartment. Gradually, Aldo took on warden duties from the domina Anita; he even wrote the daily work schedule" (Lurie 2016: 51-54).[14]

It's a matter of the seductive, erotic power of relationships between the victim and the perpetrator,[15] which is transferred to the relationship of male/female gallerists and male/female artists on the American art market and which Lurie experiences as the continuation of that which he had felt and experienced in the KZ-system of the Nazi-regime. The artists and their works are only consumer goods for the amusement of the neo-aristocratic New York snobs; they have to offer their goods on the art market much like the proletarians offer their labor. Lurie's comparison of the capitalistic art market with the KZ-system goes right to the core of the American capitalism.

Finally, in chapter 50, Bobby – who, contrary to his alter ego Lurie, is a slave artist completely adapted to the system – is visited in his domina-gallery studio by five corpses:

> "An ancient woman, fast asleep; a handsome middle-aged woman, sitting errect and unflinching; a lovely round, innocent-looking girl of about sixteen; a tiny child, unattended on the floor, but carefully bundled up for warmth; and a young soldier-boy. All seemed spotlessly clean, but no question about it – the smell emanated from them.[16] And each posessed a pronounced mark between the eyes, that of a big bloody wound" (Lurie 2016: 198).

Bobby asks them where they come from. The older woman answers: "A Seventh-Day Adventist from the countryside near Rumbula. And Comrade Stalin. An unlikely team, don't you think?'" Bobby answers with a stutter: "'Rumb? Where is, ah...

[13]Designation for a functional prisoner who was employed by the camp management in German concentration camps and who supervised other prisoners. He received benefits for it, such as alcohol or access to camp brothels. Kapos could also be Jewish prisoners, but also political and criminal prisoners. The word origin is in dispute. It might be derived from the Italian *il capo* – 'for leader'.

[14] See German translation in: Ripplinger, Stefan; Milch, Vergossene.

[15] Theme used e.g. in Liliana Cavani's film *Der Nachtwächter*, 1974.

[16]According to the memoirs by Frida Michelson (*I Survived Rumbuli*, 1982), apparently one of three survivors of the executions of Rumbula, the 'travelers' wore their best, cleaned clothes on the route from the large ghetto to Rumbula (Lurie 2016: 204). Lurie's literary image of living corpses refers to reports that – after the executions – naked people wandered about through the forest, in vain looking for help. Professor Ezergailis: "The pit itself was still alive; bleeding and writhing bodies were regaining consciousness. [...] Moans and whimpers could be heard well into the night. Hundreds must have smothered under the weight of human flesh" (Lurie 2016: 320).

Rum...whatever.' 'Very far away,' she smiled. A drop of blood from the open hole in her forehead began coursing down her face. 'How could you know, Bobenka? You never bothered to learn about it.' [..] 'You should have repeated them to yourself three times a day, for your whole life'" (Lurie 2016: 198-205).

Despite the admonitions, Bobby still does not understand why these dead travelers have come to New York. In their further dialog, it becomes evident that one of the women is his mother, the others apparently his grand-mother, his sister, lover and himself. His mother holds western liberalism responsible for the Nazi victory:

> "I was a medical doctor, trained at a time when there were hardly any female doctors in the west. But the liberals lost all control over Hitler; they kept rather aloof and had the Russians fight it out with the Germans. Liberalism brought about the pits for corpses. The fascist pits for corpses had me go over to Stalin."[17]

Thus, it was not the liberal West but Stalin and the Soviet Union which liberated the camps under huge losses in life. The estimated number of the dead is approximately 27 million.

But of course, said his mother, "'We do not know this. We died on December 8, 1941'" (Lurie 2016: 202).

His lover Ljuba Treskunova throws Bobby in his face:

> "You see I am and always will be sixteen and beautiful! Beautiful as a heroine, immortalized in the drama of Rumbula. But you? YOU will never be sixteen again! You will remain a dideous old slave, licking the boots of the Americans for the rest of your life. Licking boots, no less thoroughly, than you did those of the Germans before them, for four years' [..]" (Lurie 2016: 208).

The mother accuses him of having left his lover for the Goddess of Slavery. Bobby answers:

> "How could I have known what choices lay ahead? Instinct to survive had taken me by the hand, and led me in the wrong direction. [..] I cry aloud. I would have been happier being one with you, From the very start. But was I not led by God? Was it really the Goddess of Slavery who took me? All I know is that I followed – like a lamb – to a different kind of slaughter" (Lurie 2016: 209).

It is only now that the painful truth gradually reaches Bobby – that he is a survivor of the camps. This is tied in with the traumatic experience of having survived by

[17] Cited acc. to the German translation (Ripplinger 2018: 132).

chance – in view of the excessive number of victims.[18]

The domina and gallerist Anita welcomes the corpses from Bobby's past; but they stink: "'Bobby, take them to the service bathroom for disinfection at once. Wash and scrub! Carbolic soap' [..]." Regarding Bobby's objection that the stench would certainly stay forever – despite scrubbing and showering – Anita answers: "'These relics of the past must be relegated to where they belong – to contemporary Art, not in Life. These guests are welcome visitors, Bobby. They are Art-treasures. Soon they will have no hint of odor except that of the museum'" (Lurie 2016: 229).[19]

In Boris Lurie's imagination, the art market – in the form of galleries – is a gigantic laundromat which will clean art down to the deep pores of all traces of history and individual suffering. In the end, "anything offensive will get the odor-free form of goods or money. Pecunia non olet. The gallerist Ms. Polanitzer says: 'Money wipes it all off – as if by magic – the past as well as the present.' [Art makes] corpses disappear by exhibiting them" (Ripplinger 2018: 132).

Contrary to Lurie, Bobby subjects himself to the powerful curator Dr. Geldpayer (allusion to Henry Geldzahler) and explains "How clear will it be for me that the highest level of civilization is subjection, i.e. unquestionable acceptance of the historic events [..]" (Ripplinger 2018: 132). Boris Lurie considered this continuation of slavery, suffered under the conditions of capitalism, to be worse and more humiliating than the real concentration camp. That's also why he called New York a 'World Art Concentration Camp' (Lurie 2019: 310-312).

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the novel *House of Anita* was preceded by a series of disturbing sadomasochistic paintings and collages, which Lurie had called *Love Series.*[20]

Resume

[18]Theodor W. Adorno described this trauma of life in his *Negative Dialektik*: "In retribution, dreams haunt him such as that he was no longer alive but had been gassed in 1944 and that his entire existence thereafter was merely in his imagination; emanation of the mad desire of a person murdered twenty years ago. [...] The guilt of life [...] according to statistics, supplementing an overwhelming number of murdered people by a minimum number of people rescued [...] can no longer be reconciled with life. That guilt is reproducing incessantly [...]. That, and nothing else will force one to turn to philosophy" (Adorno 1975: 355).

[19] "'Sie sind Kunstschätze. Bald werden sie keinen Geruch mehr an sich haben, außer dem des Museums'" (Ripplinger 2018: 132).

[20]See, for example *Slave* (1962–73, collage, paper, paint and varnish on paper, 56 x 79 cm)*, Love Series: Bound on Red Background* (1962, collage in transfer technique: photograph and paint on canvas, 203 x 135 cm)*, Untitled, undated* (collage, oil and paintings on canvas, 61 x 46 cm)*, Love Series* (1970-72, photograph, brushed over with paint, 15 x 17 cm)*, Love Series (Tripple Bound)* (1962, photomechanical enlargement of a newspaper illustration and oil on canvas, 40 x 100 cm); all illustrated in: 'NO!art', exh. cat. of NGBK (1995: 33).

In the mid-1960s, Adorno revised his ban of the early 1950s – regarding the writing of poems after Auschwitz – in the sentence that in art after Auschwitz "the perennial suffering [...] has as much the right to expression as the tortured one has to scream" (Adorno 1975: 355).[21] The art of the Shoah is beyond all aesthetics and beyond all artistic taste, it has the right to scream. Screaming as an expression of amorphousness and ugliness was in the classicist aesthetic still a severe violation of the rules, thus prompting Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his work *Laocoon or on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766) to explicitly discourage its use by the artist, because a mouth opened wide in screams of pain would essentially be disfiguring and unsightly.

However, art of the Shoah is beyond such assessments and rules. It not only recurs to reality, facts or a photo documentary character. It also gives form to the invisible, the pain and the feelings. Even hearing inner voices and seeing hallucinations are phenomena of reality for the artists of the Shoah, as they are showing the collapse of reality.

The assessment made by Primo Levi in 1986 half a year prior to his alleged suicide on April 4, 1987, in his final book *The Drowned and the Saved* also applies to Boris Lurie: The survivor of the Shoah is branded by his experience so that he never really survived, but is imprisoned in this experience; and until his actual death, he can do nothing but write, paint, express and remember that which actually cannot be expressed, as if being compelled to do so.

Thus, the pain incurred can never be sublimated, symbolized or historized. This is why, after a few years already, Lurie abandoned the attempt of illustrating his traumata with the means of traditional, narrative painting (1946-1950). The experiences made in the past remain unresolved – standing without explanation, barren in all their naked brutality. Following the death of Boris Lurie, we still have to deal with them further. This art of the Shoah, based on the experience of Auschwitz, escapes all explanation and interpretation. It must be 'suffered' as it encompasses the experience of absolute "revocation of the basic solidarity shown by one human being to another, as human beings from Germany towards the German and European Jews. [..] It does not aim at compassion, but rather at fright" (Knigge 2003: XIII).

But this art of the Shoah also knows that it will never be able to convey the death experience of the Shoah. There are no pictures of death in the gas chamber, death is invisible because nobody survived the gas chamber and is able to bear witness thereof. This also goes for the death of Lurie's family in the forest of Rumbula. Their death is the blind spot in Lurie's pictures and texts. His description in the novel *House of Anita* is sur-real. His reaction to the first encounter with Rumbula is the desire to die or go the way of grief, namely, the via dolorosa, to Rumbula:

[21]The quote continues: "Thus it might have been wrong to say that no poem could be written after Auschwitz" (Adorno 1975: 355).

> "To kneel, Japanese style, and put a knife in your stomach [..] Yes, this is the only way to incorporate Rumbula or to be incorporated into it. I see myself like a penitent Christian, every year on the Eighth of December, carrying a huge wooden Star-of-David all the way from Ludzas Street to Rumbula. The people stop and stare as I collapse, and get up again, stumbling under my heavy weight" (Lurie 2019: 89).

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Jenny Gaßer
Katrin Schmidt

Images of the Holocaust in East German Art (1949–1989)

Abstract

In chronological order, the authors discuss selected examples of works of art providing a brief overview of the Holocaust representation in East German art. The authors provide evidence that there was a continuous artistic examination of the crimes committed by the National Socialists. At the same time, the emerging 'anti-fascist resistance art' marginalised the commemoration of Jewish victims. Integrated into the inner-German system conflict and controlled by the state authorities, art on the Holocaust was used as a political instrument mainly for the anti-Federal Republican propaganda. It was not until the 1970s that Jewish victims of the Holocaust were commemorated differently. This development was related to the GDR's political rapprochement with Israel, as well as the increasing interest of civil society in the Nazi past.

Keywords: German Democratic Republic (GDR), visual art, Jewish artists, commemoration, anti-fascism, marginalisation

Jewish Life in the GDR

The Jewish population in the Soviet Occupation Zone stood at around 3,500 people immediately after the end of the war. An official census determined that 4,500 Jews were living in the Soviet Occupation Zone in October 1946. In 1949, the year the

state was founded, eight Jewish communities existed in the GDR with a total of 3,750 members (Zuckermann 2003: 18). They consisted of Jews who had survived in hiding, those liberated from concentration camps, people from 'mixed marriages', as well as remigrants (Illichmann 1997: 116). The relationship between the state and the Jewish population in the GDR was ambivalent. On the one hand, Jewish communities received government grants. On the other hand, they were exposed to massive mistrust and were monitored by the *Staatssicherheit* [State Security Service]. This led to a mass flight of Jews from the GDR at the beginning of 1953, including the leaders of almost all Jewish communities (Illichmann 1997: 129–130). In 1955, the Jewish communities consisted of 1,715 members. By 1976, this number had decreased to 728. In autumn 1990, a year after reunification, the Association of Jewish Communities in the GDR had 372 members left (Zuckermann 2003: 18).

As a result of state repression, Jewish communities in the GDR ceased to exist as an independent social and political force. However, unlike in the Soviet Union, they were not fully dissolved. Instead, they were used by the state and party organs for political purposes (Illichmann 1997: 183). The social and political function of the Jewish community was explicitly defined in the 1965 statute of the *Verband Jüdischer Gemeinden in der DDR* [Association of Jewish Communities in the GDR]. Thus, they were required to participate in campaigns against the FRG (Illichmann 1997: 216). Moreover, Jewish communities were constrained to help convey a positive image of the GDR to the West (Illichmann 1997: 225). In the 1980s, the relationship of the state towards its Jewish population, as well as the way in which the GDR dealt with the Holocaust, changed slightly (Illichmann 1997: 15). Parts of the Jewish community centre in the city of Schwerin were handed over to the local museum as *Gedenkstätte der Jüdischen Landesgemeinde Mecklenburg in Schwerin* [Memorial of the Jewish Community of Mecklenburg in Schwerin] (Klie und Sparre 2017: 189), and, in July 1988, the foundation *Neue Synagoge Berlin – Centrum Judaicum* [New Synagogue Berlin – Centre Judaicum] was founded (Simon 1992: 22). At the same time, the government attempted to improve its relationship with the Jewish people and the State of Israel. However, it was not until 1990 that the GDR formally acknowledged its special responsibility at the end of World War II (Illichmann 1997: 10). On 8 May 1990, the President of the *Volkskammer der DDR* [People's Chamber of the GDR], Sabine Bergmann-Pohl declared:

> "The burden of our history does not end in 1945. We are not only responsible for the humiliation, expulsion, and murder of Jewish women, men, and children; for the suffering caused by the Germans during World War II in the countries of Europe, especially those in the east. We are also responsible for the renewed persecution and humiliation of post-war Jewish citizens in our country, for a policy of

hypocrisy and hostility towards the State of Israel"[1] (Illichmann 1997: 9).

Early Representations of the Holocaust in East German Art

The first works of art that dealt with the National Socialist crimes were created during World War II, and often drew on traditional depictions of violence. In combination with photographs, they helped shape the memory of recent history. The artistic examination of National Socialism continued without interruption after the war (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 11). Indeed, artists who themselves were persecuted because of their religious beliefs and/or political opinion were now incorporating their personal experiences into art. Additionally, the Nuremberg Trials brought the full horror of the Holocaust into the homes of the public for the first time, as newspapers and the radio reported extensively on the trials: the numerous documents brought in as evidence became generally accessible later, but the trials examined the extent of the murder in a publicly visible way for the first time (Golczewski 2017: 41–42).

To picture the Holocaust at this early point was a difficult endeavour, not just because of Theodor Adorno's dictum.[2] According to Carol Zemel, who examined the relationship between aesthetics and trauma in the visual narratives of Holocaust survivors, 1945 marked a 'critical moment' in both Holocaust history and its representation. Firstly, Holocaust survivors were now free to tell their story and began to document the Holocaust history. Secondly, it was the beginning of a period of change and uncertainty: "For many survivors in 1945, the past continued with an enduring sense of catastrophe; the present was further dislocation, and the future unknown" (Zemel 2010: 49).

To illustrate the experiences of individual and structural violence under the Nazi regime, graphic art became a widely used medium. Indeed, quick sketches proved to be the only possible medium for capturing impressions in the concentration camps. Unlike paintings, they often did not strive for a thorough representation, but were able to depict a multitude of different facets of the Nazi terror. Furthermore, graphic art traditionally attracts a larger audience and allows private reading (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 47–48). Additionally, the forewords of graphic portfolios offered the opportunity

[1]English translation by the authors: "*Die Last unserer Geschichte geht über 1945 hinaus. Wir sind nicht nur mitverantwortlich für die Demütigung, Vertreibung und Ermordung jüdischer Frauen, Männer und Kinder, für das Leid, das im Zweiten Weltkrieg von Deutschland aus über die Länder Europas, besonders über unsere Nachbarn im Osten kam. Wir sind auch verantwortlich für die erneute Verfolgung und Entwürdigung jüdischer Mitbürger nach dem Krieg in unserem Land, für eine Politik der Heuchelei und Feindseligkeit gegenüber dem Staat Israel.*"

[2]See Hofmann, Klaus. 'Poetry after Auschwitz – Adorno's Dictum'. In: *German Life and Letters* 2 (58) 2005, pp. 182–194 for a detailed analysis of the argumentative context of Adorno's dictum and the problematic use of the two phrases out of context: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric [and] [it] is impossible to write poetry after Auschwitz.".

to deal with the National Socialism in a written form (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 13).

While a prisoner in Theresienstadt, the artist Leo Haas (1901–1983) produced over 500 drawings, some of which were published as graphic cycles after 1945 and used as evidence in the Theresienstadt Trial. Under the title *Von Theresienstadt ins Gas (nach Osten)* [From Theresienstadt into the Gas (Eastwards)] (Fig. 1), Haas illustrates the transport of camp prisoners to Auschwitz. The artist himself had witnessed such a transport together with his friend, the artist Bedřich Fritta (1906–1944). While Fritta died of exhaustion shortly after arriving at the camp, Haas was imprisoned there for several weeks and carry out forced labour in a counterfeiting workshop (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 88–89). After the end of the war, the artist moved back to Czechoslovakia. In 1947, twelve lithographs by Haas were published in Prague entitled *Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern* [From German Concentration Camps], with texts in Russian, English and French. The individual sheets bear titles such as *Hunger (Auschwitz)* [Hunger (Auschwitz)] (Fig. 2), *Auschwitz* [Auschwitz] (Fig. 3), *Todesmarsch* [Death March] (Fig. 4), and *Vor dem Krematorium* [In Front of the Crematorium]. The images do not show the heroic resistance of individuals, but rather the everyday life in the camp, prisoners searching for food, their struggle for survival plus a variety of forms of humiliation and the indifference of the camp administration towards the prisoners (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 85–86). In 1955, Haas, who had studied at the School for Decorative Arts in Berlin in the 1920s, moved to the eastern part of the city and worked for the state-owned film company *Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft* (DEFA) (Rosenberg 2020). In 1965, the *Akademie der Künste* [Academy of Arts] in East Berlin acquired all twelve lithographs from the *Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern* cycle directly from the artist. To this day, they are still part of the Academy's collection (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 85–86). Other works by Haas can also be found in the collection at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D. C. (USHMM 2019).

Other outstanding examples of an early artistic examination of the Holocaust can be found in the graphic cycles by the East German artist Lea Grundig (1906–1977). A German Jew, Grundig had been a member of the Communist party in Germany since 1926 (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 16). As such, she was expelled from the *Reichskammer der bildenden Künste* [Reich Chamber of Fine Arts] and banned from working and exhibiting in 1935. Grundig was arrested by the Gestapo in 1938. After her release one year later, she fled to Palestine. On her way, the artist stayed in refugee camps in Czechoslovakia and Palestine (Gillen 2015: 11–12). After almost nine years in exile, Grundig returned to her home town of Dresden in 1947 (Sukrow 2011: 51) where she worked as a lecturer and later as a professor at the city's Academy of Fine Arts (Sukrow 2011: 67). From 1964 to 1970, Grundig was the president of the *Verein Bildender Künstler der DDR* [Association of Visual Artists of the GDR] (Sukrow 2011: 155).

During the 1940s, Grundig began working on graphic cycles on themes of fascism, war, and militarism (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 7). Grundig herself said about her art

that she "wanted to portray people in such a way that their misery, their suffering could be recognised and at the same time anger about it could be felt" (Grundig 1958: 93). Although Grundig left Europe in 1939, she tried to create authentic representations of the Holocaust and its dimensions (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 45). They were important contributions to the formation of "iconography of the Holocaust" in Germany (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 41). However, not a single one of the cycles Grundig produced on the persecution of the Jews with one exception was ever exhibited in the GDR or the FRG, in its entirety and in a coherent order. They were only accessible to people as individual sheets in publications and exhibitions. Like Horst Strempel (1904–1975), Grundig was represented in state collections, whereas their works were banned from storage until the 1970s (Sukrow 2011: 69).

The only graphic cycle by Grundig that was published in its entirety was *Im Tal des Todes* [In the Valley of Slaughter] (Fig. 5) (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 49). It was created between 1943 and 1944 and comprises seventeen ink drawings explicitly dedicated to the theme of the genocide against the European Jews. The images are based on the iconography of the Old Testament, on the depictions of the pogroms of the early 20th century and on the Soviet Army's photographs of the mass murder of Jews by the Germans, which were already known during the war (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 45). Individual graphics from the cycle were exhibited in Palestine, England and the USA in the 1940s, and were published in Tel Aviv in 1944 with texts in Hebrew and English. A German edition was published in 1947 with an introduction by Kurt Liebmann, an Expressionist writer who was persecuted by the Nazis (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 43). He honours Grundig as a 'political illustrator' and explicitly points out the extent of the Holocaust in Europe by providing the total number of Jewish victims and information on their origin (Grundig 1947: 7). The introduction is followed by reproductions of the individual graphics, whose message is emphasized by Liebmann's epic texts. They cover numerous aspects of the life and fate of the Jewish people under National Socialism. Grundig traces the suffering of Jews from flight, captivity and deportation to mass murder through the arrangement of the individual graphic sheets.[3] At the same time, she prompts her audience to intervene. Plate 9, *Helft!* [Help!] (Fig. 6), and *10 Öffnet!* [Open!] (Fig. 7) are dedicated to members of society living outside the labour and concentration camps. Liebmann asks: "Are people out there hearing the cries for help?" (Grundig 1947: 28). Moreover, Grundig addresses Jewish resistance, for example in plate 14, *Revolte im Ghetto* [Revolt in the Ghetto] (Fig. 8), and 16, *Partisanen* [Partisans] (Fig. 9).

[3]Order and titles of plates: (1) *Der Fluchende im Tal des Todes* [The Cursing in the Valley of Slaughter]; (2) *Flüchtlinge* [Refugees]; (3) *Weil sie Juden sind…* [Because they are Jews…]; (4) *Nach Lublin* [To Lublin]; (5) *Bluthunde* [Bloodhounds]; (6) *Vergasung* [Gasification]; (7) *Alle Kinder sind abzuliefern…* [All Children are to be delivered…]; (8) *Die Mütter* [The Mothers]; (9) *Helft!* [Help!]; (10) *Öffnet!* [Open!]; (11) *Das Ungeheuer* [The Beast]; (12) *Hoffnungslos* [Hopeless]; (13) *In den Abgrund* [Into the Abyss]; (14) *Revolte im Ghetto* [Ghetto Revolt]; (15) *Unter der Erde* [Undergound]; (16) *Partisanen* [Partisans]; (17) *Ewige Schande* [Eternal Shame].

The last plate in the book is entitled *Ewige Schande* [Eternal Shame] (Fig. 10). It shows a mountain of corpses, with one body piled on top of another in a ruined landscape. As Dr. Ziva Amishai-Maisels writres in her publication on the influence of the Holocaust on the visual arts, Grundig took great care to identify the bodies explicitly as Jewish victims by giving the most skeletal and distorted figure a beard (Amishai-Maisels 1993: 75). In the middle of the mountain of corpses there is a gibbet from which Hitler is hung, swathed in a swastika flag. Liebmann writes:

> "At the shameful pole hangs the destroyer,
> destruction among his own and destroyed himself.
> To the eternal Memory. To the eternal shame" (Grundig 1947: 44).

The drawing depicts a variation on the image of the old shameful sign of a skewered head on a pole, and represents a desire to defeat Hitler and to make the crimes committed by the National Socialists public. Thus, at the end of the cycle there is no optimistic vision of the future — just a reminder of the never-ending guilt, in order to prevent a repetition of recent history (Ladengalerie Berlin 1996: 48).

In the Valley of Slaughter was not the last cycle by Grundig dedicated to the crimes of the National Socialists. On 20 August 1946, she admitted in a letter to her husband that "the monstrous tragedy of the Jews in Europe has deeply shocked me. I am far from finished with everything" (Grundig 1958: 65). During this time, her focus shifted to Jewish life in the ghetto. Between 1946 and 1950, she explores this theme in her graphic cycles *Ghetto* (1946–1948), *Ghetto-Aufstand* [Ghetto Uprising] (1946–1948) and *Niemals Wieder!* [Never Again!] (1943–1950) (Sukrow 2011: 47).

Jewish Victims in the Remembrance and Commemoration Culture of the GDR

Public remembrance in the form of monuments, memorials and commemorative days is an important element of a state's political culture. Integrated into the inner-German system conflict, public remembrance was used as a political instrument in both East and West Germany (Illichmann 1997: 72–73). In the 1950s, plans for the construction and design of the *Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätten* [National Remembrance and Memorial Sites (NMS)] of the GDR at Buchenwald (1958), Ravensbrück (1959) and Sachsenhausen (1961) began. The works of art commissioned by the state for this purpose can be regarded as exemplary for the official artistic engagement with National Socialism in the GDR. The individual experiences and impressions of individual artists were replaced by a desire for collective remembrance. While shortly after the end of

the war all groups of victims were represented equally, the works of art at the NMS focused on the Communist resistance fighters through the explicit symbolism of the Red angle. As a result, Jews, as victims of National Socialism, did not fit into the image of the militant anti-fascist (Illichmann 1997: 51).

The former Buchenwald concentration camp was the first NMS to open in 1958, and played a key role in the process of forming a national identity in the GDR. It helped to legitimise the state, which saw itself as an anti-fascist, democratic, and Socialist political entity which firmly followed the tradition of the German labour movement (Sukrow 2011: 72). The central element of its artistic programme was the so-called *Buchenwald Denkmal* [Buchenwald Memorial] (Fig. 11) by Fritz Cremer (1906–1993). The bronze sculpture is thoroughly integrated into the extensive memorial on the Ettersberg. It is located at the end of a long staircase leading from the mass graves up to a bell tower with an eternal flame. The sculpture consists of a group of eleven bronze figures representing concentration camp prisoners, both armed and unarmed. Their heads are bald, their clothes ragged, and their bodies pinched. However, the body language of the figures and their posture towards the west express notions of resistance. This was in line with the requirements of the state authorities, who had previously rejected two of the artist's drafts as neither weapons nor flag bearers appeared in them. Instead of heroic resistance fighters, they showed "repulsive characters which could clearly be identified as victims" (Fig. 12) (Sukrow 2011: 71).

The emerging 'anti-fascist resistance art' marginalised the commemoration of Jewish victims. Instead of images of misery, murder and grief, Communist resistance to the Nazi regime dominated the imagery (Sukrow 2011: 193). At the end of the 1950s, there were only a handful of works of art which, in contrast to the political instructions, contained references to Jewish victims during National Socialism based on explicit religious symbols or the titles of the artworks (Korn 2018: 7). With her etching *Appell im Konzentrationslager* [Roll Call in the Concentration Camp] (1956) (Fig. 13), Lea Grundig once again reminded people that not only Communist resistance fighters were victims of the Nazi regime. The work was created two years before the opening of the Buchenwald Memorial, and it shows two concentration camp prisoners supporting a physically debilitated person in the middle, who is marked with a yellow star. In doing so, she maintained the GDR hierarchy, which classified victims into 'fighters' and 'those who were persecuted' but that also marked the forgotten group of Jewish victims (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 148). A very similar motif was implemented by the East German artist Hermann Bruse (1904–1953) in his painting *Hungermarsch* [Hunger march] (1945–1946) (Fig. 14).

Recollection and Legal Processing in the 1960s

In contrast to the 1950s, a period in which art about the Holocaust had largely gone unnoticed, during the 1960s increasingly more works of art concerning the Holocaust were created, displayed and discussed as a result of the legal, political and social reappraisal of the Nazi crimes (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 167). At the same time, interest in artists such as Lea Grundig and Leo Haas, who were constantly recalling the crimes of the National Socialists, grew steadily. Many of the newly created works of art were reactions to the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem 1961, the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials (1963–1968), or the West German parliamentary debates on the statute of limitations that began in 1965. Works addressing perpetrators were also used for propaganda against the FRG. In some cases, the explicit depiction of Jewish victims only took place if, in return, the FRG could be exposed as a 'fascist state'. Florian Korn, who studies the artistic and curatorial confrontation with the Nazi past in both German states finds no comparable artistic exploitation of the Holocaust in the art of the FRG (Korn 2018: 8).

Another example of the political exploitation of artistic engagement with the Holocaust in the GDR is a work by the graphic artist and caricaturist Herbert Sandberg (1908–1991) titled *Eichmann und die Eichmänner* (1961) (Fig. 15). The aquatint etching shows the accused Adolf Eichmann (1906–1962) in a retreating attitude and a dismissive gesture on the left-hand side. Co-defendants in the trial – the *Eichmänner* – are behind him. The prosecutors are depicted on the on the right-hand side, brightly illuminated and pointing at Eichmann, led by a young woman bearing the Star of David on her chest.

As both a Jew and a Communist, Sandberg himself was a victim of the Nazi persecution (Lang 1977: 201–203), and was incarcerated for over a decade from 1934 until his liberation in 1945, including seven years in Buchenwald (Held 1991: 90–91). Commissioned by the Buchenwald Committee to turn his experiences and observations into art, Sandberg produced 70 aquatints based on the autobiographical graphic cycle *Eine Freundschaft* (1949) that can be read as both an example of the individual experience of the artist as well as the collective experience of the many people persecuted by the Nazis. At the same time, it illustrates the history of the German revolutionary proletariat (Lang 1977: 83). Recognising a lack of knowledge about recent history from the Weimar Republic to the Nazi regime during his visits to public schools, Sandberg decided to develop a more comprehensive biographical cycle titled *Der Weg* [The Path]. Whereas parts of the cycle *Eine Freundschaft* [A Friendship] had already been created as sketches during his imprisonment, the former is more a reflection than a report by the artist himself, and can be seen as the result of a continued artistic process with a stronger ideologically consolidated artistic positioning. The cycle was published as a book by the *Verlag der Kunst* on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the liberation from 'Hitler

fascism' in 1965 (Lang 1977: 83). Similar to the Buchenwald group by Cremer, the book depicts no victims explicitly labelled as Jewish in the entire graphic cycle. Instead it also focuses on the political narrative of the Communist and anti-fascist resistance. Thus, it is not a coincidence that the Jewish writer Arnold Zweig (1887–1968) does not mention Sandberg's Jewish origin in the foreword of the book (Sandberg 1966: np).

Sandberg was represented at numerous state art exhibitions in the GDR with several works documenting Nazi crimes. His graphic work *Helden* [Heroes] (1966) (Fig. 16) was exhibited with a slight variation at the ninth German Art Exhibition of the GDR under the title *Oh, Buchenwald, ich kann dich nicht vergessen* [Oh, Buchenwald, I Can Hardly Forget You] (1980) (Fig. 17) (Ministerium für Kultur der DDR and Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR 1982: 256). It also featured as the motif of the poster for the exhibition *Bekenntnisse* [Confessions] which opened in Berlin in 1960 (Fig. 18). The exhibition was a commentary on the Nazi continuities in political and legal state bodies as well as the recurring fascism in the FRG. The exhibited artists, including John Heartfield (1891–1968), Fritz Cremer, Leo Haas and Lea Grundig, were to "make a confession against the resurgence of fascism and racial hatred" (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 177–178).

In Sandberg's work, apart from the serial processing and the recourse to Christian iconography, the integration of National Socialist crimes into the anti-fascist and Communist narrative is rather conspicuous. These three observations are also reflected in Werner Tübke's (1929–2004) paintings from the 1960s. Born in the German city of Schönebeck, Tübke experienced World War II as an adolescent. Along with Bernhard Heisig and Wolfgang Mattheuer, Tübke belonged to the so-called *Leipziger Schule* [Leipzig School] and was one of the most popular painters in the GDR. From 1964 to 1967, Tübke produced 12 paintings, 15 watercolours and about 65 drawings on the terror of the Nazi regime and its inadequate reappraisal in the FRG. Later, these works formed the cycle *Lebenserinnerungen des Dr. jur. Schulze* [Memories of the Life of Dr. jur. Schulze]. The cycle was started by Tübke on his own initiative, but was later supported by the *Kulturbund der DDR* [Cultural Association of the GDR] as a commission. The reason for dealing with this topic were neo-fascist phenomena in the FRG during a time in which the statute of limitations for National Socialist crimes was openly discussed. In addition, the Globke Trial[4] had just begun, despite the fact that former judges from the Nazi regime continued to work in the newly formed state (Tübke-Schellenberger and Lindner 1999: 23). The most frequently published painting from the group is the

[4] Hans Globke (1898–1973) was German lawyer and politician. He had started his political career in the 1920s and later served the Nazi Regime. As an official Globke had written commentaries on the anti-Semitic Nuremberg race laws. After World War II, critics accused him of direct involvement in the mass murder of Jews. Nevertheless, Konrad Adenauer had chosen him to be the director of the chancellor's office in West Germany. His name became shorthand for the failures of denazification in the FRG. In July 1963 the GDR organised a public 'Globke trial', which took place at the Supreme Court in East Berlin. After a nine-day trial Globke was 'sentenced' in absentia to life in prison for crimes against humanity (Herf 1997: 183–184).

third version of the *Lebenserinnerungen des Dr. jur. Schulze III* (1965) (Fig. 19), which combines various image and memory quotations concerning violent scenes of the persecution of the Jews without a continuous narration. In addition to the media coverage on the legal processes, it were mainly books with pictorial material, which served Tübke as a model, such as *Der gelbe Stern* [The Yellow Star] (1960) by Gerhard Schoenberner (1931–2012). As Hoffmann-Curtius elaborates in detail, Tübke appropriated numerous photographs from the book. It almost seems as if Tübke provided the illustrations to Schoenberner's introductory words to the book (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 228):

> "The biblical prophecies of the Last Judgement and the visions of fear of Kafka became reality. The monsters of Hieronymus Bosch rose in human form. They did not have tusks or hooves or the faces of toads. They were clean-shaven, wore their hair neatly parted, they were good family men [...]. Dante's Infernos was established in the modern world" (Schoenberner 1960: 7).

Tübke shows the murderer and the murdered in the scheme of a court. He shows the figure of the judge and — in contrast to traditional Christian representations of the world court — the torments of Hell on the left-hand side and not, as is usual, on the right-hand side in the picture (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 230). The agonies of Hell symbolise the crimes against Jews in clarity and detail. Whereas Jewish artists on the whole did not use photographs of the mounds of the dead as a basis for their art (Amishai-Maisels 1993: 86), the influence of historical photographs and their appropriation in paintings becomes particularly clear in Tübke's work. The artist refers to photographs published by Schoenberner, for example an execution scene from Warsaw (Schoenberner 1960: 100) (Fig. 20), but adds a goat's foot and spectacles to the executioner's attire in a reference to Heinrich Himmler. He also adopts the rear view of an SS officer whom he depicts with a skull (Schoenberner 1960: 170) (Fig. 21), the bright iron lattice of an image from the Warsaw Ghetto (Schoenberner 1960: 182) (Fig. 22) and cardboard urns for the dead from Theresienstadt (Schoenberner 1960: 73) (Fig. 23). He indicates not only the names of the victims, but also the sites of crime. Various references of this kind can be found in the painting. While the perpetrators are always anonymised and depicted with skulls, Tübke shows the numerous and nameless victims individually, thus breaking with anonymity (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 232).

Grundig, who in her works depicts the terror of the Nazi regime in an accusatory and drastic manner, could not find access to Tübke's rather spiritual work. The generational conflict between Grundig and the Leipzig School was also visible on a creative level (Sukrow 2011: 232). Tübke integrates the photographic quotations into a complex system of signs and places them in the traditional line of early panel painting, thus creating an artistic space in the GDR, which successfully distinguished himself from the Western avant-garde. At the same time, he integrates the persecution of Jews into a

historical continuum of cruelty and violence. In this way, he emphasises the suffering and torment of the Jews with more strength (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 240). However, his concept of the therapy of deterrence formed a contrast to the state-imposed concept of realism. As a result, Tübke was accused of "leaving the path of socialism" in 1967 (Tübke-Schellenberger and Lindner 1999: 25). Nevertheless, an attempt to remove the artist as a lecturer from the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig in 1968 failed, partly due to huge student protests (Tübke-Schellenberger and Lindner 1999: 28).

Expansion of the Holocaust Remembrance Content and Form during the 1970s and 1980s

The efforts for a differentiated confrontation with the Holocaust intensified in the 1970s, when increasingly more artists started to create the works of art that were distanced from the popular anti-fascist art. A differentiation and expansion of the commemoration of the Jewish victims of National Socialism can be noticed, which seems to be connected to the political rapprochement of the GDR towards Israel. Moreover, society became more and more interested in the Nazi past. The two last decades of the GDR were also characterised by the beginning of an abstract examination of the Holocaust, especially of the Auschwitz and Treblinka death camps (Korn 2018: 8).

At the beginning of the 1980s, the artist Horst Zickelbein (b. 1926) created a series of non-representational paintings whose titles refer to the Auschwitz extermination camp. After he was taken a prisoner of war during his military service, Zickelbein moved to Berlin in 1947 and studied at the *Kunsthochschule Weißensee* [Weißensee Academy of Art Berlin] under Horst Strempel (Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR and Galerie am Schönhof 1989: np). In 1955 he became a member of the *Verein Bildender Künstler der DDR* [Association of Visual Artists of the GDR] (Bildatlas 2020: np). From 1960 onwards, the artist increasingly focused on abstract effects of forms and, above all, colours (Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR and Galerie am Schönhof 1989: np). In a series of paintings, he approaches the Holocaust theme. In 1989, his paintings *All die herrlichen Frauen / Auschwitz III* [All The Glorious Women / Auschwitz III] (1981) (Fig. 24), *Die Mulde (Auschwitz)* [The Hollow (Auschwitz)] (1981) (Fig. 25) and *2030 – 2032 (Auschwitz)* (1983) (Fig. 26) were exhibited at a state-owned gallery in Görlitz (Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR and Galerie am Schönhof 1989: np). Zickelbein's choice and use of colours are reminiscent of the painting *Die Erde von Auschwitz* [The Ground of Auschwitz] (1962–1966) (Fig. 27) by Lea Grundig. Here she transforms the canvas into dirty ground on which the prints of naked feet and heavy military boots are clearly visible. The foreword to the exhibition catalogue praises "the direct experience of the landscape" through the artist's works (Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR and Galerie am Schönhof 1989: np). Here, Auschwitz is a mere patch of land without any history. Thus,

it is surprising that *All die herrlichen Frauen / Auschwitz III* was featured on the cover of the exhibition catalogue.

Another example of the increasingly abstract representation of the Holocaust in the GDR are the paintings by Gerhard Kurt Müller (1926–2019), a volunteer in the Luftwaffe in 1943 who was taken a prisoner of war in France. In 1948 Müller returned to his home town of Leipzig, where he studied at the *Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst* [Academy of Fine Arts]. Müller later became head of the class for free graphic art and illustration and was appointed director of the academy in 1961 (Ministerium für Kultur der DDR and Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR 1982: 243). In the years 1981 and 1982, the painting *Die Jüdin* [The Jewess] (Fig. 28) was created and displayed shortly after its completion at the ninth art exhibition of the GDR in Dresden, where it was acquired by the *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden* [Dresden State Art Collections] (Kunst-Archive 2020: np). The painting shows a sitting person in profile, hiding her face in a gesture of grief and despair with her right hand. Behind the figure, geometric elements such as cuboids, cylinders and pyramids pile up to form an abstract building or sculpture. The upper part displays elements reminiscent of a swastika, whereas the Jewish woman in the lower part of the painting is marked by a Star of David. The soft lines of the human body in combination with the fragility of both arms and hands form a strong contrast to the massive steel skeleton that looms behind the woman. The abstract forms in the background, which multiply many times over, have become the artist's signum (Krischke 2018: 38–39). They also occur in the painting *Kristallnacht* (1986) (Fig. 29) by Müller, which also shows a figure surrounded by numerous abstract forms. Due to the monochrome style of the painting, the figure is difficult to identify: it protects its head with its hand while being surrounded by anonymous creatures with faces resembling gas masks. Stylistically, the painting can be connected to works of Futurism or Cubism. Indeed, in the year of its creation, Müller made a trip to Paris, where he visited the Picasso Museum and the Louvre (Gosse 1996: 190).

The colour aquatint titled *Haschoah (Die Katastrophe)* [Haschoah (The Catastrophe)] (1982) (Fig. 30) by the artist Hartmut Berlinicke (1942–2018) shows the interior of the synagogue in Osnabrück, which was destroyed by the Germans during Kristallnacht (Galerie Wildeshausen 2013: np). Berlinicke was a self-taught artist (Kunstamt Neukölln 1977: np) whose artistic activity began in 1965. Three years later he bought his own etching press (Kunsthalle Bremen 1975: np). His work during the 1970s, which was exhibited in both East and West Germany, is predominantly concerned with technical subjects and architecture. Between 1971 and 1977, he was also represented at international biennials in Lubljana, Kraków, Wien, Trieste, Bradford, Segovia, Monte Carlo and San Francisco (Kunstamt Neukölln 1977: np). In *Haschoah (Die Katastrophe)*, a ramp leads to the *bimah* in the depths of a synagogue, which is surrounded by flames, ending in front of a barred gate — the doors of the Auschwitz extermination camp. A passport belonging to the Jewish artist Felix Nussbaum (1904–1944) is clearly visible lying on the

ramp. The artwork becomes a commemorative memorial for both Nussbaum, who was murdered at Auschwitz, and all other persecuted and murdered Jews. Berlinicke chose the infamous 1938 pogrom, the first climax of anti-Jewish violence in Germany, as the subject for his work.

Interestingly, works from the 1940s that deal with this subject came back into public focus as more and more pieces of art from the 1970s and 1980s concerned themselves with the Holocaust in the GDR. One example is a painting by Horst Strempel, titled *Nacht über Deutschland* [Night over Germany] (Fig. 31). The artist created the triptych complete with a predella in 1945/1946. It was one of his most important works, and today is part of the collection of the *Nationalgalerie* [National Gallery] in Berlin (Saure 1992: 271). The work shows Germany as a camp landscape in the immediate post-war period, with a clear reference to the destruction of the country and its people. The format corresponds to a Christian winged altar, and is composed of several parts. On the right wing, Strempel depicts a Jewish family with the father prominently marked with a yellow spot on his chest. After its completion, the painting was purchased by the Berlin Magistrate and displayed at the exhibition *Meisterwerke der deutschen Bildhauerei und Malerei* [Masterpieces of German Sculpture and Painting] in Berlin in 1947 (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 29). After 1949, the triptych remained in the eastern part of the city. A West Berlin publication on Strempel commented on the painting:

> "Strempel painted the suffering of the Nazi years after 1945 in the great triptych *Nacht über Deutschland* [Night over Germany] as someone who was liberated himself and who found art the perfect method to express his emotion as well as the general silent outcry of the people. Despite the fact that the painting is the property of the *Galerie des 20. Jahrhunderts* [20th Century Gallery], it had to be left behind in East Berlin in 1948" (Kunstamt Charottenburg 1963: 4).

The artist was subsequently caught between the fronts of the Cold War and the cultural-political debate of the time. In 1951, *Nacht über Deutschland* disappeared from public view (Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 29). It was exhibited again for the first time in March 1970 at the Kunstamt in the Tiergarten district in East Berlin. Astonishingly, only the right wing of the triptych, showing the grieving Jewish family, was chosen to be displayed (Kunstamt Tiergarten 1970: np).

Conclusion

Anti-fascism was a central element of the national self-image in the GDR, becoming an integral part of the everyday political life. For many surviving Jewish Communists, returning exiles and Jews who had become convinced anti-fascists, the new state

was a place of hope and refuge. The first generation of artists to deal with the Holocaust in East Germany after 1945 were mostly Jews themselves and/or Communists who had first-hand experience of emigration, violence, and imprisonment in labour or concentration camps. The memory of the Jewish victims was then marginalised by the emerging anti-fascist resistance art. Based on the works for the national memorials in Buchenwald (1958), Ravensbrück (1959) and Sachsenhausen (1961), anti-fascist resistance formed the central focus of the official artistic examination of the Nazi past. Also, works of art which focused on the perpetrators were primarily used for anti-West German propaganda. In the course of the legal, political, and social discussion on the Holocaust, more and more works of art were created and discussed at art exhibitions. It was not until the 1970s that Jewish victims of the Holocaust were commemorated differently. This development was related to the GDR's political rapprochement with Israel, as well as with an increasing interest in society about the Nazi past. Shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, several civil and church initiatives encouraged public remembrance of the genocide committed against the Jews.

The central motifs of the works of art were life in the ghetto, discrimination, evacuation, and various themes connected to the camps, such as hunger, grief, murder, the suffering of children, illness, flight, guilt, hunger marches, and also resistance, solidarity among the prisoners and — eventually — liberation. The Jewish victims in these works of art are mostly marked by a yellow star, concentration camp clothing, religious symbols or partly stereotypical external features such as beards. As a whole, the works of art are realistic respective figurative representations in the traditional genres of painting, sculpture and graphic art which corresponded to the art and cultural political preferences of the Party and state leadership. The few examples of the Holocaust representation in abstract formal language mostly date from the 1970s and 1980s, a time when more diverse art forms were generally established in the GDR.

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Image source: Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 88

Fig. 2 Leo Haas: *Hunger (Auschwitz)* [Hunger (Auschwitz)], colour lithograph, 28.3 x 45.0 cm, plate 4 of the graphic cycle *Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern* [From German concentration camps] (published 1947), Akademie der Künste Berlin

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Fig. 5 Grundig, Lea. *Im Tal des Todes*. Dresden: Sachsenverlag, 1947. With texts by Kurt Liebmann.

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Image source: Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz, Monumente Online, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.monumente-online.de/de/ausgaben/2014/3/politisches-figurentheater.php> © Peter Hansen, Gedenkstätte Buchenwald.

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Fig. 15 Herbert Sandberg: *Eichmann und die Eichmänner* (1960), aquatint etching, 49.1 x 31.8 cm, edition of 50

Image source: ddrbildarchiv.de – Zeitgeschichtliches Pressebildarchiv aus den Neuen Bundesländern, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.ddrbildarchiv.de/info/ddr-fotos/grafik-herbert-sandberg-eichmann-eichmaenner-jahr-49664.html> © ddrbildarchiv.de/Prof. Herbert Sandberg.

Fig. 16 Herbert Sandberg: *Helden* [Heroes] (1958), aquatint etching, 19.5 x 24.5cm, plate 48 of the graphic cycle *Der Weg* [The Way] (1958–1965), 70 aquatint etchings

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Fig. 17 Herbert Sandberg: *Oh, Buchenwald, ich kann dich nicht vergessen* [O, Buchenwald, I Can Hardly Forget You] (1980), aquatinta etching, 20.0 x 31.0 cm

Image source: Ministerium für Kultur der DDR and Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR 1982: 101

Fig. 18 Poster for the exhbition Bekenntnisse [Confessions], *Klub der Kulturschaffenden* Johannes R. Becher, East Berlin (1960) showing Herberst Sandberg's graphic *Helden* [Heroes] (1958)

Image source: ddrbildarchiv.de – Zeitgeschichtliches Pressebildarchiv aus den Neuen Bundesländern, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.ddrbildarchiv.de/info/ddr/plakat-ausstellung-bekenntnisse-ueber-herbert-sandberg-jahr-49585.html> © ddrbildarchiv.de/Prof. Herbert Sandberg.

Fig. 19 Werner Tübke: *Lebenserinnerungen des Dr. jur. Schulze III* (1965), tempera, canvas on panel, 188.0 x 121.0 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

Image source: Tübke-Schellenberger and Lindner 1999: 31

Fig. 20 Execution scene from Warsaw Ghetto (Stroop Report) 1943
Image source: Schoenberner 1960: 100
Fig. 21 Arrest of Company Brauer, Warsaw (Stroop Report) 1943
Image source: Schoenberner 1960: 170
Fig. 22 Executed Insurgents, Warsaw (Stroop Report) 1943
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Fig. 24 Horst Zickelbein: *All die herrlichen Frauen / Auschwitz III* [All The Glorious Women / Auschwitz III] (1981), dispersion paint, paper on cardboard, 89.0 x 100.0 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (acquired in 1991)
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Fig. 26 Horst Zickelbein: *2030 – 2032 (Auschwitz)* (1983), mixed media, 59.0 x 46.0 cm
Image source: Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR and Galerie am Schönhof 1989: np.
Fig. 27 Lea Grundig: *Die Erde von Auschwitz* [The Ground of Auschwitz] (1962–1966), ink and watercolour, 55.0 x 76.0 cm, current location unknown
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Fig. 28 Gerhard Kurt Müller: *Die Jüdin* [The Jewess] (1981/1982), oil on canvas, 190.0 x 105.0 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Galerie Neue Meister
Image source: Kunst-Archive, Werkverzeichnis Gerhard Kurt Müller, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.kunst-archive.net/de/wvz/gerhard_kurt_mueller/works/die_juedin/type/all> © Gerhard Kurt Müller, Atelier und Archiv, Leipzig
Fig. 29 Gerhard Kurt Müller: *Kristallnacht* (1986), oil on hard fibre, 160.0 x 185.0 cm
Image source: Kunst-Archive, Werkverzeichnis Gerhard Kurt Müller, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.kunst-archive.net/de/wvz/gerhard_kurt_mueller/works/kristallnacht/type/all> © Gerhard Kurt Müller, Gerhard Kurt Müller Stiftung, Leipzig
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Image source: Galerie Wildeshausen, Hartmut R. Berlinicke, 27 Sept. 2021 <http://bilder.kunstgalerie-wildeshausen.de/201-haschoah/>
Fig. 31 Horst Strempel: *Nacht über Deutschland* [Night over Germany] (1946), oil on canvas, central panel: 150.0 x 168.0 cm, side panels: 150.0 x 78.0 cm, predella: 79.0 x 166.0 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie
Image source: Saure 1992: 146

Fig. 1. *Leo Haas: Von Theresienstadt ins Gas (nach Osten) [From Theresienstadt to Gas (Eastwards)], colour lithograph, 29.0 x 44.5 cm, plate 2 of the graphic cycle Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern [From German concentration camps] (published 1947), Akademie der Künste Berlin*

Image source: Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 88

Fig. 2. *Leo Haas: Hunger (Auschwitz) [Hunger (Auschwitz)], colour lithograph, 28.3 x 45.0 cm, plate 4 of the graphic cycle Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern [From German concentration camps] (published 1947), Akademie der Künste Berlin*

Image source: Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 86

Fig. 3. *Leo Haas: Auschwitz [Auschwitz], colour lithograph, 29.5 x 44.5 cm, plate 5 of the graphic cycle Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern [From German concentration camps] (published 1947), Akademie der Künste Berlin*

Image source: Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 89

Fig. 4. *Leo Haas: Todesmarsch [Death March], colour lithograph, 28.7 x 44.7 cm, plate 11 of the graphic cycle Aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern [From German concentration camps] (published 1947), Akademie der Künste Berlin*

Image source: Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 87

Fig. 5. *Grundig, Lea. Im Tal des Todes. Dresden: Sachsenverlag, 1947. With texts by Kurt Liebmann.*
Image source: Grundig 1947: front cover

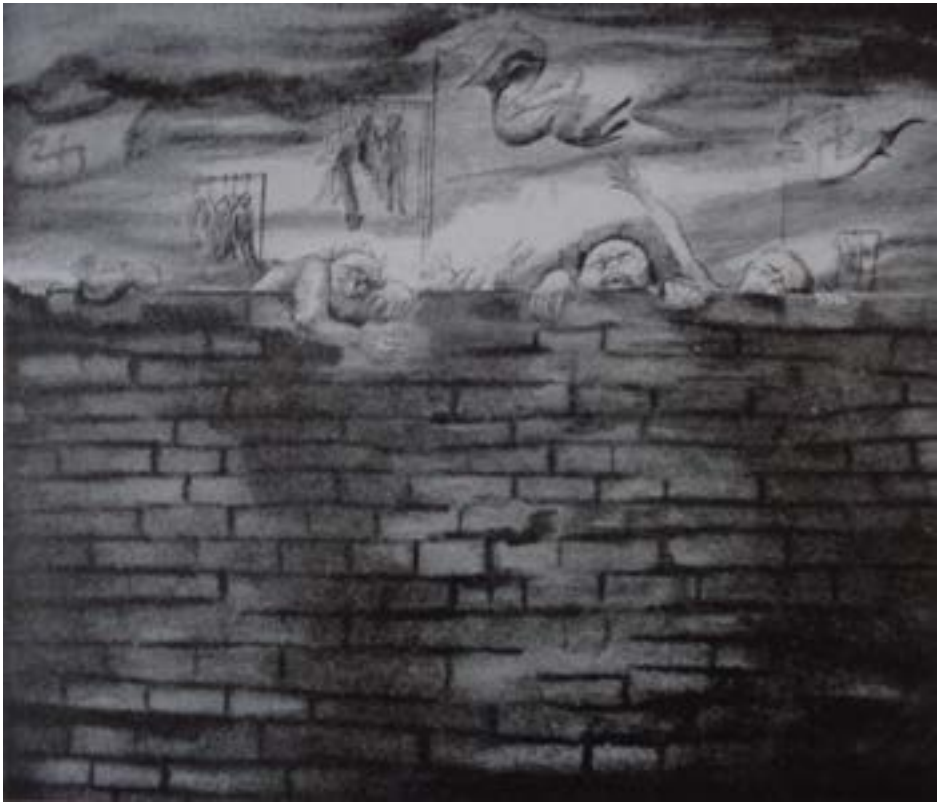

Fig. 6. *Lea Grundig: Helft! [Help!], plate 9 of the graphic cycle Im Tal des Todes [In the Valley of Slaughter] (1943/1944), pencil, ink and watercolour*

Image source: Grundig 1947: 29

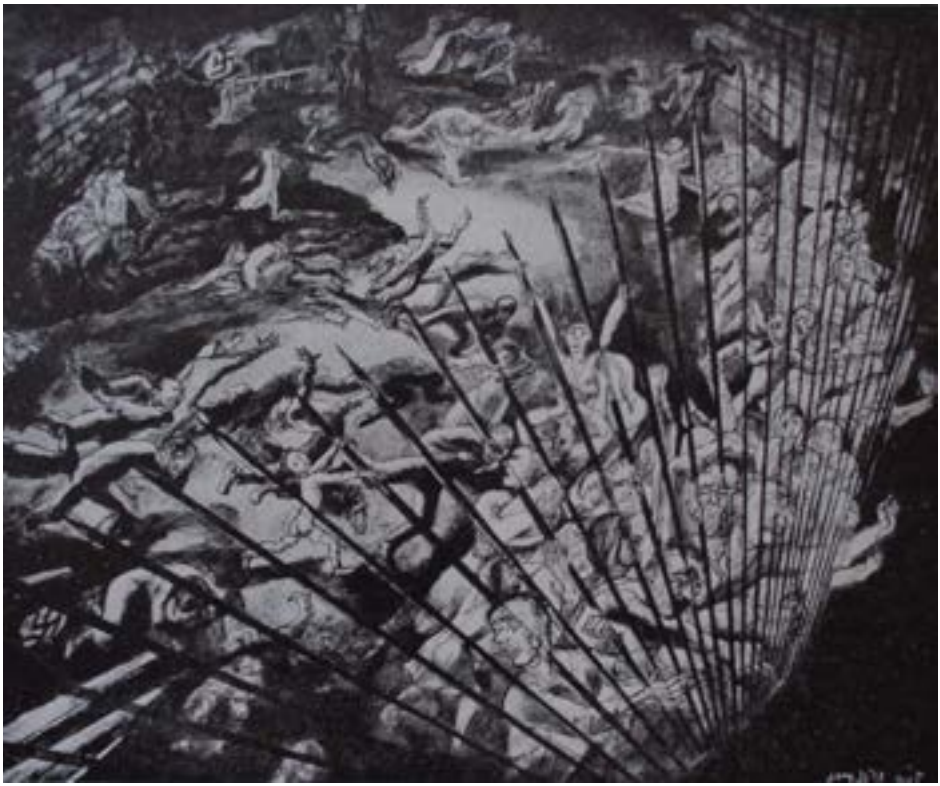

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Image source: Grundig 1947: 31

Fig. 8. *Lea Grundig: Revolte im Ghetto [Revolt in the Ghetto] (ca. 1943/1944), plate 14 of the graphic cycle Im Tal des Todes [In the Valley of Slaughter] (1943/1944), pencil, ink and watercolour*

Image source: Grundig 1947: 39

Fig. 9. *Lea Grundig: Partisanen [Partisans] (1944), plate 16 of the graphic cycle Im Tal des Todes [In the Valley of Slaughter] (1943/1944), pencil, ink and watercolour*

Image source: Grundig 1947: 43

Fig. 10. *Lea Grundig: Ewige Schande [Eternal Shame] (1943/1944), ink drawing, plate 17 of the graphic cycle Im Tal des Todes [In the Valley of Slaughter] (1943/1944), pencil, ink and watercolour*

Image source: Grundig 1947: 45

Fig. 11. *Fritz Cremer, Buchenwald Denkmal [Buchenwald Memorial] (1958), bronze, c. 400.0 cm (height), National Memorial Site Buchenwald (1958)*

Image source: Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz, Monumente Online, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.monumente-online.de/de/ausgaben/2014/3/politisches-figurentheater.php> © Peter Hansen, Gedenkstätte Buchenwald.

Fig. 12. *Fritz Cremer, first design for Buchenwald memorial (1952), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie*

Image source: Stiftung Ostdeutsche Galerie 1995: 124

Fig. 13. *Lea Grundig, Appell im Konzentrationslager [Roll Call in the Concentration Camp] (1956), etching, 36.0 x 27.0 cm*

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Fig. 14. *Hermann Bruse: Hungermarsch [Hunger march] (1945/1946), oil on hard fibre, 127.0 x 93.5 cm, Stadtmuseum Berlin*

Image source: Hoffmann-Curtius 2015: 114

Fig. 15. *Herbert Sandberg: Eichmann und die Eichmänner (1960), aquatint etching, 49.1 x 31.8 cm, edition of 50*

Image source: ddrbildarchiv.de – Zeitgeschichtliches Pressebildarchiv aus den Neuen Bundesländern, 27 Sept. 2021 <www.ddrbildarchiv.de/info/ddr-fotos/grafik-herbert-sandberg-eichmann-eichmaenner-jahr-49664.html> © ddrbildarchiv.de/Prof. Herbert Sandberg.

Fig. 16. *Herbert Sandberg: Helden [Heroes] (1958), aquatint etching, 19.5 x 24.5cm, plate 48 of the graphic cycle Der Weg [The Way] (1958–1965), 70 aquatint etchings*

Image source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection

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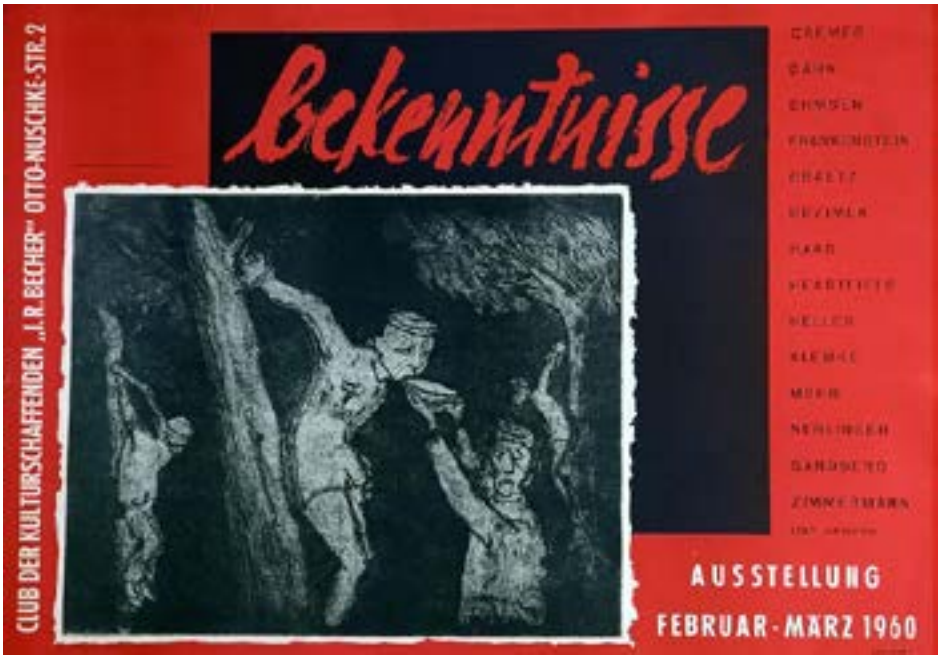

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Authors of the Articles

Dr. Magdalena Tarnowska
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland
m.tarnowska@uksw.edu.pl

Dr. Irmina Gadowska
Institute of Art History, University of Lodz, Poland
irmina.gadowska@uni.lodz.pl

Teresa Śmiechowska
Polish Institute of World Art Studies/independent researcher, Poland
tess.smiechowska@gmail.com

Dr. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė
Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research, Lithuania
giedre.jank@gmail.com

Dr. Vilma Gradinskaite
Lithuanian National Museum of Art, Lithuania
vilmagrad@yahoo.com

Dr. Eleonora Jedlińska
University of Lodz, Poland
eleonora.jedlinska@gmail.com

Dr. Eckhart J. Gillen
Boris Lurie Art Foundation/independent curator, Germany
e.gillen@t-online.de

Jenny Gaßer, M.A.
Art Historian, Leipzig, Germany
jenny.gasser@gmx.de

Katrin Schmidt, M.A.
Federal Art Administration, Berlin, Germany
mail_katrinschmidt@web.de

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