

*The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times: Essays on Jews and Aesthetic Culture*

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Introduction

This volume documents an encounter between Jewish Studies and the arts, fields that have largely been strangers to each other. While Jewish Studies has traditionally emphasized history and textual analysis but neglected aesthetic concerns, the study of the arts has only infrequently addressed Jews. Yet recent developments in the academy suggest that this overdue encounter has also been long in preparation. Jewish Studies, outgrowing its nineteenth-century philological and positivist orientation, now draws on a broad range of theories and methodologies to explore all areas of Jewish life and culture across time and space.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, disciplines dedicated to the arts, whether the visual or performing arts, have also been turning away from their positivistic historicism and theoretical and critical preoccupation with formal analysis. They too have been engaged in an intensive process of rethinking themselves, first and foremost by challenging “the assumption that art constitutes an autonomous sphere, separate and insulated from the outside world.”<sup>2</sup> That said—and notwithstanding several outstanding studies of Jewish artistic expression that have appeared in recent years—much remains to be done if the arts are to figure more fully in Jewish Studies and the Jewish experience more fully in the arts disciplines.<sup>3</sup> While by no means comprehensive, this volume aims to further that project by bringing together scholars in a wide range of fields to explore modern Jewry’s artistic involvements across genre and medium.

The volume’s diverse character reflects the agenda that framed a year-long research seminar on “Modern Jewry and the Arts” at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the introduction to *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, eds. Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. vii–xxi.

<sup>2</sup> Richard D. Leppert and Susan McClary, “Introduction,” in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, eds. Richard D. Leppert and Susan McClary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Notable recent examples in the field of art history include Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on “Jewish Art”* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Catherine M. Soussloff, ed., *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Matthew Baigell and Milly Heyd, eds., *Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001); Samantha Baskind, *Raphael Soyer and the Search for Modern Jewish Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and the many substantial catalogues produced by The Jewish Museum in New York to accompany their art exhibitions.

University of Pennsylvania during the 2000-2001 academic year.<sup>4</sup> Conceived by Richard I. Cohen and Ezra Mendelsohn, the seminar focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe, North America, pre-1948 Palestine and modern Israel/Palestine. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines investigated topics such as the relationship of Jewish identity to artistic creativity; Jewish artistic self-representation and the depiction of Jews by non-Jews; the role of aesthetics in forging a relevant “usable past”; the instrumentalization of artistic expression in Jewish political and ideological movements; and Jews as mediators of aesthetic culture, whether in their role as artists or in the capacity of patron, critic, curator, and entrepreneur. The essays in this volume address these as well as other issues that arose during a year of intense research and dialogue conducted under the ideal conditions provided by the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, its visionary director, David Ruderman, and its dedicated staff.

The approaches represented here arise from conversations across disciplines, particularly between history and art history, over the last twenty years.<sup>5</sup> During the research year at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, the dialogue was enlarged to include literary theorists, theater, dance, and film historians, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists. Cohen and Mendelsohn have been pivotal figures in these discussions. Historians by training, they have been instrumental in bringing contextual art history to Jewish Studies. In his landmark book *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (1998), Cohen cites a special issue of *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1986) dedicated to “The Evidence of Art: Images and Meaning in History.” In this issue, Theodore K. Rabb and Jonathan Brown urge historians to recognize that art historians have developed methods for dealing with “the evocative, many-leveled properties of art. Thus, the

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<sup>4</sup> This seminar was the most recent in a series of efforts by Richard I. Cohen and Ezra Mendelsohn over the last fifteen years to encourage work on this topic. These efforts include two important collections of essays: Ezra Mendelsohn and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, Studies in Contemporary Jewry, vol. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, for the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University) and Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Modern Jews and their Musical Agendas*, Studies in Contemporary Jewry, vol. 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, for the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University). In spring 1996, they convened a research group dedicated to Visual Culture and Modern Jewish Society at the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Since then, each has published a major work on Jews and the arts: Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Ezra Mendelsohn, *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Waltham, Mass.; Hanover: Brandeis University Press; Published by University Press of New England, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Touchstones for Cohen’s *Jewish Icons* include a special issue of *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, 1 (1986), which was dedicated to “The Evidence of Art: Images and Meaning in History,” and *Representations*, no. 12 (1985), which included a symposium entitled “Art or Society: Must We Choose?” More recently, *Art Bulletin* 77, 4 (December 1995): 534-552, included a range of critical perspectives on “Inter/disciplinarity.” Like the present volume, these publications arose out of symposia designed to foster interchange across fields.

orientation to an object or group of related objects and the special techniques for interpreting allusive evidence distinguish art history from other types of history and need to be understood by those who wish to use the evidence of art.”<sup>6</sup> Writing in *Representations* in 1985, art historian Svetlana Alpers notes that, having “come to consider art as a social practice,” it is necessary to consider “what we are about when we do look at and study art in what might broadly be termed a society way—or, conversely, when we study society in an aesthetic way.”<sup>7</sup>

The decades following these statements have seen the coalescence of contextual art history (or new art history) in the 1980s and the emergence of the “new, new art history” and visual culture studies in the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> The study of the performing arts has been similarly transformed with the emergence during the 1970s and 1980s of the “new musicology” and of performance studies from theater history. These fields expand and reconfigure art history, musicology, and theater history by disentangling the disciplinary subject (art or theater or music) from its traditional objects of inquiry (paintings, sculptures, plays, the musical canon). Those objects are then situated within a much wider range of phenomena (not only fine art, but anything visual; not only music proper, but also musical practices; not only plays as dramatic literature, but theatrical productions, indeed, anything performed). In the process, the disciplinary subject itself shifts from art to visual culture, from music to music in society, and from theater to performance. With that shift, new questions arise about the nature of visuality itself (and not only art proper): in the words of W. J. T. Mitchell, “The complex field of visual reciprocity is not merely a by-product of social reality but actively constitutive of it.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, as Susan McClary writes,

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<sup>6</sup> Theodore K. Rabb and Jonathan Brown, “The Evidence of Art: Images and Meaning in History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, 1 (1986):5.

<sup>7</sup> Svetlana Alpers, “Foreword,” *Representations*, no. 12 (1985):1.

<sup>8</sup> Editor's Introduction [W. J. T. Mitchell], “Essays toward a New Art History,” *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 226.

<sup>9</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, “What Do Pictures “Really” Want?,” *October* 77 (Summer 1996):82. On the “new art history,” see Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, “What is New about the ‘New Art History,’” in *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts*, ed. Philip Alperson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 515-520. On visual culture studies, see W. J. T. Mitchell, “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 1, 2 (2002):165-182, and Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999). For recent efforts to address these concerns in relation to Jewish Studies, see Shelley Hornstein, Laura Levitt, and Laurence J. Silberstein, eds., *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), which “seeks to contribute to the emerging field of Jewish cultural studies” and, to that end, brings together “artists, architects, art historians, art and architectural historians, curators, cultural critics, literary scholars, and religious studies specialists,” out of “concern that Jewish studies scholars critically engage with works of visual culture and the representational problems that this entails” (pp. 1 and 2). Leora Batnitzky and Barbara Mann, eds., *Icon, Image, and Text in*

music makes us who we are—“our feelings, our bodies, our desires, our very subjectivities.”<sup>10</sup>

The study of performance as embodied action and event is similarly constitutive.<sup>11</sup> Viewed through a new optic, texts, films, buildings, urban form, popular festivity, and other phenomena generally regarded as remote from the study of the visual and performing arts reveal their performative character. Seen in these terms, such phenomena require more than a contextual

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*Modern Jewish Culture*, forthcoming, grows out of a 1999 Princeton University conference that explored the nature of visuality in modern Jewish culture from interdisciplinary perspectives.

<sup>10</sup> Susan McClary, “Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music,” in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, eds. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 212. On the “new musicology,” which shares much in common with ethnomusicology, see the special issue of *Journal of Musicology* 15, 3 (1997): 291-352, which is dedicated to “Contemporary Music Theory and the New Musicology,” and Philip V. Bohlman, “Ethnomusicology’s Challenge to the Canon; the Canon’s Challenge to Ethnomusicology,” in *Disciplining Music*, eds. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp.116–36. Noteworthy recent studies of Jewish music include Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Lodz Ghetto, 1940-45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Jehoash. Hirshberg, *Music in the Jewish Community of Palestine 1880-1948: A Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); David Michael Schiller, *Bloch, Schoenberg, and Bernstein: Assimilating Jewish Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Philip V. Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity: Music and Cultural Contestation in Central Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For a comprehensive survey and bibliography, see Edwin Seroussi et al, “Jewish Music,” in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 29 July 2004), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

<sup>11</sup> On performance studies, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Performance Studies,” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 43-55; Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Mark Franko and Annette Richards, eds., *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, published by University Press of New England, 2000). For recent efforts to bring this perspective into Jewish Studies, see the special issue of *American Jewish History* 91, 1 (2003) on “Jews and Performance,” edited by Edna Nahshon, which includes articles ranging from *Death of a Salesman* and Paul Robeson’s “Hassidic Chant” to the American-Israel Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair, 1964-1965 and the film *Avalon*. Historian Arthur A. Goren has done pioneering work on the role of performance in Jewish public culture; see, for example, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). Recent studies of Jews and theater include Glenda Abramson, *Drama and Ideology in Modern Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Claude Schumacher, *Staging the Holocaust: The Shoah in Drama and Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Edna Nahshon, *Yiddish Proletarian Theatre: The Art and Politics of the Artef, 1925-1940* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000); Joel Berkowitz, *Shakespeare on the American Yiddish Stage* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002); and Joel Berkowitz, ed., *The Yiddish Theatre: New Approaches* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003); and Janis Bergman-Carton, “Negotiating the Categories: Sarah Bernhardt and the Possibilities of Jewishness,” *Art Journal* 55, 2 (1996):55-64. For a thorough survey of the field, see Ahuva Belkin and Gad Kaynar, “Jewish Theatre,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, eds. Martin Goodman, Jeremy Cohen, and David Jan Sorkin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.870-910.

approach—studying art in a society way and society in an aesthetic way--if they are to reveal their constitutive capacities, that is, not only what they say, but also what they do. The essays in this volume take up this challenge.

Like cultural studies and other post-disciplinary formations, visual culture studies and performance studies are big-tent fields that organize themselves around a set of problems and range widely for their approaches and objects.<sup>12</sup> Consistent with this generous mandate, there was theoretically no limit to the range of art forms and approaches allowed during our research year. However, the seminar's architects did focus its temporal scope on the modern period of Jewish history, the era during which Jews became citizens of the countries in which they lived, their aesthetic capacities became an issue relevant to their integration, and they entered artistic professions in unprecedented numbers.<sup>13</sup> Modern art, with its universalistic ideals, but national character (French Impressionism, Russian Constructivism, Italian Futurism, American Abstract Expressionism), held out the impossible promise of world citizenship in a kind of utopia of pure form, while offering Jewish nationalists a medium for styling the Zionist project. These considerations alone would have warranted the year's focus on modern Jewry and the arts. But, as this volume attests, there is more to the relationship between Jews, the arts, and modernity. The art of being Jewish in the modern world—or, alternatively, the art of being modern in the Jewish world—points to the question of whether the “modern Jewish experience” has in some sense been a pointedly artistic one.

What has been the role of artistic expression in Jewish self-definition? How have Jews used the arts in their individual and collective lives? What are the various styles of contemporary Jewishness? If, following Benedict Anderson, “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their

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<sup>12</sup> See the wide range of expressive practices represented in Michael Steinlauf and Anthony Polonsky, eds, *Focusing on Jewish Popular Culture in Poland and Its Afterlife*, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, vol. 16 (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), which includes postcards, cartoons, and photography, traditional wedding music and Yiddish world beat, Yiddish theater, and the Yiddish press. Jenna Weissman Joselit has amply demonstrated the value of close attention to vernacular aesthetic culture, both tangible and intangible, in *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture 1880-1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), as well as in Jenna Weissman Joselit and Susan L. Braunstein, eds., *Getting Comfortable in New York: The American Jewish Home, 1880-1950* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1990). For earlier periods, see Lawrence Fine, ed., *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), which, in contrast with a tendency in Jewish Studies to stress intellectual religious achievements, focuses on “religious practices and religious experience” as evidence of the “embodied nature of Jewish religion.” Approaches include “literary, anthropological, phenomenological, and gender studies, as well as the methods of comparative religion” (p. 1).

<sup>13</sup> See Susan Tumarkin Goodman, ed., *The Emergence of Jewish Artists in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York, NY: Merrell in association with The Jewish Museum, New York, 2001).

falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined,” this volume explores how the arts—and the debates they engendered—give sound, shape, and dramatic form to such imaginings in all their local and historical specificity. Such questions require attention not only to aesthetics, but also to ethos, affect, and sensibility, to what Raymond Williams calls “structure of feeling,” that is, not only to aesthetics but to aesthetic culture.<sup>14</sup> The rendering of modern Jewishness in artistic terms—whether in a “diasporist” aesthetic or a musical vision of the Reform synagogue service or the “first Hebrew city,” as Tel-Aviv was envisioned—invites greater scrutiny of how Jews have employed the arts in their acts of self-fashioning and how they have appeared in the friendly and hostile visions of others. Jews have made their own art, to paraphrase Marx, but not just as they have pleased. It is not sufficient to point out that Jews and non-Jews have sometimes labeled an artwork or artist Jewish against the subject’s intention or will, as was the case with such figures as Max Liebermann and Ben Shahn; it is also necessary to show how “Jewish” attributions and misattributions have affected Jewish aesthetic consciousnesses and become, thereby, forces in their own right, forces in Jewish history.

Such questions require a broad conception of what counts as art and greater attention to the organized contexts in which it is made, whether the American or German or Russian art world, a culture industry such as the American or Israeli popular music business, or the everyday life of a local community in Philadelphia, Tel-Aviv, or Birobidzhan. Though several authors do focus on a singular artist—Mark Antokol’skii, Max Liebermann, Ben Shahn, R.B. Kitaj, Ben Katchor, Vera Frenkel, Marcus Ophuls, and Zehava Ben—the book as a whole has the ambitious aim of identifying the aesthetic as a key conceptual category for treating modern Jewish history. The present volume is not simply about modern Jewry and the arts, but about the art of being Jewish in modern times.

### ***The Jewish Art Question***

“The Jewish art question” is the vexing but unavoidable problem of what makes a work of art Jewish. Is it the artist’s provenance or his or her conscious or unconscious intention? It is the themes and language or the iconography and the symbols a given work employs? Or is Jewish

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-35. Williams distinguishes feeling (“meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt”) from ideology (“formally held and systematic beliefs”), noting that they are of course interrelated in practice: “Methodologically, then, a ‘structure of feeling’ is a cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand such elements [affective elements of consciousness and relationships] and their connection in a generation or period, and needing always to be returned, interactively, to such evidence” (pp. 132-133).

art in the eyes of the beholder? In his landmark study of painter Maurycy Gottlieb, Ezra Mendelsohn defines Jewish art as “work by artists of Jewish descent that not only depicts Jewish life but may also advance a Jewish agenda.”<sup>15</sup> While several essays presented here do deal with Jewish art so defined, the volume as a whole neither presumes a definition nor sets out to create one. Instead, by examining how the “Jewish art question” has been formulated in specific situations—by artists, composers, filmmakers, dealers, collectors, audiences, critics, historians, philosophers, and curators—the volume historicizes the question and exposes its relativity. It starts from the premise that the question is constitutive rather than independent of the phenomena to which it points. For this reason, it is important to put the very posing of the “Jewish art question” to the test. When does “Jewish” matter? Under what circumstances, whether historical or conceptual, is the Jewishness of the artist or the work’s subject or style or its contexts of creation or reception relevant? When does Jewishness demand explanation? When is it explanatory? What does it account for? Is the dance critic Joseph Lewitan discussed by dance historian Marion Kant in this volume a Jewish artist because he was persecuted as such by the Nazis, despite his own merely occasional and peripheral Jewish associations? Were the Tin Pan Alley songwriters described here by Jonathan Karp Jewish artists simply because Jews were prominent in the music industry, in both numbers and preeminence, prompting accusations, often anti-Semitic, that that entire industry was “Jewish”? Further, what made 1930s Tel Aviv, as described below by Anat Helman, feel Jewish when in fact the city’s planners and architects deliberately set out to create a “Hebrew,” rather than a Jewish, city? And what needed to be done to synagogue music in the Reform synagogue to make it more Jewish, yet still modern, as addressed here by ethnomusicologist Mark Kligman?

Clearly no single formula for defining “Jewish art” can suffice. For this reason, we take Jewishness as contingent and contextual rather than definitive and presumptive.<sup>16</sup> The very raising of the Jewish art question in connection with a particular artist or trend—even or especially when the Jewish ascription seems false or artificial—at least tells us something about the perceptions of Jewishness, about stereotypes and categorizations. It therefore seems more interesting to inquire than to debunk. The approach adopted here is relational and transactional,

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<sup>15</sup> Mendelsohn, *Painting a People*, p. 208. Mendelsohn goes on to explore “a universalist tradition among Jewish artists, both in Europe and America,” which he links to a concern among Jewish artists since the mid-nineteenth century with rendering “scenes of conciliation among various ethnic and religious groups,” which “[f]or some of them, at least... was very much a Jewish vision, an ideal whose roots were to be found in the prophetic tradition of Judaism.”

<sup>16</sup> On the second commandment, see Kalman P. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

rather than normative, a matter of finding the appropriate category of analysis, of adducing historically specific practices and understandings, not ontological certainties.

Max Liebermann (1847-1935), the subject of Walter Cahn's contribution to this volume, certainly met two of the criteria set out by Mendelsohn in his definition of a Jewish artist—Liebermann was Jewish and he depicted Jewish life, at least some of the time. Cahn, an art historian, could have stopped there, but instead he demonstrates the illusive nature of the Jewish art/artist question by charting the disagreements among Liebermann's critics and biographers over the relevance of his Jewish descent.<sup>17</sup> Some critics attributed Liebermann's French Impressionist style to his cosmopolitanism, a derogatory code word for Jewish. He was either decried on that account by Germanophiles or praised by those critical of German parochialism. Others said that his "Jewish talent," while it contributed to his clarity and efficiency, produced art that was good but not great. Some believed that Liebermann was a true German artist, his Jewishness notwithstanding (or even because of it). Others felt that he had a special feeling for Amsterdam's Jewish quarter because he was Jewish. As for Liebermann, the challenge was to capture the essence of an iconic subject, Amsterdam's Jewish quarter, without resorting to the typical—whether the typical Jew (a racialized East European Jew in traditional garb) or the typical ghetto image (a scene of traditional Jewish life rendered in ethnographic detail). His solution was to focus on the crowd, rather than on portraits of Jewish types, and, above all, to use style, in particular French Impressionism and the aesthetics of the sketch, to capture the mood of the tightly compressed space and its swarming throng.

As Cahn indicates in his discussion of Liebermann's painting *The Twelve Year-Old Jesus in the Temple*, the ultimate test of artistic achievement in the nineteenth century was the historical rendering of Jesus. How were Jews to be represented in these works of art, given the rejection of classical conventions and commitment to historical realism—and how in particular were Jewish artists to tackle this question? Russian sculptor Mark Antokol'skii (1843-1902) found in this same dilemma a way to be "strategically" Jewish. In her analysis of his sculpture *Jesus before the Judgment of the People*, historian Olga Litvak explores how Antokol'skii's "understanding of what it meant to be a nineteenth-century Russian Jew might itself be a product of his development as an artist." Following the creation, reception, and debates surrounding this sculpture, Litvak asks: How did the process of making modern art contribute to making modern the Jews who engaged in it? Her historically specific answer, which takes into account how national modern

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<sup>17</sup> Compare with Mendelsohn's analysis of the contrasting reception of Gottlieb by Jewish and Polish Christian critics, *Painting a People*, pp., 151-166.

Russian art was being conceived during the late nineteenth century and the nature of the European art world at the time, uncovers the ways in which Antokol'skii expressed Jewishness through the back door, so to speak. That is, he asserted his Russianness via ambiguously Jewish symbols such as the image of Jesus as he is about to be judged by the people. Who are “the people” and who the judge? In this ambiguous and highly suggestive rendering, Antokol'skii took the opportunity to generate mystique, to decoy the critics, and to annihilate the clichés.

In her essay on the American artist Ben Shahn, art historian Diana L. Linden addresses a related question, namely, how museum exhibitions, in constituting art historical narratives, determine when and how an artist or work of art is Jewish. She analyzes *Common Man, Mythic Vision: The Paintings of Ben Shahn*, a major exhibition of Shahn's later works at The Jewish Museum in New York in 1998 on the centennial of Shahn's birth, which traveled to the Detroit Institute of the Arts (DIA) the following year. Shahn enjoys an honored place in standard histories of American art prior to World War II, but not in the story of postwar American modern art, whose defining moment was Abstract Expressionism, not the realistic and allegorical style of Shahn's later work. *Common Man, Mythic Vision* tried to establish Shahn's rightful place in the history of postwar American art by relating Shahn's later work to the Abstract Expressionists on grounds other than style. To make this case at The Jewish Museum, as opposed to the Whitney Museum of American Art or the Museum of Modern Art, is to say something more—namely, that Shahn is an important American artist because of and despite the fact that he was Jewish, and notwithstanding his refusal to be labeled anything, least of which a Jewish painter. It is not that The Jewish Museum made Shahn a Jewish artist and his work Jewish art. Indeed, this exhibition aimed to do just the opposite, namely, to establish his place in postwar American modern painting. Rather, the *question* of Jewishness comes to the fore because everything shown in The Jewish Museum becomes “Jewish”—contextually. Jewish becomes a consideration, a lens, a frame of reference, a contingency, for what is shown. It becomes subjunctive. As a result, in the overdetermined context of The Jewish Museum, where Shahn would tend to be seen as a Jewish artist, the challenge was to demonstrate what made his work part and parcel of post-war American art (as well as to attract a wider audience). In contrast, the Detroit Institute of Arts, where Shahn would be seen as an American artist, took advantage of his Jewishness to differentiate him from the many other American artists they exhibited and to target a Jewish audience. As Linden's essay attests, addressing the “Jewish art question” requires tracing the

scholarly fashions, ideological agendas, and merchandizing strategies that conspire to construct it.<sup>18</sup>

### *Diasporism*

One might say that Jews have been doubly disallowed their proper places in the grand narratives of art history. They have been defined either as a diaspora, a condition said to be inimical to originality or distinctiveness, let alone of the creation of a national style, or as a “nation without art”—that is, until Zionism prompted a self-conscious effort to create it.<sup>19</sup> According to this view, prior to Zionism one might have found paintings by Jewish artists on Jewish subjects, but their distinctively Jewish quality would not have been found in their style, the *sina qua non* of an art of one’s own.

Art critic Harold Rosenberg identifies the problem in his 1966 *Commentary* essay “Is there a Jewish Art?” Rosenberg begins by discounting several different ways Jewish art might be defined: art produced by Jews, art on Jewish subjects, Jewish ceremonial objects, handicrafts and semi-ceremonial folk art, and a future “metaphysical Judaica” based on Jewish philosophy along the lines of Ben Shahn’s Hebrew alphabet. As Rosenberg explains, “Style, not subject matter or theme, will determine whether or not paintings should be considered ‘Jewish’ or placed in some other category.” He then states categorically that “there is no Jewish art in the sense of a Jewish style in painting and sculpture. Whether there ever will be such a style is a matter of speculation—a speculation that ought to take into account the progressive fading of national styles in modern art generally.”<sup>20</sup> In a word, modern Jewish artists have historically offered what is at best a peculiar variation on a style that was not authentically their own; but, paradoxically, to

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<sup>18</sup> On the role of exhibition, museums, and participation in world’s fairs in furthering Jewish interests, see Jeffrey Feldman, “Within the Glass Case and Beyond: The Social Construction of Jewish Museum Objects,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte, Kultur & Museumswesen* 1:1 (1994):39-54; Grace Cohen Grossman, *Judaica at the Smithsonian: Cultural Politics As Cultural Model*, Smithsonian Studies in History and Technology, no. 52 (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Exhibiting Jews,” *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 79-128.

<sup>19</sup> See Olin, *The Nation without Art*. See also Edwin Seroussi’s introduction to the “Jewish Music” entry in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (Accessed 29 July 2004): “‘Jewish music’ as a concept emerged among Jewish scholars and musicians only in the mid-19th century with the rise of modern national consciousness among European Jews, and since then all attempts to define it have faced many difficulties. The term ‘Jewish music’ in its nation-oriented sense was first coined by German or German-trained Jewish scholars, among whom the most influential in this respect was A.Z. Idelsohn (1882–1938).”

<sup>20</sup> Harold Rosenberg, “Is There a Jewish Art?” *Commentary* 42, 1 (1966):60.

attempt to create a Jewish style at this late date, would be decidedly unmodern. Indeed, it is precisely thanks to their individualism, what Greenberg calls “the aesthetics of self,” that they have played a central role in creating “a genuine American art.” This art, he argues, while “not a Jewish art, is a profound Jewish expression,” with universal meaning, and it makes the question of whether or not Jewish art does or can exist irrelevant. Greenberg has, in essence, provided the rationale for giving Shahn his rightful place both in The Jewish Museum and in the history of postwar American modern art. So too has Arthur Danto, in his review of the Modigliani show at The Jewish Museum in 2004, where, referring to this museum’s radical art exhibitions in the 1960s, he wrote that “nothing could be more Jewish than supporting advanced art.” Today, it has become an “identity art museum,” that is, “It cannot rest satisfied with letting the work stand on its artistic merits alone. It must make an effort to explain in what special ways the Jewishness of the artist contributes to the significance of the art.”<sup>21</sup> Although Danto misreads The Jewish Museum’s present mandate as one that is narrowly confined to Jewish identity questions, his larger point is instructive. The very idea of a Jewish museum devoted, inter alia, to displaying modern art indexes an important aspect of the Jewish art question.

While such arguments have been made with respect to all forms of Jewish artistic expression, the visual arts have been singled out as particularly disadvantaged because of assumptions about the Jewish sensorium and the hierarchy of artistic expression identified with its structure.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the people of the book are alleged to have privileged the ear over the eye and reason over imagination, so that, while they may have a musical tradition of their own, at the very least a liturgical one, they have not created their own visual art. Moreover, it is argued, many factors—among them the second commandment, which prohibits the making of graven images; the marginal status of Jews in the diaspora; their historical exclusion from guilds; their lack of royal or state patronage for cultural projects (the role of Court Jews notwithstanding); their successful assimilation into the larger society in the post-emancipation period; the universalistic aspirations of modern art; and the unrepresentability of the greatest trauma in their history—have militated against their creating their own visual art, even if they had been so disposed.<sup>23</sup> That they

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<sup>21</sup> Arthur C. Danto, “Body and Soul,” *The Nation* 279, 3 (2004):40.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 33-36.

<sup>23</sup> On Court Jews, see Vivian B. Mann and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800* (Munich and: Prestel-Verlag, for The Jewish Museum, 1996). On unrepresentability, see Saul Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution”* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992) and Berel Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

were not so inclined has been construed by some as a virtue.<sup>24</sup> Fortunately, recent scholarship has taken issue with this argument and, by historicizing it, has made it an object of study in its own right and cleared the way for exciting new perspectives on the Jewish visual imagination.<sup>25</sup>

Given these considerations (and the modern preoccupation with art as an expression of the nation), the Jewish art question has always been a referendum on whether or not a diaspora can produce an art of its own—in any medium. The answer is usually no, for the kinds of reasons that Greenberg gives, but there have also been dissenting views and even a “diasporist manifesto,” the inspiration for the essay in this volume by art historian Carol Zemel. Zemel focuses on three artists: R.B. Kitaj, an American artist who has painted in England for much of his career—in Sandor Gilman’s apposite formulation, Kitaj is paradoxically “the insider outsider, the marginal centrist”; Ben Katchor, a graphic novelist working in the United States; and Vera Frenkel, an installation artist based in Canada.<sup>26</sup> Zemel takes as her point of departure Kitaj’s *First Diasporist Manifesto*, which approaches diaspora not only as a historical and existential condition, but also as an aesthetic one—and above all, as a condition that is full of creative possibilities. Diasporism (“diasporism” and “diasporist” are Kitaj’s coinages) so defined could become “the foundation of a new Jewish aesthetics,” as cultural critic Sidra Ezrahi has written elsewhere with respect to Kitaj and his close friend Philip Roth.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This subject has been extensively discussed with reference to Martin Heidegger and to post-Holocaust French thought, especially the work of Emmanuel Levinas. See Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, pp. 270, 550-586.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Bland, *The Artless Jew*; Leora Faye Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and for earlier periods, Marc Bregman, “Aqedah: Midrash As Visualization,” *Journal of Textual Reasoning* 2, no. 1 (2003) <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/tr/volume2/bregman.html> (Accessed 5 August 2004), which is followed by responses from other scholars; Jacob Isaac Leshem, “The Recognition of Aesthetic Beauty in Judaism” (in Hebrew), in *Yahaadut ve-ha-omanut*, ed. David Cassuto (Ramat Gan: Makhon le-Yahadut u-le-mahashavah bat zamanenu, 1988), pp. 71-80; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Vivian B Mann, *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Sander Gilman, “R. B. Kitaj’s “Good Bad” Diasporism and the Body in American Jewish Postmodern Art,” in *Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*, eds. Matthew Baigell and Milly Heyd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 221.

<sup>27</sup> Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, “The Grapes of Roth: Diasporism from Portnoy to Shylock,” in Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*, pp. 221-233.

While Jews are not the only diaspora, they are the paradigmatic one, such that the Jewish art question becomes a prime site for exploring what a diasporist aesthetic might be.<sup>28</sup> Diaspora becomes associated with a thoroughly postmodern state of mind arising from the circumstances of rootlessness, nomadism, and dispersal. In Zemel's view, artists working under diasporic conditions are tactical, anti-essentialist, and labile as a result of their multiple affiliations and subjectivities, uncertainties and ambivalence, tensions and pleasures (we have already seen how such a description could be applied to Liebermann and Antokol'skii). In a word, they possess what W.E.B. DuBois, referring to the African American experience, had designated a "double consciousness." Local and translocal, they are connected to a vast imagined community across space and time.<sup>29</sup>

At the center of Zemel's analysis is Kitaj's *The Jewish Rider* (1984-85), one in a long line of images of the Wandering Jew. For Zemel, *The Jewish Rider* is an ambiguous image, one that calls into question "the stereotyped exilic figure of the Wandering Jew—the Jew as doomed and punished, the Jew as perpetually homeless." He is a dandy on a train, "soberly lost in thought despite his brightly-colored surroundings"—a rooted cosmopolitan, a serious dreamer, embarked upon a gay yet dimly ominous excursion. But this partially hopeful deployment of what had been a stock Christian and anti-Semitic symbol of the Wandering Jew, condemned to roam ceaselessly as punishment for spurning Christ during his last hours, also calls into question the relatively recent championing of Jewish diaspora existence, seen most dramatically in the idea, espoused by Simon Dubnow at the beginning of the twentieth century, that diaspora nationalism was superior to Zionism precisely because it was not predicated on land and statehood and therefore was a spiritual form of national autonomy, as Richard I. Cohen discusses in this volume.

The flip side of this upbeat view of diaspora is exile, disenfranchisement, and homelessness. As Cohen details, in his contribution here, Christian art and literature have long exploited the Wandering Jew image to underscore Jewish taint and otherness, an image all the more fascinating because wandering itself seems to hold clues to the mystery of Jewish survival. In Cohen's analysis, this quintessential icon of the Jewish diaspora becomes a screen onto which are projected historically specific anxieties about diasporic Jews and their relation to Christians—

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<sup>28</sup> See Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews* (New York: Routledge, 2000) and Howard Wettstein, ed., *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> See Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

both negative and positive.<sup>30</sup> Because the images not only index moments of tension between Jews and Christians, but also figure in them, they are a particularly rich source for exploring the history of Jewish-Christian relations. Here too the aesthetic domain has functioned as a contested sphere, marked by the dialectical tension between ascription and affirmation, symbolic appropriation and ironic reappropriation.

### *Useable Pasts, Uncertain Futures*

The historical condition of diaspora has, if anything, intensified the desire in the modern period to identify an authentically Jewish aesthetic, to endow it with a deeply Jewish genealogy, to create a Jewish national art form, with or without a state, and to use the arts in the service of utopian ideals. It could be said that a hallmark of Jewish modernity is precisely a self-conscious concern with the Jewish art question, which, as this volume amply demonstrates, is really many questions, and with deliberate efforts to provide definitive answers. Programmatic, even ideological, in character, these efforts manifest themselves in a variety of forms, many of which are represented in this volume. They include R. B. Kitaj's diasporist manifestos and Franz Rosenzweig's philosophy of Jewish aesthetics, Abraham W. Binder's proposal for a more "Jewish" music for the Reform synagogue, as well as numerous unabashedly propagandistic uses of the arts, among them the Yiddish marching songs for indoctrinating Jewish children with Soviet ideals and the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, which was intended to mobilize support for the Jewish homeland and eventual state.

Aesthetics was an essential element in the program of Jewish self-emancipation in nineteenth-century Europe, which placed great store in the concepts of *Bildung* (cultivation) and *Sittlichkeit* (civility) as essential preparation for citizenship and full participation in the larger society.<sup>31</sup> It was not enough to exhibit the capacity for aesthetic appreciation. It was also important to be able to create art—and even Jewish art. But, what should such art look and sound

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<sup>30</sup> See also, Robert S. Wistrich, "The Demonization of the Other in the Visual Arts," *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 44-72, and, for an earlier period, Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> See Goodman, *The Emergence of Jewish Artists in Nineteenth-Century Europe*; David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), and, for the earlier period, Jonathan Karp, "The Aesthetic Difference: Moses Mendelssohn's *Kohelet Musar* and the Inception of the Berlin Haskalah," in *Dialogues between Past and Present: Cultural Reconfigurations in Medieval and Modern Jewish History*, eds. Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 93-102. For the turn of the nineteenth century, see Steven Beller, "The World of Yesterday Revisited: Nostalgia, Memory, and the Jews of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna," *Jewish Social Studies* 2, 2 (1996):37-53.

like? What should it be made from? What resources might be found in the Jewish past for the creation of a contemporary if not explicitly modern Jewish art, music, theater, or dance?

Two authors in this volume, Zachary Braiterman and Mark Kligman, explore the role of aesthetics and the arts in reshaping Jewish theology and religious experience. Braiterman, a historian of Jewish thought, offers a highly original portrait of the philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), depicting him as a sort of director seeking to reinvent the Jewish synagogue experience as a form of ritualized theater. Rosenzweig envisioned Judaism—and particularly ritual and cultic space—as “a sensual spirit in aesthetic terms.” That spirit was immanent in the dazzling array of forms created during the course of Jewish history. But Rosenzweig, who was raised in an assimilated German-Jewish family and schooled in German Idealist philosophy, had not always seen Judaism in these terms. Indeed, according to the well-known story, he was on the verge of converting to Christianity when he had an epiphany during a Yom Kippur service in an Orthodox synagogue in Berlin. Overwhelmed with its beauty, he was prompted to contemplate a form of Jewish religious observance that felt authentic to him as an individual—and which he believed made him no less (and if anything an even better) German. He dedicated much of his life to his theological writings—the work for which he is best known is *The Star of Redemption*, which he wrote while fighting in the German army during World War I—and to the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus (Free House of Jewish Learning), which he established in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1920. Not a building, but a program, the *Lehrhaus*, was open to everyone, Jews and non-Jews alike, and was distinguished by its progressive pedagogy and attention to the artfulness of religious observance in everyday life. Attuned to the tenor of prayer, movement of the body, taste of wine, and tactile pleasure of the prayer shawl, Rosenzweig emphasized the importance of the sensory, sensual, architectural, and theatrical aspects of Jewish observance, even before ritual spaces and objects took on a particular artistic style, whether organic *Jugendstil*, Orientalist *art nouveau*, dissonant Expressionism, or the synthetic abstraction of the Bauhaus. He found beauty in the mitzvot and, as Braiterman so aptly characterizes Rosenzweig’s philosophy, he “drew art out of Jewish life.” The “ancient treasure chest” of Judaism” provided the basis for a distinctly Jewish aesthetics of everyday life, a fully sensuous, spatial, and theatrical experience, in which all the arts were fused.

Rosenzweig’s attempt to define an aesthetic Judaism were preceded by efforts in Germany dating from the early nineteenth century to reform Jewish religious life along aesthetically apposite lines. Culminating in Reform Judaism, those efforts accorded the arts, and especially music, a central place in the reshaping of religious experience and thereby in the transformation of Jews themselves. By the twentieth century, however, there were some, like Abraham Wolf Binder (1895-1966), an

American composer associated with the Reform Movement, who felt that Protestant-style hymns and liturgy set to Rossini were standing in the way of an authentically Jewish religious experience. Moreover, Binder argued, these compositions were failing to satisfy sophisticated Jews who expected their synagogue music to be as good as what they heard in the concert hall. How Binder addressed these issues is taken up by ethnomusicologist Mark Kligman. First and foremost, Binder set out to counter what he saw as the “secular atmosphere” created by such music. He encouraged composers to create a modern (and national) Jewish music for the Reform service based on *nusach ha-tefillah*, traditional Jewish modes and melodies, which he celebrated as a wellspring of musically coded moods specific to each liturgical occasion. The composer’s task was to “purify and perpetuate” *nusach*, to harmonize it appropriately, and to respect its modal character, melodic emphasis, and free rhythms. Only then would composers succeed in giving proper—which is to say “authentically Jewish”—sonic form to the Reform service and at the same time create a national Jewish art. Binder’s declaration in 1944 that “Without a distinctive Jewish art we are not a nation; we cannot speak of a complete culture, nor can we call ourselves a civilization,” while never a guiding principle of the Reform movement, does reflect his attachment to the East European Jewish sounds of his childhood and the distinctive character of American Reform Judaism in contrast with its European counterpart. Binder’s 1944 statement must also be read in the context in which he wrote it, during the Holocaust and just four years before the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>32</sup> In this light, it is remarkable, but not surprising, that Binder’s formula for authenticity proved to be so unabashedly eclectic, combining East European liturgical modes, Hassidic emotionalism, Palestinian Hebraic Orientalism, and European classical rigor.<sup>33</sup>

A more strictly utilitarian approach to how music might be used to transform Jews can be found in the Yiddish marching songs created for children during the 1920s and 1930s as a way inculcating Soviet ideals in the state’s youngest Jewish citizens. Envisioned as little soldiers on the front line of social transformation, children literally embodied a utopian Soviet future as they sang and marched to the rhythm of sung ideology. As Anna Shternshis, a Yiddish Studies scholar

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<sup>32</sup> Abraham Wolf Binder, “The Sabbath in Music,” *Studies in Jewish Music: Collected Writings of A. W. Binder*, ed. Irene Heskes (New York: Bloch Publishing Company), p. 90.

<sup>33</sup> For a parallel effort to create a national Jewish style of modern synagogue architecture, see Steven Fine, “Arnold Brunner’s Henry S. Frank Memorial Synagogue and the Emergence of ‘Jewish Art’ in Early Twentieth-Century America,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 54, 2 (2004):47-70. For recent studies of American synagogue music, see Judah Michael Cohen, *Becoming a Reform Jewish Cantor: A Study in Cultural Investment* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2002); Jeffrey A. Summit, *The Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

explains, youth culture was a priority in the Soviet project because young people were a fresh slate on which to write the future; without a pre-Soviet past, there was nothing to unlearn. But, even in this tightly controlled, indeed coercive framework, Jewish children were able to adapt and identify with the propaganda songs as distinctive makers of their Soviet Jewish identity, one that was to become as much Jewish as it was Soviet. Here, it was the Yiddish language—intended as a temporary if necessarily Jewish tool in the dismantling of pre-Soviet Jewish culture and especially its religious institutions—that played the decisive role. Paradoxically, one of the unintended consequences of these efforts to make Jews into proper Soviet citizens was the creation of a new Jewish subculture. These songs, “often the first ‘doves’ of propaganda to enter Jewish homes” in the Soviet Union at the time, were interpreted and valued differently from what was intended by their creators and fondly remembered many decades after they were learned, for reasons their makers never anticipated.

Not until the Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel was there a concerted effort to create a national Jewish art and style the nation into being by giving it a distinctive look, sound, and feel.<sup>34</sup> Three authors in this volume explore the role of aesthetics in Palestine and the State of Israel. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, working at the intersection of performance studies and visual culture studies, analyzes the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair in 1939 and 1940.<sup>35</sup> This pavilion was intended to make the Zionist transformation of Palestine self-evident and convince the world that all the elements necessary for Jewish statehood were already in place. Meyer Weisgal, the great Zionist impresario, intended the Jewish Palestine Pavilion to be a model of what a future state might look like and demonstration of its de facto existence. To that end, he insisted that the award-winning pavilion and its state-of-the-art displays be designed and fabricated in Tel-Aviv and shipped to New York and that they celebrate Jewish Palestine’s achievements—its cities, agriculture, industries, and trade; its infrastructure and institutions; its culture and arts. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett shows how, through the agency of display, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion played a vital role in envisioning, performing, and projecting a Jewish state within the virtual world of the fair, thereby hastening its arrival in the world itself.

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<sup>34</sup> See Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Gilya Gerda Schmidt, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901: Heralds of a New Age* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> An excellent example of this convergence is Tamar Katriel, *Performing the Past: A Study of Israeli Settlement Museums* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

What was the lived reality of that place for the Jews who settled in Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s? In search of how utopian ideals were given tangible and intangible form, historian Anat Helman reveals how Tel-Aviv's city planners, in their efforts to create the first "Hebrew" city, were at least partly undone by their own creation. No amount of planning could make a city that appeared from the dunes in a flash feel like it had been there forever. Tel-Aviv was not "naturally Hebrew." The deliberateness of the Zionist social transformation was at odds with the goal of making that transformation seem self-evident so that it might be experienced as normal—as given, not fabricated. Tel-Aviv started out as a garden suburb to the north of the ancient city of Jaffa and in short order became a bustling cosmopolitan metropolis and rival to "Jewish" Jerusalem. Self-consciously intended as a Hebrew rather than a Jewish city—with Jewish evaluated negatively as diasporic, conservative, and religious—Tel-Aviv, according to Helman, could not ultimately escape the appeal of traditional Jewish urbanity, even as it managed to reconfigure it on its streets and in its neighborhoods. Jews, most of them emigrants from Eastern Europe, made up Tel-Aviv's entire population and their sheer density was remarkable and remarked upon by inhabitants and visitors alike. To better understand why the first "Hebrew" city was experienced as Jewish, though pointedly not in the sense of religion or tradition, "high" culture or folklore, language or learning, Helman explores the aesthetics of everyday life. The official "Hebrew" program may have been promulgated from above through formal ideology, "high" culture, and the secularization of religious customs, but the city's Jewish character, its distinctive style and atmosphere, was fashioned from below by those who lived there and made the city their own through their everyday practices, festivities, and popular culture.<sup>36</sup>

More than half a century later, with the State of Israel firmly, if not securely established, dissenting voices were making themselves heard through a popular music that "vocalizes the space" between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs. What does that space sound like? Folklorist Amy Horowitz traces the history of that sound from the roots music that Middle Eastern Jewish immigrants brought to Israel to the creation of a new synthesis, *Musika Mizrahit* (Mediterranean Israeli music). *Musika Mizrahit* emerged in the 1970s in immigrant neighborhoods, where it was performed live on social and ceremonial occasions. Circulating through the informal economy of cassette tapes sold at bus stations, this music was soon picked up by the popular music industry and has been traveling across disputed

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<sup>36</sup> Recent studies of lived space and cultural production in Palestine and Israel include [Arieh] Bruce Saposnik, *From Babel and Uganda to the Promised Land: The Creation of a National Hebrew Culture in the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine, 1903-1914* (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2002); Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); and Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, eds., *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, rev. ed. (Tel Aviv, London, New York: Babel and Verso, 2003).

territories. Horowitz focuses on one of the most poignant cases explored in this volume, that of Israeli singer Zehava Ben. Despite the second-class status of Israel's Middle Eastern Jewish citizens (and their music), Ben, who was born in Israel of Andalusian Moroccan parents, not only rose to success, but also turned her Middle Eastern pedigree and musical competence to advantage as a peace advocate.. Horowitz focuses on the turning point in the Ben's career, in 1994, when she decided to perform the repertoire of Umm Kulthum, the Maria Callas of the Arab world, and did so both at Palestinian gatherings and at memorials for Yitzhak Rabin. Despite the surrounding tragedy, the moment seemed ripe with possibility, not just for musical and cultural integration, but for social and political reconciliation as well. Attuned to the fine calibrations of the Israeli soundscape, listeners heard not only the sounds but also their sources. Above all, they heard what coming together across divides sounds like. For a brief moment, between the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the fateful shadow that inevitably separates hopeful dreams from harsh realities lifted.

### *Art Worlds*

To study the arts contextually is also to study art worlds and culture industries. Howard Saul Becker defines an art world as “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for,” which is not, of course, to deny the role of competition and conflict.<sup>37</sup> While the art world concept seems self-evident and even tautological (by Becker's own admission), “many of its implications are not....The dominant tradition takes the artist and the art work, rather than the network of cooperation, as central to the analysis of art as a social phenomenon.”<sup>38</sup> In this light, what better topic for exploring the complex dynamic of art worlds than the history of Jewish participation in the arts? In the modern era seemingly disproportionate numbers of Jews gravitated to the culture industries, often not as artists per se but as agents, mediators, arbiters, publicists, impresarios, dealers, entrepreneurs, managers, and collectors. Yet, much work remains to be done to develop the connections between modernity, Jewish art, and Jewish artistic mediation. This volume offers a number of examples, including the theater and movie house entrepreneurs discussed in Judith Thissen's essay on film and vaudeville on New York's Lower East Side, the street corner entrepreneurs peddling homemade pop music cassettes

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<sup>37</sup> Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. x.

<sup>38</sup> Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. xi.

that Amy Horowitz discusses in relation to Israeli singer Zehava Ben, and the self-proclaimed Jewish purveyors—composers, musicians, critics, and salesman—of “Negro Jazz” discussed by Jonathan Karp.

Historian Charles Dellheim takes up a key variation on this theme in his examination of the slow-to-emerge but currently salient issue of the Nazi theft of Jewish “art treasures.” Before World War II, as he notes, European Jews were prominent as artists, collectors, dealers, curators, and art historians. The legacy of this aesthetic and commercial phenomenon, which Dellheim links to the Jews’ assertion of their cultural credentials for membership in modern European society, was significantly occluded by the systematic Nazi confiscation campaign as well as by the victors’ post-war obfuscation of the original Jewish sources of much of the stolen art. But whereas in recent years many of these confiscated works have been adduced as material witnesses to the Shoah and have become sites of Jewish memory in their own right, Dellheim suggests that despite the overdue attention to this aspect of the Holocaust, the historical reality that made Jews important to the arts in the first place still remains largely forgotten. Jews, after all, were prominent actors both in the multifarious “art worlds” of Europe, à la Becker, and in the singular European Art World in its traditional, elitist sense. Jews’ contribution to the integration of these two spheres comprises a history that now more than ever needs to be recovered.

This volume manages to rediscover an important but forgotten figure in the art world of modern dance, Joseph Lewitan. Like the subject of Dellheim’s essay, Lewitan too was a victim of Nazi racist aesthetics.<sup>39</sup> Moving from the Soviet Union to Berlin in 1920, he established a landmark journal *Der Tanz: Monatsschrift für Tanzkultur* seven years later. Given the ephemeral nature of dance performance, dance critics are often on the front lines of dance history, for they are the ones who see and write about performances close to the time of the event and theirs may well be the only record that remains. As much as any single figure, Lewitan charted a decisive phase in late Weimar German dance, the fractious debates between the anti-modernists and the

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that Jewish engagements with dance, of all the arts, has received the least attention. For example, *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (2002) includes substantial articles on art, architecture, and archaeology, theater, music, and cinema, but nothing on dance. For a laudatory effort to address this gap, see the excellent dance issue of *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 20, 1-2 (2000), edited by Judith Brin Inger, which includes articles on “Jewish dance” in Renaissance Italy, Hasidic dance, Israeli dance, and Jewish involvement with modern dance, among others, as well as an extensive annotated bibliography. Notable recent contributions to the study of Jews and dance in the modern period include Julia L. Foulkes, “Angels ‘Rewolt!’”: Jewish Women in Modern Dance in the 1930s,” *American Jewish History* 88, 2 (2000): 233-252; Naomi M Jackson, *Converging Movements: Modern Dance and Jewish Culture at the 92nd Street Y* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000); Nina S. Spiegel, *Jewish Cultural Celebrations and Competitions in Mandatory Palestine, 1920-1947: Body, Beauty, and the Search for Authenticity* (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2001); and Elke Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine: Performing the Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

modernists, and the increasing identification of German modern dance with the *Völkisch* aesthetics embraced by National Socialism. As Kant notes, this was an ideological war waged on the human body and how it moved. Lewitan tried, without success, to protect dance from the very politics whose victim he eventually became. Whatever sociological factors led to the disproportionate Jewish participation in mediating roles, Jewishness—by anti-Semitic ascription as much as by self-identification—also functioned to exclude him and many others. With the Nazi advent to power, Lewitan was forced to abandon his journal, flee the country, and forego the art world he helped to create. While he did not create dance, Lewitan played a vital role in the organized context in which dance was made.

However important it may be to study art worlds, such as those signified by Lewitan and others, sociologists of art (and for that matter historians and anthropologists) have sometimes been faulted for studying everything but “the work of art itself” (*l’oeuvre elle-même*).<sup>40</sup> Even the art historians have been faulted for neglecting the work itself. In a recent diatribe against the new art history—and the even newer “new, new art history,”<sup>41</sup> Roger Kimball asks if the interest in art has become “ulterior, not aesthetic”? Are scholars “enlisting art as an illustration of some extraneous, non-artistic, non-aesthetic narrative”? Is art’s fate “relegation to the status of a prop in a drama not its own”?<sup>42</sup> And the same question could be put to any other art form, as indeed it has, in almost identical words. Rose Rosengard Subotnik notes that “Critics sometimes complain that authors of studies based on this assumption of social intimacy [the “intimate relationship between music and society”] are not really interested in music but rather in philosophy or anthropology or some other ‘extrinsic’ discipline.” She challenges them to question their cherished assumption of autonomy, not only of music but also of musicology, which positivist musicologists “tend to see as an extension of the autonomous domain of music itself.”

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<sup>40</sup> “The Work Itself” was the subject of two recent conferences. The first was organized by the Département de Sociologie de l’Université Pierre Mendès France de Grenoble in November, 1999. Becker’s contribution appears as “L’Oeuvre elle-même,” in *Vers une sociologie des œuvres: Cinquièmes rencontres internationales de sociologie de l’art de Grenoble*, eds. Jean-Olivier Majastre, Alain Pessin, Pascale Ancel, Yvonne Neyrat, and Gisèle Peuchlestrade (Paris: Harmattan, 2001), pp. 449-463. Becker organized a second conference, “The Work Itself,” for the Arts Program, Social Science Research Council, New York, in September, 2003. The papers presented there will appear in *Art from Start to Finish*, eds. Howard Becker, Robert Faulkner, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). For a parallel development in the field of musicology, see Scott Burnham, “Theorists and ‘The Music Itself,’” *Journal of Musicology* 15, 3 (1997):316-329.

<sup>41</sup> M. Meskimmon, “Visuality: The New, New Art History?” *Art History* 20, 2 (1997):331-335.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Kimball, “The Rape of the Masters,” *New Criterion* 22, 4 (December 2003).  
<http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/22/dec03/masters.htm> (Accessed 5 August 2004).

Musicologists, in her view, need to subject these ideas to the same scrutiny as they do the music itself.<sup>43</sup> The new art historians would say the same for art and art history.<sup>44</sup>

Yet the response to sociology's quandary, to Kimball's complaint, and to critics of contextual musicology need not be defensive, whether by absolving sociology of the necessity to do what it is not "good at" or by rebuilding the barricades around the disciplines of art history and musicology. Rather, Becker asks, what might it mean to treat empirically "the principle of the fundamental indeterminacy of the art work," a daunting task that requires "enormously detailed knowledge of the work and of the organized context in which it was made."<sup>45</sup> A singular strength of this volume is precisely its integration of a close analysis of the work of art with careful attention to the circumstances of its production, dissemination, reception, and efficacy—whether a single piece of wedding music, in the case of Hankus Netsky's musical self-portrait of Philadelphia's Jewish community, or a single film, in the case of Susan Rubin Suleiman's analysis of Marcus Ophuls' fascinating documentary about Klaus Barbie.

With a penetrating focus, Netsky traces the history of the Philadelphia Russian Sher Medly from the late nineteenth century to the present on the basis of an extraordinary collection of early manuscripts and recordings. An ethnomusicologist by training, as well as a musician from a long line of Philadelphia klezmerim (traditional East European Jewish instrumentalists), Netsky offers a close musicological reading of a classic East European wedding dance that shows how its shifting role was expressed through its changing form, as it moved with those who danced—and later forgot how to dance—to its rhythms. This one piece of music becomes a sensitive barometer of the relationship of American Jews to their European past and American future. Muting what was once the signature sound of Philadelphia's Jewish community, upwardly mobile Jews who had moved to the suburbs partied to new rhythms. By the 1960s, the Philadelphia Russian Sher Medley was rarely heard, except as a nostalgic reminder of an immigrant and European past. Yet, by the 1970s, a new generation had rediscovered the music,

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<sup>43</sup> Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "On Grounding Chopin," in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, eds. Richard D. Leppert and Susan McClary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 106. For a history of the notion of music's autonomy, see Susan McClary, "The Blasphemy of Talking Politics during Bach Year," in *Music and Society*, pp. 13-62. The locus classicus for the notion of the radical autonomy of art is, of course, Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, eds. Gretel Adorno, and Rolf Tiedeman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), first published in German in 1970.

<sup>44</sup> See David Carrier, *Principles of Art History Writing* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> Howard Becker, "The Work Itself," in *Art from Start to Finish*.

and the sher—and this particular version of it—became a cornerstone in the revival of what has come to be known as klezmer music.<sup>46</sup> By exploring the interplay of the music business, the musical taste of Philadelphia Jews, and the ways they chose to party, Netsky’s richly textured sonic history of one piece of music reveals the social nature of musical creativity and the historically specific circumstances that shaped Philadelphia’s Jewish soundscape over the course of its history.

In her elegant and precise analysis of *Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie*, Susan Suleiman, a literary scholar, explores the moral consequences of making the film—and the making of the film—at least partly its own subject. In this film, released in 1988, auteur Marcus Ophuls takes up the refusal of the French to “remember” what happened under Klaus Barbie, the infamous “butcher of Lyon,” who was responsible for the arrest, torture, deportation, and deaths of Jews as well as members of the French Resistance during the German Occupation of France. In his treatment of Barbie’s 1983 capture and trial, which took four years to prepare, Ophuls employs every technique in the documentarian’s arsenal to avoid making a film that in any way resembles an exposé, an indictment, a tribute, or a monument. Instead, his unsettling concentration upon his own persona in an ostensibly non-autobiographical documentary is clearly designed to expose the performative character of even a supposedly factual, truth-telling historical film. This strategy succeeds in unsettling the moral certainty that viewers likely bring to the film, by placing them in an uncomfortable if not untenable position that requires a struggle to arrive at judgment. The conclusions are no longer pat, the moral no longer self-affirming and comforting. Ophuls demands that one situate oneself “affectively, as a subject—an ethical subject as well as the subject of aesthetic perception—in relation to the film’s rendering of ‘other people’s memories.’” Ophuls was worried that this film, both in the making and in its reception, would just be a “Jewish film,” that the Holocaust would be a parochial matter rather than a more universal human concern. Paradoxically, the film pursues its universality precisely through its relentless, jolting subjectivity, achieved not least of all by the intrusive on-screen presence of the filmmaker, who confronts his subjects, enrages them, makes asides, and addresses the viewer directly. For Suleiman, it is precisely “in these moments of visually highlighted subjectivity that Ophuls points the viewer to the central moral issues raised by his work.” The total effect of applying such extreme distancing techniques to the topic of the Holocaust is among the most

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<sup>46</sup> For recent work on the klezmer revival, see Mark Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Mark Slobin, ed., *American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

radical of Jewish artistic statements possible today.

### ***Stratification of the Cultural Field***

The remapping of disciplinary subjects and the formation of new ones has called into question the cultural hierarchies that compartmentalize and stratify the arts and the study of them. The result has been a series of specialized disciplines devoted to the high and largely European end of artistic achievement (fine art, classical music, concert dance, literary drama). The low end of the cultural spectrum has been left to ethnomusicology, anthropology, and folklore, with profound implications for how the Jewish arts and Jewish participation in the arts broadly conceived are constituted as subjects of study. Taken as a whole, the essays in this volume range across a stratified cultural field, attending to residual as all as preferred categories of artistic expression.<sup>47</sup> The goal is not simply to remedy a history of exclusions by being more inclusive of the so-called low end of the artistic spectrum. Rather, these essays focus on the historical formation of the cultural hierarchies themselves; they seek to understand, in the words of cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall, “the relations of power which are constantly punctuating and dividing the domain of culture into its preferred and its residual categories.”<sup>48</sup>

As theater historian Nina Warnke chronicles in this volume, Yiddish theater became a battleground for the hearts and minds of the Jewish immigrant masses on New York’s Lower East Side during the first decades of the twentieth century. Believing in the power of art to effect social transformation, critics of *shund* or trash, as Yiddish melodrama and vaudeville were dubbed, waged their war in the pages of the Yiddish press in an effort to refine the taste and comportment of immigrant audiences addicted to spectacular melodrama and vulgar vaudeville. Convinced that good theater, which meant realist literary dramas, would enlighten and uplift the Jewish masses, Russian Jewish radical intellectuals strived mightily to “elevate” what was performed on the stage.

Why did they fail? What intervened to frustrate the noble plans of the simultaneously socialist egalitarian and culturally elitist critics? Both Warnke and Judith Thissen, who explores a similar dynamic in the contemporaneous emergence of nickelodeon films, suggest that the Jewish masses found a ready ally in the struggle against their erstwhile benefactors in the emerging mass entertainment industries generated by American consumer capitalism. The result of this alliance,

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<sup>47</sup> Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular,’” in *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 227-240.

<sup>48</sup> Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular,’” p. 234.

however, was neither the respectful tutelage to high culture demanded by the ideologues nor the robotic submission to commodified entertainment desired by the film industry, but rather a hybrid form of popular American Yiddish culture.

It is by focusing on the programming and exhibition practices associated with movies (and not just the movies themselves) that Thissen, a film historian, is able to show how movies and vaudeville changed places in the cultural hierarchy. During the first decade of the twentieth century, social reformers objected to the unsanitary, unsavory, and unsafe conditions of Lower East Side movie venues, while some critics thought the movies themselves were actually preferable to vaudeville and hoped that movies would drive out the lowest forms of live entertainment. Worst of all, in their view, was the promiscuous mixing of movies and live vaudeville in the same program, because the low quality of live performances—tickets were so cheap, the exhibitors could not afford better—debased the movie experience. The result was trashy vaudeville and sing-a-longs, which encouraged rowdy sociability. To elevate movie-going as a social practice, critics insisted that movie programs be devoted exclusively to movies and that movie-goers focus on the screen, not on what was going on around them in the theater. In this way, what had been a boisterous social experience would become a quiet individual one and movie-going as a practice would be a more effective agent of Americanization. The tide turned in 1909, when the Grand Theater ceased to be a Yiddish theater and became a movie venue and movies came to be seen as posing a serious threat to live Yiddish performance of any kind. Some of the critics who had railed against Yiddish vaudeville as Americanization of the wrong kind started supporting it “as an authentic expression of *yidishkayt*.” As a result, Yiddish vaudeville shot up the cultural escalator from lowbrow to middlebrow, while movies, increasingly associated with vice, slid to the bottom, though not everyone who objected to movies thought Yiddish vaudeville was the antidote. Jewish working class taste prevailed: Yiddish vaudeville experienced a revival and mixed programs won out. Moreover, because most of the movies were mainstream, not Jewish, fare, the interspersing of Yiddish vaudeville between reels made the experience more “Jewish” and conditioned the movie experience itself, as well as any Americanizing effects that movies—and above all, movie-going—might have on Jewish immigrant audiences.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For recent contributions to the study of Jews and cinema in the United States, see J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film between Two Worlds* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Schocken Books, 1991); Michael Paul Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler, eds., *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press for The Jewish Museum, 2003). For a survey of the field and bibliography, see Moshe Zimerman, "Jewish and Israeli Film Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, pp.912-942. On the Holocaust and media, a topic about which

Stratification of the cultural field is not only a source (as well as an outcome) of conflict, but also a resource for the creation of new expressive forms, as Jonathan Karp demonstrates in his account of how early twentieth-century American Jewish composers and songwriters worked with—and not only within—artistic hierarchies.<sup>50</sup> They ragged the classics and classicized the rags, whether to parodic or serious ends, in the hope that a synthesis of American popular music with European art music might form the basis of a national American music. Noting that Tin Pan Alley was a “Jewish” business, at the very least demographically, Karp explores the parallel efforts of Jewish and Black musicians to synthesize popular and classical music, as well as differences in their status within a racialized music industry. Karp, a historian by training, calls attention to a peculiar but hardly unique case of cultural substitution and ethnic impersonation. Arising from the contemporary perception that Jews by nature, as well as (diasporic) historical experience, are the cultural mediators par excellence, Jews were thought to be ideally placed to “straddle [the] multiple worlds: black and white, American and European, high and low” in the manner that cultural critics of the era deemed necessary to the creation of a distinctively American form of music. Karp’s “maestros” and “minstrels” are thus self-conscious musical mediators between the marginalized and the mainstream who attempted to create a distinctively American music by classicizing what had come to be identified as the singular expression of American musical genius, namely, African American vernacular music. They thus exemplify the problem of cultural stratification wherein the art of the Jews is viewed as either constructive or corrosive, but never constitutive.

These then are the broad contours of *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*. First, by historicizing the Jewish art question, the essays in this volume pose the question in different ways, and above all keep it alive and unpredictable as a question that can shed light on the relationship between Jews, the arts, and modernity. Second, by attending not only to the work itself, but also to the organized context in which it was made, the contributors to this volume illuminate how the social and the aesthetic are mutually constitutive. Third, the range of

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much has been written, see, among others, Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> Recent contributions to the study of Jews in American popular performance and media include Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Paul Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Song* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Michael Alexander, *Jazz Age Jews* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Michael Billig, *Rock 'n' Roll Jews* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2001); and Andrea Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

approaches and sites of analysis highlight the ways in which disciplinary and cultural hierarchies are formed and make their formation an object of analysis in its own right. Taken together, the essays in this volume entertain the hypothesis that the “modern Jewish experience” has in some sense been a pointedly artistic one.

To capture these concerns and others that cross-cut the essays, we have organized the volume thematically, rather than chronologically, geographically, or by genre. The first section, *Culture, Commerce, and Class*, focuses on art worlds, the art business, and stratifications of class and culture within the Yiddish immigrant world of the Lower East Side (Warnke and Thissen) and Tin Pan Alley (Karp). The second section, *Siting the Jewish Tomorrow*, explores the role of embodied and concrete practices in making utopian ideals tangible, whether Soviet Yiddish marching songs for children (Shternshis) or the Zionist ideals materialized in the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett) and performed in “the first Hebrew city,” Tel-Aviv (Helman) and in the music of Zehava Ben (Horowitz). The third section, *Lost in Place*, takes up the question of diaspora, both negative (Cohen’s analysis of the Wandering Jew) and positive (Zemel’s discussion of a diasporist aesthetic). The fourth section, *Portraits of the Artist as Jew*, explores the Jewish art question in Germany (Cahn on Liebermann), Russia (Litvak on Antokol’skii), and the United States (Linden on Shahn). The fifth section, *In Search of a Usable Aesthetic*, discusses efforts to formulate a Jewish aesthetics (Braiterman on Rosenzweig) and give it sonic form, whether from the top down (Kligman on Binder) or the bottom up (Netsky on Jewish wedding music). The volume concludes with the sixth section, *Hotel Terminus*, which explores the relationship between aesthetics and ethics in extremis, from the Nazification of dance in Germany (Kant on Lewitan) and preoccupation with the recovery and restitution of Nazi loot (Dellheim) to the possibility of a poetics of memory after the Holocaust (Suleiman on Ophuls). Together, the essays explore how Jewish aesthetic culture (a set of historically specific practices that includes but is broader than the arts proper) gives tangible, palpable, and affective form—a sound, a look, a feel, a poetics—to understandings and values and to what effect.

It is our hope that these contributions will enliven a conversation across fields that will make the arts and innovative ways of studying them a more prominent concern within Jewish Studies, while encouraging other disciplines to discover what might be learned from the Jewish experience.