Permanent Exhibition
Nevet Yitzhak


אל אברהם


ZIONISTEN-CONGRESS 1897.
מי יתן ישועת
מציון ישראל
העשית היום
בעד עמך וארצך?
אולם גדולי ישראל
אולם תמונות עצמיות
בית-נכאת עברי לעתיקות ארץ ישראל
אוניברסיטה חרסינה זכובית
הר סיני
אשל אברהם
קבר רחל
ארז הרצל
כי לכלב חי, הוא טוב מן האריה המת


הר סיני
אשל אברהם
קבר רחל
ארז הרצל

Permanent Exhibition, 2018
Video and animation installation, 23-channel HD video, two audio channels, five taxidermy animals, one fish skeleton, two Hanukkah menorahs, five small sculptures, two head sculptures, a bust, a hammer, seven plates, four vases, a scroll, four tiles, an engraving, two masks, four paintings, one poster, two flowerpots, nine bottles, one medallion, two signs, and fabric, multiple durations.

1.01

"The Song of Songs"
Wool and cotton carpet, knotting,Eretz Israel's flora and fauna against the backround of Jerusalem landscape, provenance unknown, 107x190 cm.



"[...] when we left, Professor Schatz said to me: 'Aharoni, I'm thinking about something important that you're going to realize. As you know, one embroiders into the carpets all kinds of colorful fowls, lovely butterflies and beautiful flowers, whose forms and hues entice their beholders' eye. Naturally, all carpet weavers and embroiders sew into them the indigenous ornamental birds and splendid butterflies of their own country. See for example the Japanese, Chinese, or Persian carpets, and that which these artisans take from their own country's nature, we shall take from our own country's nature [...] And since you're engaged in several natural sciences, it wouldn't encumber you if you were to breed heart stirring butterflies, and the Bezalel artists would paint them and would use these butterflies and birds to decorate our carpets [...]'" (Israel Aharoni, Memories of a Hebrew Zoologist, 1946 [in Hebrew]).

1.02

Hanukkah Menorah
Brass Hanukkah menorah adorned with winged lions and ancient motifs, early 20th century, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 27x24.5 cm.



"[...] olive tree marquetry frames, filigree, copperware – all of these are affordable, inexpensive objects so that every Jew could uphold the 'mitzvah' of purchasing something in order to help the sustenance of Bezalel [...] Nevertheless, they were all imbued with a spirit of naive charm [...] that special charm of a baby taking his first steps, uttering his first syllables [...] Bezalel was original even in its infancy. From the few original forms we have had in those days: the alphabet, the menorah, the star of David, one wanted to make something, to find an original Hebrew line, to lay the foundation for Hebraic style" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

1.03

"The Tower of David"
Wool and cotton carpet, knotting,
provenance unknown, 124x70 cm.



Sometime along the way, the citadel that had protected the city of Jerusalem for centuries was dubbed the "Tower of David." This appellation derived from a Christian misinterpretation of Josephus Flavius's writings and from the Moslem name of the citadel, mihrab Nabi Daud (محراب النبي داود). In the 19th century, Westerns arriving in the city mistakenly identified the Turkish minaret as the "Tower of David." Its name notwithstanding, the tower has nothing to do with King David and it was attributed to him millennia after his presumed time. "[...] the upper carpet – panneau of a vista of Jerusalem: through the row of menorahs, one can see the 'Mosque of Omar,' the 'Russian Compound,' and the 'Tower of David' and above it a minaret; at the time, this was all of Jerusalem. And this Jerusalem was the stuff a golden dream was made of!" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

1.04

"The Tomb of Rachel"
Wool and cotton carpet, knotting, 1920-31,
Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 265x150 cm.



The Tomb of Rachel is flanked with two tall cypress trees. The caption reads: "Zion," "A voice is heard in Ramah [...] Rachel weeping for her children" (Jeremiah 31:15). "[...] By the entrance a carpet laid, and I recognized it immediately: It was our first complete carpet. Its layout was that of a menorah. The verse: 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet' was knitted beneath the menorah, which was designed of red anemones. These flowers used to cover the barren hills around Jerusalem. Then, I remember, the knitting girls told me that these flowers were reddened with the blood our ancestors shed in defending Jerusalem... my heart sighed. [...] This little carpet on the wall, 'the Tomb of Rachel,' little Rachel had knitted it. She made it somewhat crooked, she promised me that next time, she would do better [...]" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918).

1.05

Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl Bust
Bronze bust, c. 1918, Jerusalem, 65x50x26 cm.



In 1930, Boris Schatz wrote the following about his meeting with Herzl in Vienna: "[...] I expounded to him my ideas, for a whole hour. He wanted to know everything in detail, I spoke and his ideal, glorious Hebraic face excited me. On his bright forehead, I read profound thoughts and in his sad dreamy eyes I saw the gentle Hebraic soul, a soul that sees fantastic worlds but also senses the current bitter reality. I finished speaking and waited with a beating heart: What will he say to this? – 'Well, let's do it,' he said in a whisper, but firmly. – And after a brief pause, he asked: 'And how will you call your school?' – 'Bezalel,' I answered, 'after the first Israelite master craftsman, who had built us a tabernacle in the desert.' – 'A tabernacle in the desert,' repeated Herzl and his beautiful, sorrowful eyes gazed at some infinite horizon, as if he felt that he himself would not witness this [...]" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel, its History, Essence, and Future, 1910 [in Hebrew]).

1.06

The Wandering Jew Plant
Scientific name: Tradescantia
A plant species of Eretz Israel flora.



This resilient herbaceous perennial wildflower of the commelinaceae family grows well in conditions of partial or complete shade and spreads easily. There are six different species of Tradescantia: Tradescantia pallida, Tradescantia zebrina, Tradescantia fluminensis, Tradescantia sillamontana, Commelina cyanea, and Commelina erecta (an adventive species in Eretz Israeli flora). The stereotype of the "wandering Jew" derives from a Christian medieval myth about a Jewish cobbler who refused to let Jesus rest on his doorstep on his way to Calvary. For this, the cobbler was condemned to eternal wandering.

1.07

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning!"
Wooden plaque with crushed mother of pearl inlay, early 20th century, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 32x45 cm.



"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalms 137: 5-6).
"[...] I stood with my teacher in a handsome park by the airport. And we both ascended the aeroplane and sat down. [...] Down below we saw an exquisitely beautiful city sprawling across hills and valleys adorned with tall towers, domes, bright flat roofs, gardens, ponds and bridges over ravines. 'What is it?' I asked my teacher. 'Jerusalem, built Jerusalem.' 'Built Jerusalem!' I cried in amazement, let's go down [...] In the west, in front of the Jaffa Gate, on the hill with the moat, I recognized the beautiful dome of the Mosque of Omar. – The Mosque of Omar that had once stood on the Temple Mount and was then transferred to the beautiful hill in gratitude to the Arabs, our good neighbors, for faithfully preserving our holy places" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

1.08

"Tomb of Absalom"
Wool and cotton carpet, knotting, provenance unknown, 124x70 cm.



The Tomb of Absalom (Yad Avshalom) is a monumental tomb located in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem, on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, facing the Temple Mount. It is part of a large cemetery with other sumptuous tombs such as those of Bnei Hezir and Zecharia, for example. Although its name suggests that it had been built by King David's son Absalom, it is actually from the 1st century AD, namely about a millennium after the time of Absalom. The 15th century Swiss pilgrim Felix Fabri described what he had learned about a tradition revolving around the Tomb of Absalom: "[...] there is a custom that all the boys who pass by this pyramid, whether they be Jewish, Saracen, or Christian boys, pick up stones from the ground, and cast them at him against the pyramid [...] if anyone in Jerusalem hath a disobedient son, he leads him hither and forces him by threats and stripes to cast stones at it and to curse Absalom [...]" (Felix Fabri [c. 1480-1483], trans. by Aubery Stewart, London, 1896).

1.09

Taxidermy Eagle
Golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos)
one of Israel's bird species. This apex predator
belongs to the order of accipitrformes and can compete
with larger birds of prey.



"[...] there are also, among the residents of our city, gentiles who bring their gifts to the Museum, be it an ancient object, an animal, a beautiful bird, a beautiful butterfly, a snake, a beetle, and so on and so forth. One should mention especially the sympathy the honorable Russian Consul, the distinguished Mr. Yakovlev, has shown to both Bezalel and our Museum; and this is the second time that he sends his findings to the Museum. In the previous time, having found, in one of his journeys through the country, a stone of special interest and import, either for its colors, or for the study of the country, he donated it to Bezalel on Thursday" (Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Hashkafa, 1907 [in Hebrew]).

2.01

"The Congress of Tears"
Copper relief, the sixth Zionist Congress, Basel, 1903,
provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



"Basel, August 27th (three hours and twenty minutes post meridiem). We had a difficult, bitter day [...] the issue of East Africa threw the Congress into a fiery turmoil. Emotions run high. The entire Congress is like a turbulent sea. Many of the Russian delegates bitterly protest against the Congress's resolution to have a commission resolve the issue. The Congress's discipline has been violated. Many are crying of sorrow [...] Herzl pacifies the tempest, speaking softly like a merciful father; promising to vehemently uphold the Basel Program in its entirety, explaining the big political importance of the English Government's proposal, the big hope offered to our aspiration [to improve] our people's situation in this age by this enlightened government. From the Basel Program – the leader of the Zionists cries feverishly – we will not budge even an inch [...] We will always and everywhere long to Zion, also in East Africa" (Ha-Tsefira, August 28th, 1903 [in Hebrew]).

2.02

"The Congress of Tears"
Copper relief, the sixth Zionist Congress, Basel, 1903,
provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



"Basel, August 26th (10 p.m.). This was the announcement of the English Government concerning East Africa: '[...] The Foreign Secretary Chamberlain has forwarded to Marquess of Lansdowne the main points of the suggested agreement, submitted by Herzl, between the British Government and the Jewish Colonial Trust concerning the settlement of Jews in East Africa. His Excellency said that he investigated and considered the issue, and that His Excellency the Prime Minister has always heeded to good advice whose aim was to improve the lot of the Jews [...] Lord Lansdowne thinks that the Colonial Trust should dispatch a delegation to Africa, to the country under the protectorate of England, to investigate the place and find out whether one can find there suitable available territory. Should the surveyors find such a territory [...] the Government will discuss how to carry it out in concert with the opinions of the next Congress of the Zionists on this matter" (Ha-Tsefira, August 28th, 1903 [in Hebrew]).

2.03

"The Congress of Tears"
Copper relief, the sixth Zionist Congress, Basel, 1903,
provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



"Basel, August 25th (in the afternoon). Dr. Wortsmanen [reported] from Basel: Nordau said that all we should do is to hold onto the Land of Israel, that we should beware of a split, and he finished with Africa. This is a contradictio in terminis, this is, gentlemen, a paradox. Yesterday, Nordau spoke like Achad Amist, we have to move to Africa but our center will be in the Land of Israel. Our work, therefore, will be as follows: in the morning, we shall sell shares of the JNF, and in the afternoon – shares of Africa; until 12:00 noon, we shall be Zionists, and later – Africans. Gentlemen! Do you imagine that autonomy in Africa would bring happiness to our people because it would put a stop to assimilation? Don't you know, if we would have 5 million Jews in Africa, we would forget the Land of Israel? [...] I am not opposed to the East Africa proposal, but we have to know where we stand. Let's say openly to our constituents: you sent us as Zionists, and we come back as Africans" (Ha-Tsefira, August 30th, 1903 [in Hebrew]).

2.04

"Have You Done Something for Your Country Today?"
Wooden plaque with crushed mother of pearl inlay, early 20th century, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 20x30 cm.



"[...] and the obvious question is how would we, namely the Jewish people, gain a national moral right over the cultural Land of Israel, if we won't work ourselves? With money? Indeed, my friend, a shameful, painful insult! [...] I believe that whoever is not ashamed to see that every inch of land, which we gained with so much pain, is worked by others, if we cannot feel it, then we are still far away from real national revival! We have sinned towards our homeland and we have to redeem ourselves by self-labor, if we want to lead a national life. Only through work did we succeed. Moreover, I say to you – also for improving the quality of education in the Land of Israel, we need first to improve the attitude of the residents of the Land toward self-tilling the land. [...] Whatever way you look at it, we need men and we need work. Zion should be revived by those who live in it" (A.D. Gordon, First Letter from Eretz Israel, 1904).

2.05

Taxidermy Mallard
Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos)
one of Israel's bird species



The mallard is a locally widespread duck species. This resilient and adaptable waterfowl inhabits a wide range of habitats and climates, at sea level and in mountainous areas. In Israel, it nests under shrub thickets near water sources, on small islands. "[...] Distinguished Prof. B. Schatz, I hereby send to the Museum these feathers, which I found by the Jordan River on the Forty Days Mountain, where the bird to which these feathers belong probably nests. Thirty years ago, I visited Mount Tabor and found, also there, many feathers of this kind, and since I haven't seen these feathers at your Museum, I send them to you. Yakovlev [...]" (Hashkafa, July 9th, 1907).

2.06

Tower of David Vase
Etched brass artillery shell casing, 1917-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 15x7x7 cm.



"[...] cringed and bent, I sat in the corner with my hand beneath my head and felt as if I weren't in this world, as if I was listening to a voice from another world, which I also saw in my mind's eyes. Indeed, I saw the Western Wall, the two-thousand-year-old tombstone of our nation, weeping with our Jewish brethren who come from the four corners of the world to pour out their bitter heart; I did hear the voice of our matriarch Rachel weeping and mourning in her desolate grave for her sons who were exiled and don't return to their homeland; I did see our land strewn with holy graves and enveloped in handsome citrus groves, where oranges [and] citron fruit blossom in the winter, and the sweet carobs are goat fodder [...] thus I day-dreamt" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.07

The Conquest of Jerusalem Vase
Etched brass artillery shell casing, December 12th, 1917, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 27.7x7x7 cm.



"[...] I dreamt of a sect of artists imbued with a holy spirit, freemen removed from the world of the stock exchange and the gang of art critics who are involved in it, artists whose love is natural and their nature is 'natural,' artists of sound body and courageous spirit and with luminous fantasies in their minds [...] we do eat the fruit of our labor, but we do not sell the fruit of our spirit for money. We all live together as a fraternity and have one single aim – to show people the fine and pleasant things in God Almighty's world, and how much happiness awaits people once they will start living like men. And already then, I was seeing the Land of Israel as this holy place, in which I would be able to realize this vision" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.08

Vase Adorned with Palm Trees and Leaves
Etched brass artillery shell casing, c. 1918, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 27.7x7x7 cm.



"The Jews were always gifted in the arts, but in the Diaspora their spirit was broken, and they could not properly develop their talents. When studying with others, a Jewish boy's mind had to deny his emotions and instincts, and his ego got lost, always just waiting, chanting in what was not his and, for this reason, there were among us more virtuosi than creative artists. But once he had spent his adolescence, his good training days, in this Land of Israel, where every stone told him forgotten childhood fables, and each hill stood in front of him like a witness to the free past of his nation, as he sketched the real characters of his people – here under the blue sky of our country – his dormant soul of an ancient Hebrew prophet was awakened in him" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.09

The Conquest of Jerusalem Vase
Etched brass artillery shell casing, 1917-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 15x7x7 cm.



"Each of us knows how many talents we are losing due to the impossibility to enter schools in Russia or in Europe [...] and the lucky ones who manage to be accepted and do not starve to death, come out as anything but Jewish artists, because during their better years they grow apart from the Jewish people and their first artistic experience is with foreign characters and landscapes. If a few of them wish and endeavor to be Jewish in their art, the diaspora leaves it mark in their work, and their paintings are nothing but gloomy memories of their childhood. Here, on the other hand, things are different: living is inexpensive, admission to school is easy for him, and here he lives among his people and studies, and the glorious past of our people in our country must leave its mark on the painter, because everything here reminds him of that golden age when we were a sane and free people in this place" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.10

Heracles and the Lernaean Hydra
Marble sculpture copy (after von Aspenburg), provenance unknown, 20.5x10x5 cm.



"We may explain the absence of visual art in ancient Judaism through the ethnic characteristics of the people. [...] The Jew of the diaspora [...]. In connection with this narrowness and misery in life[,] his sense of being separates more and more from reality, flees farther and farther, ever more distant from the world, in-to a rigid tradition incapable of development and into a spirituality totally es-tranged from life. Only now religious Law becomes absolute. The human body is shunned. Beauty is not appreciated. To look is sinful. Art is sinful" (Martin Buber, Jewish Artists, June 1903 [trans. by G.G. Schmidt]).

2.11

Portrait of a Yemenite Boy
Painting on plywood, 1906-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 29x17 cm.



"[...] visiting the Jericho vineyards, one can see that the story about the need of two men to carry between them a cluster of grapes on a pole is absolutely true. The soil is extremely fertile over there. But it has one great disadvantage that makes it difficult for Europeans to settle there, because it is situated four hundred cubits below sea level it has a tropical climate. In the winter the region is indeed heavenly, but in summer it is hard for a European to bear its scorching sun. But as to our Yemenites, the place is as if intended for them, because they were born in such a climate, and they would feel better there than in Jerusalem, and now that fifty honest workers have been trained in our filigree department, we can settle them and their families in Jericho, so that they will work there for Bezalel with their craftsmen like they do in Jerusalem" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.12

Portrait of a Yemenite Jew
Painting on plywood, 1908-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 32x17 cm.



"Sons of Yemen, praise the merciful God / Because the silver department is given to you / With the help of faithful Polack; / Long live Professor Schatz forever / Who provides work to all / To the old and to the young / At home, in the field and in the vineyard; / The pleasant and sweet life to build / At the Bezalel School / And his hope to have a decent place / And for its future we wait; / Bezalel – our country's hope / Bezalel – the revival of our people / And its headmaster Schatz we praise / Wholeheartedly, day and night; / Joy and jubilation on everyone's face / When we sit under our vines / As promised by the Home Secretary / And his belief we celebrate; / The flag of Zion will be hoisted / And the one who will raise it will prepared / For the coming of our king / And will settle in our country" (Al-gamal, Bezalel Song in honor of the Silver Department, 1910).

2.13

Taxidermy Eretz Israeli Common Rock Hyrax
(Procavia Capensis Syriaca)
Gift of Mr. Pascal, Petah Tiqwa.



"[...] In our small country, like in many other countries, civilization has muscled out the fauna. This fact has brought about the extinction of quite a few local animals, or at least lead to their relocation. Thus, it is not always advisable to rely on books written a hundred or even eighty years ago. In contradistinction to the creatures who had perished or exiled from their habitat, there are animals, who have escaped the long hand of 'progress' or, more precisely, of European man, and still live in their habitat also in our day and age; for instance, the hyrax, which represents a phylum of its own and, despite its small size, is most closely related to the largest mammal of our days – the elephant. As in the days of King Solomon, it still lives in the rocks and has not migrated from its habitat; because rocks are its shelter at the Dead Sea environs since days immemorial, cliffs are its stronghold in the Sinai Peninsula and the Lebanon" (Israel Aharoni, Memories of a Hebrew Zoologist, 1946).

2.14

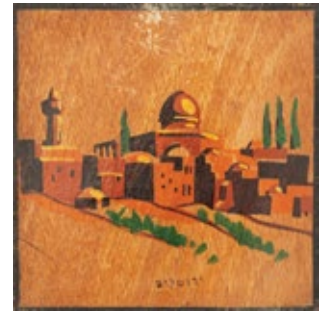
Carp (Cyprinus) Skeleton
Gift of Mr. Pascal, Petah Tiqwa.



"[...] Luckily, we found a Hebrew teacher, Mr. Aharoni, an avid lover of nature. By then, he had already gained a reputation among natural sciences scholars of Eretz Israel, and is rightfully considered one of the leading Palestinian zoologists [and as such he was] also invited to partake in an expedition initiated by the Sultan for researching the country [... and] he had already discovered hitherto unknown species of birds, fish and butterflies, one of which is named after him, and which he shows with pride and pleasure to whoever comes to visit him. Our natural sciences collection is already among the best in Eretz Israel. Obviously, it is still far from perfection [...] but we hope that in the future we will succeed in collecting everything that was created here by Nature [...] [which] will offer us an opportunity to understand the nature of Eretz Israel that, regrettably, is still so alien to the Jews"
(Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.15

Landscape in Palestine
Painting on plywood, 1906-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 35x35 cm.



"[...] Therefore, art enthusiasts of each and every nation, who love their people and cherish their nationality, should collect precious pictures depicting the spiritual life of their nation alongside pictures of reputable persons who had lived among them and influenced the nation's spirit, or man-made pictures that present the deeds, occurrences and actions that have taken place in their midst and arouse sacred memories. And the tremendous popular workings of famous paintings upon the revival and reinforcement of the Christian faith are well-known" (Boris Schatz, "A Masterpiece," Ha-Tsefira, December 30th, 1888 [in Hebrew]).

2.16

Shepherd on the background of Rachel's Tomb
Painting on plywood, 1906-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 35x35 cm.



"[...] I remember that in this moment, my soul yearned very much to see something of that wonderland, to feel something with my hands; with my own hands; and immediately after Havdalah, I went out with my old father, who surely was also craving for it and we walked to the delegate's hotel – crossing with determination the deep swamp. I remember how saddened was my little soft heart when I saw there a small box, nicely shaped, as it were, topped with half a bulb, bearing the inscription 'Tomb of Our Matriarch Rachel' and a drawing of a fence with four brooms installed on it represented the Western Wall. So big was my feeling of insult and sacrilege, and, in my heart, I vowed that when I grow up and learn how to paint, I shall go up to Jerusalem and paint it nicely so that the hearts of the Jews will rejoice" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel, its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

2.17

Theodor Herzl Poster
Paper, provenance unknown, 100x70 cm.



"[...] when Dr. Herzl entered the stage, he was met with roaring applause that lasted a few minutes. His figure enchanted the delegates below, who saw him for the first time, and the guests in the balconies. His figure presages the type of the next Jew, of the reborn Jew: upright in stature, and pleasantly humble, Oriental beauty and good Western manners, glorious mind and graceful emotion. I was not aware of the applause which greeted Herzl's appearance on the stage in that year, but I experienced firsthand this feeling of inner admiration, which flows directly from one's heart, makes the hands raise by themselves and elicits calls of consent from the throats of a mesmerized public during the four first congresses. In this year's applause were involved real admiration, a sense of duty and a force habit. When the applause had subsided, Dr. Herzl read his speech from a page with clear and very pleasant voice. The assembled audience drank in each and every word of his" (Breinin, Ha-Tsefira, December 29th, 1901 [in Hebrew]).

2.18

Star of David Pendant
Wood, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 45x45 cm.



"How was our national flag born? [...] At the behest of our leader Herzl, I came to Basel to make preparations for the Zionist Congress. Among many other issues that occupied me then, there was one that epitomized the Jewish problem. What flag would we hang in the Congress Hall? Then an idea struck me. We have a flag – and it is blue and white. The talith (prayer shawl) with which we wrap ourselves when we pray: that is our symbol. Let us take this Talith from its bag and unroll it before the eyes of Israel and the eyes of all nations. So, I ordered a blue and white flag with the Shield of David painted upon it. That is how the national flag, that flew over Congress Hall, came into being"
(David Wolffsohn, The First Zionist Congress, Basel, 1897).

2.19

Collection of Jars with Eretz Israeli Reptilian Specimens
Gift of Mr. Pascal, Petah Tiqwa



"[...] Mr. Pascal from Petah Tiqwa has sent the museum a crate full of various beetle species found in gardens, houses, orange groves, yards, fields, and vineyards [...] Mr. Aharoni, Director of the Museum's Natural Science Department, corresponded with big European natural science institutions, and most important, five hitherto unknown to scientists [species of] butterflies found here by Mr. Aharoni and Bezalel's other searchers were called after Bezalel. What a beautiful fact it is that also in this respect Jerusalem – this Jerusalem, our Jerusalem – takes part in natural research!" (Hashkafa, July 9th, 1907 [in Hebrew]).

2.20

Taxidermy Quail
(Coturnix ypsilophora)
One of Israel's bird species



The quail (phasianus), also known as a pheasant, is one of Eretz Israel's bird species. In rabbinic literature and in the Jonathan translation of the Bible, the biblical quail (Exodus 16:13) is identified as a pheasant or "pesionin" (peacock) and is mentioned along with the chicken and the peacock as fowls of delicious taste. In Roman times, Jews used to eat quail meat, since it was counted among the kosher birds. "[...] Last week, Mr. Yehezkel Hankin has returned, after being sent by Mr. Aharoni, Director of the Museum's Natural Science Department, to Antioch and its surroundings. On the seashore of Antioch, there are many nests of various bird species, and he has brought from there very interesting things [...] and Mr. Hankin has brought with him many more land and water fowls from Antioch, after risking his life and wandering in remote desolate places in his search for the birds and their eggs [...]" (Hashkafa, July 9th, 1907).

2.21

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



To the Camp
Never mind, never mind / In the diaspora there was nothing for me to find, / To Eretz Israel I fared / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! / A month or more I've been waiting, / Until I started working... / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! / Clothes, money, shoes – do not exist; / in Hebrew it's called "kvish" [paving a road]! / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! / Everyone is equal over there; / The same troubles they all share... / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! / Everything is available / Enough onions and garlics to go around... / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! / Beautiful lassies, / Only in dreams one sees... / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! / My friend, don't be a dope / Don't lose hope... / Never mind, never mind, never mind, / Never mind, never mind, never mind! (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925).

2.22

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



On the Way
Hallelujah! / Frayed we are; / Tattered we are; / On a holiday / Our patched and darned clothing we wear. / Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah / Evermore! / And the heart is wild and hungry, / And the heart roars and rumbles of pain... / We are hungry; / We are thirsty; / On a holiday / We feed on dry bread. / Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah / – Out of our distress, we call!... / And the heart is wild and hungry, / And the heart roars and rumbles of pain [...] (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925).

2.23

Helen of Troy
Marble copy of a Greek statue,
provenance unknown, 23.5x9x5 cm.



"[...] Understand and feel – then you'll express it clearly at once, don't look for the soul before you can draw the body [...] don't make pictures! Don't improve on God's creation! [...] Don't delude yourself into thinking that a lie is prettier than the truth. Remember and don't forget that 'truth' is the seal of the Holy One, blessed be He [...] Imagination and an ideal are the artist's world of light, but lest his imagination be perverse and his ideal false, he should get used to the truth. The truth should sit deep in his heart and flow in his veins like blood. And therefore, beware of the lie, whatever be its form. And only then, your imagination will shine like God's world and your ideals will be elevated like the Lord's spirit, and then you will understand the 'beautiful,' the 'sublime' and the 'divine' and you will tell it to others in the language of fine art [...]" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918).

2.24

Red-Billed Chough
(Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax)
Gift of Mr. Yehezkel Hankin



Red-billed chough is a passerine bird of the corvidae family endemic to Israel. It has glossy black plumage, a long curved red beak and red legs. The chough breeds on mountains and coastal cliffs from where it takes deep plunges and performs breathtaking maneuvers carried on violent blasts of wind.

2.25

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



My Portion of all My Labor
Lament not… / Lament not / Cry not / In such a time, / Your head bow down not… / Work! Work! / Ploughman, plow! / Sower, sow! / In one bad moment / Double your toil, double your work / And weed your plot and remove the stones from it, / And plant and hoe, / And level and pave / A path to freedom / To a shining day… / On a via dolorosa / Redemption is marching on, / And the blood cries out / To the nation's soul / Wake up and act! / Redeem yourself and your people. (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925).

2.26

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



Barud! [Arabic: gunpowder; a warning call before quarrying] Quarry / Look at my chest, / Look at my hands! / My muscles are made of / Stone, iron, and steel. / We, only we, / All of us are confused / Without us, we're sure, / The world will not be fused. / Quarry, Oh quarry! / Nothing compares to you / The paved road is for the fainthearted / And gravel too is good for nothing. / Demolition and expansion – / Are they worthy of the fellow? / Long live the chisel, the hammer and the pick, / Let the quarry speak. (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925).

2.27

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



Horah
Pioneer, pioneer I am / A good-for-nothing pioneer, / Cloth-less and shoe-less / And with no schmaltz to schmear / Don't know from whence I came from / And I don't ask for much; / There is or there isn't work / But I despair not. My family I've already forgot; / Moshe, Hannah, Devorah – / Are my brothers and sisters / All those who dance the "horah." / Beat the hammer by day and hoopla by night / The world is celebrating; / One-two-three, / Boys and girls / Let's dance. (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925).

2.28

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



A Letter...
We shall build the country / "We shall build the country" / One hears everywhere. / Yet the Jews, / Don't pay their dues... / Aha, aha, don't pay their dues! / The galut / is a hoot / That's what they think, / Since life in the galut / Is sevenfold a hoot / Life, aha, aha, is a hoot! / The pioneers laughingly refute, / They have nothing to do with galut; / All of this is not cute! / Aha, aha, aha, absolutely not cute! / Theater and a concert, / A ball and a masquerade; / And in our holy land, nothing of the kind! / Aha, aha, aha, nothing of the kind! / Thousands of pretty young women, / One by one; / And in our holy land, none! / Aha, aha, aha, none! (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925.)

2.29

"Pioneers"
Ceramic plate, provenance unknown, 30x30 cm.



Fire, if You Please!
Galilee. / Traveling, traveling is nice and fine / Pioneers love traveling in springtime / To the Galilee we head; / There, in the north, music and songs, there, only there, that's the life for us! / Girls are beautiful there, each one is quick, / Amorous like a dove, quick and reckless, / There one kisses and hugs everywhere, / Long live the Galilee, the Galilee, hip, hip, hooray! (Meir Gur Arie, HeChalutzim, silhouette cuttings accompanied by pioneer songs collected by M. Narkiss, Bezalel, Jerusalem, 1925.)

2.30

Hall of Jewish Dignitaries
Ceramic plaque, 1909-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 24x24 cm.



"[...] If a painter presents us with a picture of an esteemed dignitary, who has excelled in the literary or religious realms for many centuries, and succeeds in conveying his wisdom and courage, his integrity and the hardships he had known along the way and his heroic spirit through his facial features and the gaze of his eyes [...] then, we cherish all these sublime virtues, and everyone will clearly read on his face the spirit of multiple feats that had lived inside him, and will see and realize that even a mere mortal like himself has the ability to face everything without letting it repress his soul because it is just as glorious [...]" (Boris Schatz, "A Masterpiece," Ha-Tsefira, December 30th, 1888 [in Hebrew]).

2.31

Self-Portraits Hall
Ceramic plaque, 1909-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 24x24 cm.



"[...] The artist did not see the grandfather and listened to his words. All his mental powers were centered in his eyes, which have penetrated the president's heart and read his hidden thoughts, he wanted to convey his inner soul through his outward appearance, to find the whole. And indeed, the artist succeeded in doing so, and with how much simplicity this portrait is painted! Only real masterpieces are so easy, simple, almost naive [...]. The painting was not a mirror reflection of the president; in a mirror, everything seems to be so vulgar, cold and hollow. A mirror reflection has everything, and yet it has nothing [...] In this painting, his character and nature are encapsulated, a man has such a countenance only when he doesn't feel gazed at by others, when he is oblivious of himself. Only the eye of the chosen few can capture such a human expression" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

2.32

Jewish Museum of Eretz Israel Antiquities
Ceramic plaque, 1909-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 24x24 cm.



"[...] A museum where artifacts, antiquities and natural sciences exhibits will bring them closer to nature, will develop their sense of beauty, and they shall learn to look at and love God's world. A man who watches the visitors to the small, unfortunately too small, museum, will not doubt it. One has to see with what enthusiasm and joy every child looks at every bird and animal in the Museum. If he finds a bird, the name of which he knows from the Bible, his joy knows no bounds. The wonderful world he has seen in the Bible is now revealed to him in the Museum and when he goes to the great outdoors, he will surely pay attention to it. It is interesting to see how the mothers, who come to the Museum with their toddlers in their hands, get excited by an ancient coin or an ancient menorah. I saw an elderly woman so happy when she saw in our exhibition a photograph of the mummy of Ramesses II and said to her lady friend: 'this was the pharaoh that had inflicted so much suffering on us and [see] how [miserable] he looks now, while we're still alive [...]" (Boris Schatz, <u>Das Judisches Museum Palaestina</u>, 1908).

2.33

Ceramics • Porcelain • Glassware
Ceramic plaque, 1909-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 24x24 cm.



"[...] I advised to distribute in Eretz Israel home-made works of the second kind – of crafts wherein a machine cannot expel man's mind and art, wherein the unique human talents and taste are still needed. This kind of work also has the advantage that if it is done at home, each family or small groups of different people can compete with bigger and better equipped and mechanized domestic workshops all over the world. Such a work offers a great leeway for production and trade, here in Jerusalem in particular and in Eretz Israel in general, and it is also to our liking. This work is close to my heart, because I have been interested in it for more than two decades in various countries and have helped to distribute it in Bulgaria, and in the past decade here in Eretz Israel" (Boris Schatz, "Proposal for Encouraging and Distributing Domestic Arts and Crafts" (a lecture), 1917).

2.34

"The Congress of Tears"
Copper relief, 1903, the sixth Zionist Congress, Basel, provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



" The second day of the Congress, Dr. Nordau's speech: '[...] The fourth item of the Basle Programme, on the granite composition of which the snarlers and backbiters will break their teeth, speaks in its necessary and deliberate terseness, which admits of no broad examination of details nor any expansion of its laconically expressed idea [...] of the 'steps for obtaining the assent of the Governments which are necessary for Zionism to achieve its end.' This sentence has always had the good fortune of being regarded by every opponent of Zionism as a thorn in the side. Round this sentence the wit of our opponents has played the most. 'This assent of the Governments,' we were ironically told again and again, 'you will never, never obtain. The Sultan will and can never grant you Palestine, for even if he were disposed to do so – which will never be the case – he would encounter the opposition of Russia, and on your sweet behalf the Sultan will not pick a quarrel with his most powerful neighbour [...]'" (Ha-Tsefira, August 8th, 1903 [in Hebrew]; for the English version, see: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/address-by-max-nordau-at-the-sixth-zionist-congress).

2.35

"The Congress of Tears"
Copper relief, 1903, the sixth Zionist Congress, Basel, provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



"The third day of the Congress (August 25th, in the afternoon) Dr. Chlenov's speech: 'Ladies and Gentlemen! My heart is saddened and I know not why. "Are we facing a disaster?" I ask myself. They want to give us something instead of Zion that until now I find hard to conceive. Indeed, Gentlemen, I fear not that this thing will replace Zion, since Zion is inscribed on our flag forever, but I am afraid that by this they will give our people a new illusion. Why haven't we, the entire people, become Zionists, because many still subscribe to old illusions such as emancipation, assimilation, etc. [...] We created the Basel Program with our own hands: A Homeland in PALESTINE. This is the real essence of Zionism. It is hard to achieve our goal now, you say. So, let us wait for the right moment to arrive in order to write it down on our flag" (Ha-Tsefira, August 30th, 1903 [in Hebrew]).

2.36

Avraham Greenblatt Head
Head sculpture, 1925, terracotta, 40x30x30 cm.



"[...] All these masterpieces were arranged tastefully and knowledgeably. Almost each artist was allotted a special comfortable corner. Alongside each artist's work, laid a book with the artist's detailed biography, what and where did he work, and where his works are kept. About many of them, it was written that their works are kept at a school or in provincial museums, but in most cases, their works are kept, according to the records, in various cities all over the world [...] With how much affection and deep wisdom all of this was edited! How much concern and love were invested in the layout, so that each and every work would produce the desired effect, and faithfully reflect the things I wanted to express, and so that each work would correlate to the other. They were divided into series: 'Our Holidays,' 'Scenes from Life,' 'Characters,' 'Israel's Dignitaries,' 'Israel's Heroes,' 'Prophets,' 'Historical Pictures.' All the series were tastefully displayed, each series on its own [...]" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

2.37

"Oak of Abraham"
Wool and cotton carpet, knotting, provenance unknown, 260x146 cm.



Zionist leaders, including Boris Schatz, father of Zionist art, against the background of an Oak of Abraham, Mount Sinai and Rachel's Tomb. The "funeral" of a cedar tree that was planted by Herzl in 1898 during his visit to Palestine and was felted in 1915 is depicted in the upper part of the carpet. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the stumped tree was put in a glass box and returned to the original site of the planting near Motza. In the margins of the carpet, local animals are depicted. "[...] Here are a series of carpets! The 'Tomb of Absalom,' the 'Tomb of Zechariah,' and the 'Cave of the Patriarchs,' the 'Tombs of the Kings,' the 'Western Wall': nothing but ruins, graves, sacred tombs. This was all we had in Jerusalem at the time. Here is also 'Herzl's Cedar,' another sort of a tomb [...]" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

2.38

Avraham Greenblatt Bust
Bronze bust, 1925, 40x30x30 cm.



"[...] Most of the items in the Museum were donated by the country's residents, and when we say 'museum,' we are very well aware that our little collection is as yet not worthy of that name. But this too is true. Residents of the Land of Israel can already be proud of the little, but independent, collection they have. Currently, we have but one sponsor from foreign countries, namely the glorious philanthropist Moser, with whose money the Hebrew Gymnasium is built in Jaffa. He has been donating to the Museum five hundred francs a year" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910).

3.01

Still Life
Oil on canvas, provenance unknown, 35x25 cm.



"[...] But the worst calamity brought upon art by the mecenati was that they raised and cultivated 'art critics,' these 'pirates of journalism,' these mercenaries, who have stupefied the public's mind with their fictitious, misleading, deceitful teachings and have enslaved all the art leaders. Only for a price and with bribery, the artist could purchase from them the right to create, the right for fame and also the right not to starve. And women artists, if they were blessed with good looks, were coerced to give their body away to these scoundrels [...] Being a mecenas has become fashionable, and every 'moneybag,' who feels compelled to 'live according to the fashion' also becomes a mecenas and purchases art for full price, the way he buys expensive furniture, precious stones and other valuables, in order to prove that he can spend money like water" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

3.02

Mark Antokolsky, "Nestor the Chronicler"
Copper relief, date unknown, 87x64 cm.



Mark Antokolsky (1843-1902), arguably the first Jewish sculptor, was a teacher of Boris Schatz, the founder of Bezalel. "[...] and we [...] can only reflect sadly on what Antokolsky might have given, but did not give, to his people, and on the terrible poverty and degradation of our national position, but for which men like Antokolsky would not look abroad for an outlet for their genius. [...] How would progress have suffered, what would humanity have lost, if Antokolsky had devoted his genius, or at least some considerable portion of it, to the service of his own people's culture; if the matter which he endowed with form and soul had been taken from our national life, which was undoubtedly much closer to him in spirit, much more intelligible to him, than the alien life in which he sought his subjects?" (Ahad Ha'am, "The Spiritual Revival," in idem., Selected Essays, trans. by Leon Simon, 1903 [1912]).

3.03

Boris Schatz, "Jeremiah"
1911, cast copper and wood, 76x87 cm.



"[...] I worked passionately consumed by prophetic message. I yearned to unravel the soul of the Jewish beggar, tortured by famine and freezing, humiliated to the core by human derision, a man whose grotesque rags concealed a sensitive soul [...] I saw an old man with heroic heart of a Maccabee sounding a battle cry with his shofar, rallying a bunch of freedom-seeker Jews, who had rather die as freemen than live as slaves. I saw the prophet Jeremiah hounded by his own people, who, unable to understand his desire to save them, had thrown him into prison. People who had turned a deaf ear to his calls, were doomed, but he is still standing, alone, in the wilderness, lamenting his people, writing a book of lamentations, the most beautiful lamentations ever written" (Baruch Schatz, His Life and Work, Monograph, Part I, Benei Bezalel Press, Jerusalem, 1925 [in Hebrew]).

3.04

Portrait of Herzl
Copper relief, provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



"[...] Therefore, all art enthusiasts of each and every nation, who love their people and cherish their nationality, should collect precious pictures depicting the spiritual life of their nation alongside pictures of reputable persons who had lived among them and influenced the nation's spirit, or man-made pictures that present the deeds, occurrences and actions that have taken place in their midst and arouse sacred memories. And the tremendous popular workings of famous paintings upon the revival and reinforcement of the Christian faith are well-known. Similarly, progressive – realist – painters, who depict the life of the people, have contributed greatly to lifting their spirit and to improving their living conditions [...]" (Boris Schatz, "A Masterpiece," Ha-Tsefira, December 30th, 1888 [in Hebrew]).

3.05

Death Mask
Plaster death mask of unknown deceased, provenance unknown, 26x20 cm.



"[...] The procession was approaching, and one could already see the flags bearing the names of the cities whence the participants came. In the middle of the procession, surrounded by flags, were marching people carrying something wrapped in white. They drew nearer. I saw three coffins covered with praying shawls, the returned sons were bringing a gift to Zion, their old mother: Three of the nation's best. They were bringing with them the remains of Herzl, Wolffsohn and Chlenov from the diaspora to be buried in the Land of Israel, their heart's desire, for which they sacrificed their life. 'El male Rachamim!' [...] a sorrowful voice was heard saying by the coffins. Everyone stood up, silently listening in grief to the warm prayer for our three deceased leaders who died abroad [...] Amen! All replied in unison. 'Amen,' the Jerusalem hills echoed, and they all sang together our Tikvah anthem. 'Then our hope – the two-thousand-year-old hope – will not be lost: To be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem'" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

3.06

Apollo and Daphne
Marble copy (after Bernini), provenance unknown, 28x12x7.5 cm.



"[...] Real nature is now their most sublime ideal. They, the artists, only wish to understand what they see. With amazing genius, they present what they see. Their art is free, charming and simple like nature itself and original as the Land of Israel, its people and its animals. In their depiction of a man, they wish to portray his healthy, handsome body. The artist presents with admiration the harmonious beauty of the naked body, depicting with affection each joint, each muscle, no part is covered in a vulgar manner, the beauty resembles that of the Greeks and that of our Song of Songs [...] Our artists want to convey the strong man with his rhythmic, flexible movements, the delicate, fine lines of the soft and tender female body, and the fluffy, doughy forms of an innocent, lively child" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

3.07

"Exile"
Canvas copy (after Samuel Hirszenberg), c. 1904, 128x48.5 cm.



The famous original painting was painted by Samuel Hirszenberg (1865-1908), one of the pillars of Jewish art throughout the ages. The painting had disappeared from the Jewish Museum in Berlin shortly before the outbreak of World War II and hasn't been found to this day.
"[...] I have been carrying this idea and plan in my mind for a long time [...] When my feeling has matured, the feeling of our abnormality, of the Jews who study art [...] Foreign, displaced and desolate we were in an alien atmosphere, in the midst of a people whose way of life and ideals we did not understand [...] In spite of that, there were also a chosen few, who followed their heart and made Jewish pictures. Among those were Gottlieb, Hirszenberg, and others. However, the surrounding alien atmosphere did not allow the development of such an art [...] Some of our great artists advised our youngsters to quit art and only learn a craft [...] I could not be satisfied with this solution, I looked for another remedy to the sorrowful situation of the wretched Jewish artist [...] far away from Europe, far away from European 'culture' and the diaspora [...]" (Boris Schatz, Our Way, 1923 [in Hebrew]).

3.08

Meir Gur-Arie, "The Jewish Legion"
Date unknown, pencil, pen and ink on paper, 74.5x106 cm.



"The moral value of the legion is clear to any sincere and honest man. War is bad – namely, in terms of its price in human life. Today no one can reproach us: Where were you? Why didn't you come to us with the demand: Let us sacrifice our life, as Jews, for Eretz Israel? – Now, we have an answer: 'Five thousand, and probably many more, could have done so, if your leaders did not delay the issue for two and a half years.' This moral aspect is invaluable; and this is also what the South African Prime Minister – himself a great pacifist – meant when he said: Let the Jews fight for the Land of Israel – this is one of the finest ideas I have ever heard" (Ze'ev Zabotinsky, The Story of the Jewish Legion, 1926 [in Hebrew]).

3.09

"The Dreyfus Trial"
Copper relief, provenance unknown, 59x49 cm.



The Dreyfus affair revolved around an antisemitic libel that gave rise to a serious political crisis in the Third French Republic. In 1894, Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jewish artillery officer, was tried for treason as a German spy. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on the basis of false testimonies and, only after a public uproar and a retrial, he was rehabilitated in 1906. Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl covered the first trial for the Neue Freie Presse, and it is believed that the affair triggered his conversion to Zionism. However, the writing of Der Judenstaat predated the public uproar that led to the retrial of Dreyfus, who was at the time almost anonymous. Herzl does not mention the affair among the major events of 1894.

3.10

Death Mask
Plaster death mask of unknown deceased, provenance unknown, 26x20 cm.



"[...] What shall I say about your 'Garden of Love'? It is a temple: The dead are revived in it – I said laughingly. – Don't laugh. The Greeks had something like this and they actually called it a 'temple,' the Temple of Venus and her priestesses. But even in its best days it was not as pure as our 'Garden of Love.' Eventually, it had turned into a source of base passions. Don't forget, we are over two thousand years distant in time from them. Moreover, the last century by itself is more important for us than a millennium [...]" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

3.11

Perseus and the Gorgon's Head
Marble copy (after Cellini), provenance unknown, 34x12x9.5 cm.



"[...] Everyone understands now that good copy of a work is better than bad original work... Only geniuses create truly original works because we are only interested in works of genius: and from these the experts make thousands of copies. At 'Bezalel,' only god-gifted creative people study. These superior men are but few in number. For the training of architects and practical sculptors there are schools everywhere. All students study the craft of sculpting in order to better understand the form, but only a few of them study to be creative sculptures. [...] The love for art has grown sevenfold and the people has evolved to such a degree that it can distinguish between real art and ugly works. One stopped buying bad works" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918 [in Hebrew]).

3.12

Portrait of Otto Warburg
Carved stone, c. 1917, provenance unknown, 33x33x8 cm.



Otto Warburg (1859-1938), one of the leaders of the Zionist movement in Germany and the third President of the World Zionist Organization (1911-21), was a world-renowned German-Jewish botanist. Warburg studied botany, chemistry and zoology at the universities of Bonn and Berlin. In 1885, he embarked on a botanical expedition to the Far East and Australia and upon his return to Germany in 1889 started cataloging his findings. In the late 1890s, he cofounded and chaired the Colonial Economy Committee and was appointed Professor of tropical botany and agriculture at the Oriental Seminary in Berlin. Within the framework of his Zionist activity, due to his specialization in agriculture, he was assigned in 1903 by the 6th Zionist Congress to cofound, with Franz Oppenheimer and Zelig Soskin, the Commission for the Exploration of Palestine. Warburg was one of the pioneers of natural sciences research in Eretz Israel.

3.13

Meir Gur-Arie, Portrait of General Allenby
c. 1917, marble, 90x60 cm.



"To the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Blessed and the people dwelling in its vicinity: The defeat inflicted upon the Turks by the troops under my command has resulted in the occupation of your city by my forces. I, therefore, here now proclaim it to be under martial law, under which form of administration it will remain so long as military considerations make necessary. [...] since your city is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the great religions of mankind and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout people of these three religions for many centuries, therefore, do I make it known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer of whatsoever form of the three religions will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faith they are sacred" (General Allenby's official proclamation of martial law following the conquest of Jerusalem, December 9th, 1917)

3.14

Boris Schatz, "Sound the Great Shofar for our Freedom"
1903, copper and wood, 90x60 cm.



"Art became my temple and the artists – its priests. And I was dreaming to be its high priest and solemnly serve the sacred art and teach men the ideal of magnificence and might, teach them to love good and hate evil [...] And the years that have elapsed have left me bitterly disappointed. I have seen sacred art born in sin and sold for money. I got sick of it. The golden calf was standing on shaky legs and all the artists-priests called and bowed to it. And I felt cold and miserable in this world of art. I forsook my god. With broken and empty heart and with confused mind, I left glorious Paris. And on the cloud-shrouded Pyrenees, amidst the silent cliffs overlooking the purple-bluish sea, the Mediterranean Sea, I began dreaming a new dream" (Boris Schatz, Bezalel: Its History, Essence, and Future, 1910 [in Hebrew]).

4.01

Herzl's Gavel
The first Zionist Congress, Basel, 1889, wood, 8x30x5 cm.



"[...] 3 gavels of the Zionist Congress, 8 antique stoneware dishes, 4 antique mortars, 430 various minerals, 532 snails and shells, 7 Turkish canons procured by the Jewish Legion, 1 antique copper helmet, 1 antique copper armor, 2 antique powder horns, 30 antique parchment amulets, 60 pictures, 20 original sculptures, 3 original masks by Antokolsky, 3 flags of the Jewish Legion, 484 ivory, enamel, stone, copper, wood and porcelain models of Bezalel works, 142 modern antique Eretz Israeli coins, 1 Montefiore carriage, 304 Eretz Israeli bird species, 8 Eretz Israeli animal species, 138 jars with fish, snakes, insects, etc., 55 nests with various eggs and numerous bones, horns, wings, a menorah, and additional thing from the Legion" (Boris Schatz, "Inventory of the Museum," 1918).

4.02

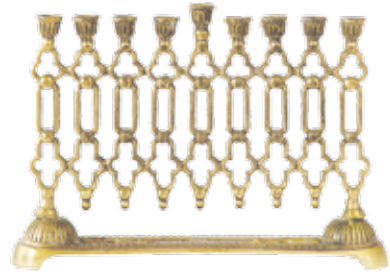
Blood Stained Torah Scroll
Metal and parchment, provenance unknown, 6.5x15x30 cm.



"In our museum, we have set up a special room called 'The Tear Jug,' its walls are covered with 46 pictures by Abel Pann of the pogroms and in the middle of the room, in the cabinets, there are bloodied memories of the pogroms such as blood stained Torah scrolls, a shirt sawn of Torah scroll, a pouch made of tent-cloth and more. The room serves as a living protest of the Jewish people against Christian crimes committed against us. I am told that in Bibliothek Goldziher there is a Russian pouch whose margins and lining are made of Torah parchment [...]"
(Boris Schatz in a letter to Hugo Bergmann, 1920).

4.03

Hanukah Menorah
Copper cast, 1906-29, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem, 17x25x4 cm.



"[...] I suppose that the best proof to the fact that our museum has become the apple of the eye of our people in Eretz Israel is that most of our exhibits were donated by our not so well-off brethren in Eretz Israel. It never happened that upon my return from my travels through the land's towns and moshavot [rural settlements] I did not bring with me many interesting gifts to the museum. We managed to do all of this with scarce resources, without employing a special person and without the museum having a place of its own. Many a times, I had to reject interesting pieces for lack of means and time. This time, too, before going to Europe, I met a Jewish resident of a neighborhood near Jaffa, who invited me to his home because he had findings from a cave with sarcophagi and other interesting antiques. Unfortunately, I had neither the time to go to his place nor the means to transport the items" (Boris Schatz in a letter to Dr. Magnes, 1910).

4.04

The Ark of the Covenant
Bronze, provenance unknown, 10x19x16 cm.



Housing the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, also known as the Tent of the Congregation served as a mobile sanctuary of the children of Israel during their wandering in the Sinai desert. The tabernacle was built according to a detailed plan given to Moses by God, as described in the Book of Exodus. It was built by skilled artisans led by Bezalel Ben Uri, who is traditionally considered as the archetype of the Jewish artist. – 'Who is this?' – I asked my self – 'How did he managed to climb up to here without me seeing him?' [...] My heart stopped... I saw in front of me our forefather Bezalel... I recognized him: He is the one who stood in the shadow [bezel] of God [el]. His hands, his artist's hands, built the Tabernacle. His wide chest is full of wisdom and knowledge. His bright eyes, eyes of an artist, penetrated my soul. My master and teacher, whispered my dead lips with difficulty, I was sitting as if riveted to my place, in my astonishment I couldn't move [...]" (Boris Schatz, Built Jerusalem: A Daydream, 1918).

9-channel video installation, animation, black/white, sound, 01:00 min (loop)
p. 77, Portrait of an Ashkenazi Jew
p. 78, Portrait of a Kurdish Jewess
p. 79, Portrait of a Maghreb (Moroccan) Jew
p. 80, Portrait of a Russian Jew
p. 81, Portrait of a Persian Jew
p. 82, Portrait of a Sephardic Jew
p. 83, Portrait of a Yemenite Jewish Boy
p. 84, Portrait of a Yemenite Jew
p. 85, Portrait of a Tunisian Jew





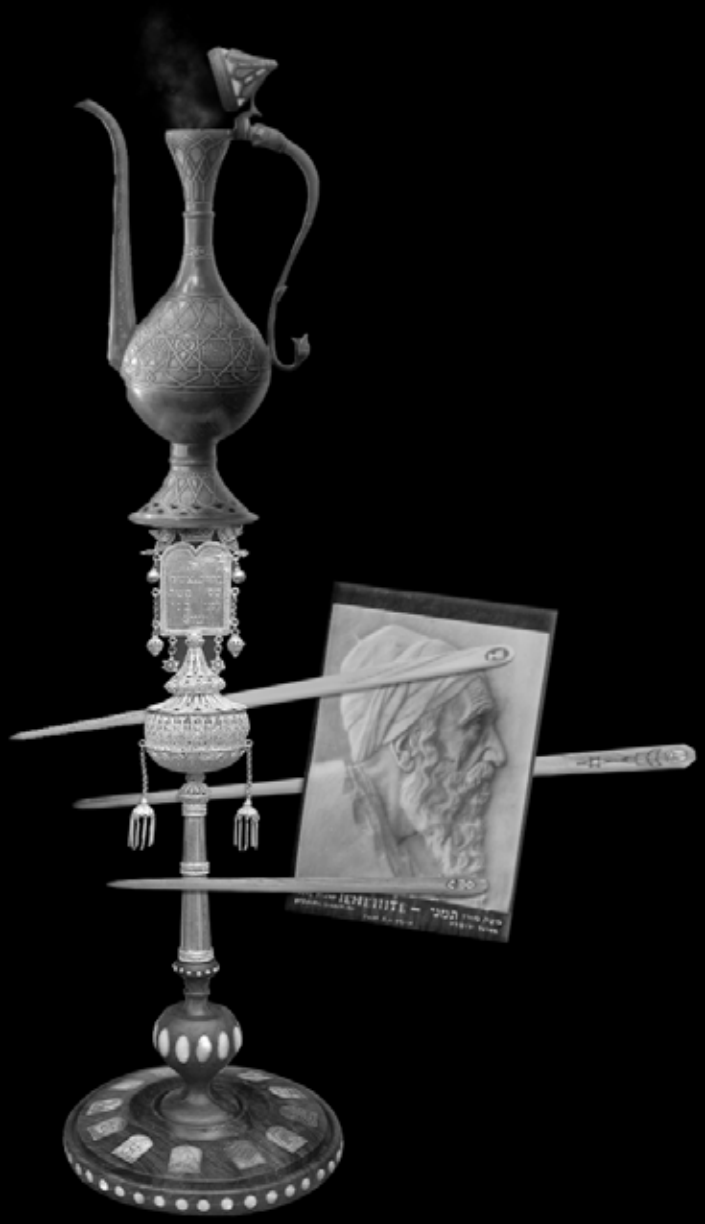





אם אשכחך ירושלם
תשכח ימיני











Oak of Abraham Carpet, 2018,
animation projection on linoleum, sound, 3:00 min.

Permanent Exhibition
Sally Haftel Naveh

"Rather than a genre-based museum dedicated to one specific discipline, this is a museum that encompasses the entire Hebraic 'cosmology.' Schatz's perception of a museum functions as a representation table containing the necessary terms for representing the Hebraic cosmos. In the various departments of the museum, one can find an assortment of celestial bodies of Hebraism: Botanic, zoologist, archeological, anthropological Hebraism, everyday Hebraism, ritual-religious Hebraism, Hebraic aesthetics, and even Hebraic suffering."
(Sarah Chinski, The Lacemakers from Bezalel, 1997.)

A seemingly eclectic collection of old artifacts, ethnographic and natural items – a mishmash of carpets, paintings, sculptures, taxidermy animals and historical items – engulf the visitor in Permanent Exhibition, Nevet Yitzhak's comprehensive two-storey installation. However, this display of seemingly anachronistic ensemble of objects is by no means accidental. With the Jewish and Eretz Israeli eclecticism of its contents, it strives to echo Bezalel, the first Jewish museum in the Land of Israel, founded by Boris Schatz and later inaugurated as the Yishuv's National Museum. Like many other institutions of the Yishuv, the Museum was part of a vision, both utopian and practical, a platform for political and ideological contents and a means for crystalizing a new national consciousness. As in and beside the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, in his museal enterprise, Schatz aspired to combine the old and the new in order to provide visual typology for the nascent Zionist project, for the ethos of settling the land as articulated by the Zionist Congresses at the turn of the 20th century.

In the exhibition, Yitzhak investigates the Museum's eclectic collection and the strategy of its director in its first two decades between the years 1906 and 1925. In this period, the Museum became more professionalized, its collection grew, it gained institutional recognition and eventually was opened to the public on a permanent basis. However, in her display layout, which is based on the real history of the collection and its items and on the Museum's departments, she has compressed these two decades into a single point in time. The anachronistic mixture of Permanent Exhibition – a product of direct and indirect quotations, reconstruction, deflection and blending of visual precedents – therefore stages a fictional synthesis, an alternative reality rather than direct and unmediated reconstruction. Yitzhak aspires to retrieve from oblivion this forgotten museal site, which is present-absent in the history of local art, in order to reexamine it. By blending the real and the invented, the historical and the fabricated, she sets afloat the worlds of content that were encapsulated in Bezalel's display layout as an ambitious project of identity forging. Although considered utterly antiquated even on the very day it was first opened to the public, from contemporary point of view the Bezalel Museum can be seen as a link between past and future, the Diaspora and the Zionist revival, the old world and modernism.[1]

The Bezalel Museum reflected several existing models of display venues, from which Schatz drew his inspiration. As someone who had been involved in the establishment of the Royal Academy of Art and the National Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria, he took his cue not only from the operational aspect of these institutions, but just as much from their ideological conditioning. Both these institutions were founded as part of an inclusive political move, the aim of which was to build a national identity and erase the blood-drenched memory of the Turkish occupation of Bulgaria – a challenge somewhat similar to the one faced by early Zionism.[2] *Another model was provided by the Jewish ethnographic museums that began to appear at the end of the 19th century in European cities such as Warsaw, Frankfurt, Paris and Hamburg as part of the growing interest in the folklore and material heritage of European Jewry. Schatz visited at least some of these museums and was especially impressed by the St. Petersburg's museum*

founded by S. Anski, which contained the remains of Jews slain in the Khmelnitsky pogroms.[3] *One may assume that he was also familiar with some of the ethnographic research collections that were opened in those years in Palestine by European and American religious and research institutions. Among these was the collection of the German Protestant Institute of Archeology (das Deutsches Evangelisches Institut für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes), which was based for a while in 5 Abyssinian Street (today Ethiopia Street) in Jerusalem, Bezalel's first quarters (1906-8).*[4]

Schatz conceived the museum as an integral part of a tripartite format of the Bezalel School, which consisted of learning-experiential syllabus alongside workshops and display spaces of archeological findings, copies of masterpieces, zoological exhibits, etc. At first, the collection exposed the students to species of the local fauna and flora, which constituted the initial core of the Museum: a variety of Eretz Israel species[5] *alongside items of the local heritage and archeology, which served as sources of inspiration for the development of design motifs. However, as the collection gradually grew and developed and following Schatz's indefatigable efforts to achieve official recognition of his collecting and display enterprise, the presentation strategy*

1 See: Gideon Ofrat, 1925, Wordpress, 2011, in: https://gideonofrat.wordpress.com/2011/07/24/1925/ (last accessed, 4/18/2019); and Dalia Manor, "Art, Nationalism and Public Relations: the Myth of Bezalel," Iyunim Bitkumat Israel: Studies in Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel, vol. 18, 2008 (pp. 417-441) (in Hebrew).

2 See Gideon Ofrat, "Beit Ha-Nechot Bezalel 1906-1929," in: Shilo-Cohen, Nurit (ed.), "Bezalel" shel Schatz: 1906-1929, exhibition catalogue, Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1983, p. 329 (in Hebrew).

3 Ibid., p. 319.

4 Oded Shay, Museon ve-Osef be-Eretz Israel be-Shilhei ha-Tekufa Ha-Ottomanit, Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2014, pp. 230-1 (in Hebrew).

5 These were collected by Israel Aharoni, the "first Hebrew zoologist." Aharoni was a protégé of Otto Warburg, president of the Zionist Organization and member of Bezalel founding committee, who was a botanist by trade. Originally, Aharoni arrived at Bezalel to teach Hebrew, but as a result of Warburg's pressure on Schatz, he was put in charge of the museum's natural history collection. Ofrat, op. cit., p. 319.

became more nationally oriented. In the wake of World War I and the transition from Ottoman to British rule, its goal was shifted to a more conscious gathering of national treasures and ethnographic and commemorative preservation in line with similar institutions elsewhere in world. Hence, the museum assumed an educational form, in the wider sense of the word, in those years; its combination of biblical-archeological motifs, heritage items, Hebrew typography, and contemporaneous works of art and crafts seemed to suggest the Jewish people's rootedness in and historic right to the Land of Israel.[6]

However, in its first format, when its display was still overwhelmingly zoological, the Museum occupied only two rooms. In 1908, with school's move to its new quarters – the Ottoman buildings that would host it in the next years[7] *– the exhibition space was expanded and divided into three separate departments. The collection of natural sciences, comprised of local finds, was exhibited, from now on, in a separate hall (the Department of Natural History). Beside it, a new gallery devoted to (more or less dubious) archeological finds and Judaica pieces was opened for the so-called "Antiquities Department" comprised of Greek and Roman arms and armor, clay shards, marble and glass ware, ancient inscriptions and coins as well as ancient manuscripts, Torah scrolls, Hanukkah menorahs from various periods and sources, and talismans and medals. A third gallery was designated for the Department of Arts and Crafts, which consisted of original works by Jewish artists and artisans alongside a few paintings by European "old masters." Schatz endeavored in those years to expand the collection, which was completely based on donations, and the museum was opened for the first time to the public in 1912.*[8]

[6] Schatz's linguistic choices attest to his desire to infuse the biblical past into the present of the Zionist settlement project - naming the school after Bezalel Ben Uri Ben Hur, the biblical builder of the Tabernacle mentioned in the book of Exodus; and calling the museum "beit nechot," a biblical term appearing in Kings 2 that is interpreted by modern exegetists as a treasury house or an archive.

[7] In the buildings on Shmuel HaNagid Street, are located today the Bezalel's Department of Architecture and the Jerusalem Artists House.

The post-World War I years witnessed the expansion, transformation and institutionalization of the Museum in an attempt to have it officially recognized. In 1919, following the return of Schatz to Jerusalem from his two years of exile in Damascus, Tiberias and Safed, both the Bezalel School and Museum were reopened. The further development of the collection and the recent change from Ottoman to British rule over Palestine were reflected in the Museum's new departments. Now, the display was divided among five wings. These included a commemoration hall for the British liberation of Palestine from the Ottomans, and galleries that were allocated to the Museum's coin collection, artifacts made by Bezalel workshops and Jewish sculptors' and painters' self-portraits. Finally, there was an ethnography hall comprised of dolls dressed in traditional costumes and miniature models of the land's holy places. Side by side with the ongoing expansion of the display, in 1920 the Museum's zoological/botanical and archeological collections were transferred to specializing institutions.[9] *Henceforth, the remaining display was linked to the nation's history, and on June 2nd, 1925, the Museum opened its doors to the public, under its new name – the Bezalel National Museum. The Museum's inventory, now consisting of 4,000 items, was shown in 14 separate halls, including a hall for changing exhibitions.*

With its mixture of art and heritage pieces, the Bezalel Museum became the favorite gathering venue of cultural creations of the Jewish people throughout the ages and, as a site of memory, documentation and commemoration, played an important role in the dissemination of the Zionist narrative. The display clearly reflected the Zionist national interest, be it in the blatantly fawning accolades bestowed on the British authorities and the celebration of the activities of the Jewish

[8] Gilit Ivgi, "Schatz's Beit HaNechot Bezalel as a National Tool, 1907-25," unpublished seminar paper, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 2006, p. 6 (in Hebrew).

[9] To the Agricultural Museum and the Hebrew Museum of Eretz Israel Antiquities respectively.



Portrait of Herzl, 2018,
video projection on framed oval panel, silent, 0:30 min.



The Congress of Tears, 2018,
video projection on framed oval panel, sound, 5:00 min.

Legion,[10] *or be it in the collection of antisemitic coins complete with the caption "in every generation they stand up against us to destroy us." Abel Pann's cycle of drawings, The Tear Jug, which was made in the aftermath of the pogroms against Ukrainian Jews during World War I, was exhibited in a special hall alongside blood stained Torah scroll.*[11] *The commemoration halls and the tendentious division of the Museum's spaces point to a need to both perpetuate the Zionist project and to erase and exclude those who had no part in the Zionist revival narrative. Thus, the Palestinian people or the century-long Ottoman rule over the country were completely omitted from the display – an underlying exclusion in Zionist thought to this very day.*

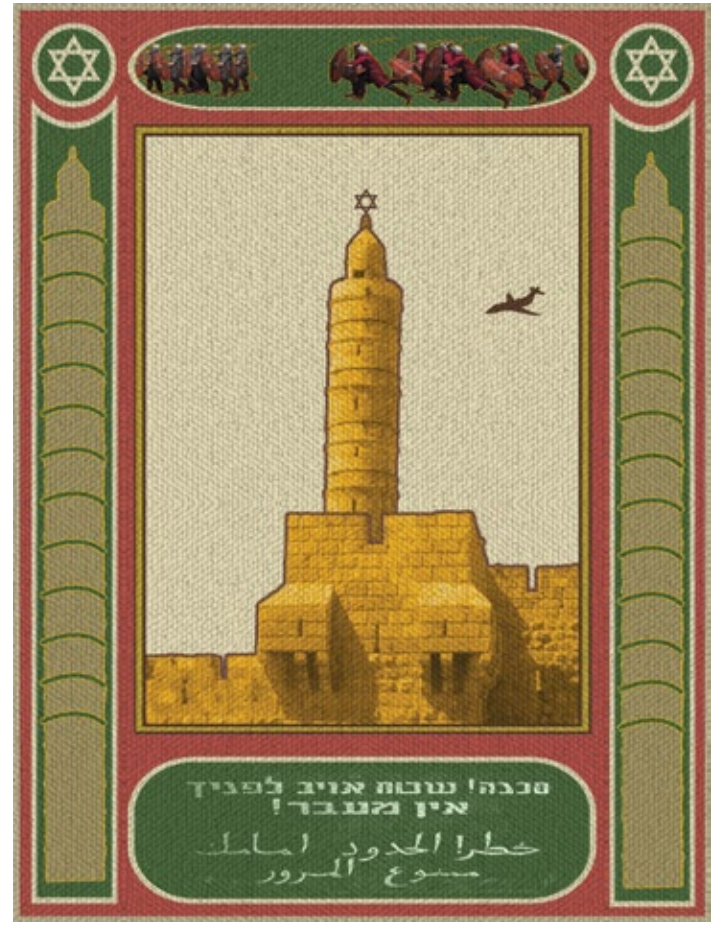
* * *

> *"The concept is clear: Cabinet de curiosites. The Bezalel Museum as an early embodiment of the museal idea, namely: aristocratic collections [...] of multi-channeled 'curiosities,' which present together exotic finds from the 'New World,' taxidermy animals, alongside mythological objects [...], archeological finds, minerals, rare botanical items, ancient coins and so on and so forth, and... works of art."*
> *(Gideon Ofrat, Shkazim, Omanut, veShear Yerakot, 2013 [in Hebrew])*

The tension between the associative, eclectic display logic and a purely methodical display is especially conspicuous in the Museum's

[10] The commemoration hall included, among other things, a portrait of General Allenby and his uniforms, photographs of soldiers who fought for the liberation of Palestine, documentation on the Zionist Commission, medals and military flags, and even a small cannon. Ivgi, op. cit., p. 7.

[11] "In our museum, we have set up a special room called 'The Tear Jug,' its walls are covered with 46 pictures by Abel Pann of the pogroms and in the middle of the room, in the cabinets, are displayed bloodied memories of the pogroms such as blood stained Torah scrolls, a shirt sawn of Torah scroll, a pouch made of tentcloth and more. The room serves as a living protest of the Jewish people against crimes committed by Christians against us." Schatz in a letter to Hugo Bergmann, 1920, as quoted in Ofrat, 1925, op. cit.



The Tower of David Carpet, 2018,
animation projection on linoleum, sound, 0:30 min.



The Tomb of Absalom, 2018,
animation projection on linoleum, sound, 0:20 min.

first two decades. However, it had characterized the evolution of the museal institution in general, from the private collections of noblemen, including the early modern Wunderkammern, to the modern museum, which was tightly tied to the 19th century national awakening. As the focus of the collection, classification and display – at first, only for the eyes of the chosen few – the inventory of these proto-museal collections included, among other things, curiosities and objects of dubious provenance, holy relics, antiques and copies. The classification relied on prevalent theological and scientific perceptions as well as on associations and functionality. The inventory thus assembled was meant to express an elevated controlling vantage point over the phenomenological world, the arts and nature under the auspices of divine providence. In its national-institutionalized phase, and with the development of empirical taxonomy methods of archiving, conservation and authentication, the museum hanged on to the generalizing vantage point, but its objective changed: the national museum controls the nation's creations and history and, as it appeals to the public at large, it is also assigned with an educational role – to provide a model for the community.[12]

With its two installations, Permanent Exhibition sustains this tension and its ideological background: together they cover the first two decades of the Bezalel Museum's display modes – from a display of an almost haphazard donation-based zoological collection and other objects of interest in a venue closed to the public, to a public, didactic, commemorative national museum aspiring for artistic and institutional prestige. The vision greeting the visitors in the ground floor of the CCA offers a saturate, focus-less assortment of Bezalel's artifacts, stuffed animals, plants, furniture pieces, local esoterica, and unmistakably Zionist-oriented sculptures and paintings – an eclectic ensemble reminiscent of the sprawly baroque Wunderkammern.[13] *On the other hand, the display in the first floor of the CCA is cleaner and*

[12] Tony Bennett, The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics (London & New York: Routledge, 1995).
[13] Ivgi, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

more spacious as befitting a picture gallery in a space designated for art display purposes. The portrait cycle of Jewish types reflects the display strategy of the historical Museum as far as fine arts are concerned, both in terms of content and of the pretense to serve as a prime museum and permanent abode of the Jewish people's masterpieces. Through the abundance of objects of the installation– including the ones which are used as a video and animation projection screen, original items, furniture, restored and fabricated pieces – Yitzhak is reflecting on the underlying conceptions of the material and visual display of the Bezalel Museum, on the status of art-works and applied art works as products of a given period and on the ideological power of objects to generate consciousness. Tracing the iconographic layout of the Bezalel display through some of its major thematic foci – the "old Jew" and the ethos of Jewish victimization, the "new Jew" and the pioneering ethos, sacred or "historical" sites, biblical and mythological motifs, the Herzl's cult, crisis periods in recent history – she creates an invented arena that vacillates between the real, the reconstructed and the fabricated. The resulting puzzle unveils the strategic mechanism of the display in action, and the way in which it lends meaning to an array of selected objects, even to those which are supposedly neutral.

* * *

Schatz's ideological-aesthetic world view accorded a central place to heartrending images of the "old World" and to the ethos of Jewish victimization, to the quasi-cyclical repetition of anti-Jewish riots, calamities and pogroms. Within the lower space of the installation, this finds expression in an emblematic object of the catastrophic pogroms, a bloodstained Torah scroll (see above, 4.02), referencing the authentic relic displayed at the historical Museum alongside Abel Pann's Tear Jug. Exile (3.07), an animated version of Samuel Hirszenberg's famous painting of the same name (c. 1904), clearly belongs to this category of imagery. The painting, lost on the eve of World War II, had shown a column of Jewish refugees staggering across snow-covered, desolate landscape – bearded men, women and children leaning forward, wrapped in their coats, as they make their way towards an unknown destination. Yitzhak loops a pictorial

representation of this iconic painting, which was widely distributed throughout the Jewish world in innumerable copies and reproductions, and thus condemns the refugees to eternal wandering.

The "new Jew" – the pioneer, the tiller of the land, intent on making the desert bloom and on building the country – was also given special attention. In Yitzhak's exhibition, the pioneering motif is epitomized by Pioneers, an animation work in which a group of laborers are screened onto plates (2.21; 2.22; 2.25-2.29). Sampled from The Land of Promise, a 1935 propaganda film produced by Keren HaYesod, the pioneer figures are seen in the midst of physical work of some description: one is drilling, the other harvests, the third waters, and so on. The sounds produced by the individual laborers create together a well-orchestrated harmonic polyphony; the work of each and every one of them contributes to the idyllic collective effort of the group. Like British plates of the colonial period, whose margins were decorated with vegetal patterns from the colonized world, here too the plates are adorned with sort of a victory wreath made of the leaves of the indigenous plant colloquially known as the Wandering Jew – a reminder to the colonial aspect of the conquest of the country.

Representations of holy places and other sites in the Land of Israel gained a special status in Bezalel, as Schatz wanted to harness the time-honored sacred aura surrounding these places to the Zionist settlement project. The series of animated carpets presented on the ground floor bring to mind the products of the Bezalel carpet workshop, "Marvadia," which depicted a variety of sacred historical sites in Jerusalem and its environs. The two medium-size carpets, the Tower of David (1.03) and the Tomb of Absalom (1.08) describe sites that were eventually annexed to the symbolic repertoire of sacred and heritage sites, although they do not strictly belong to the Jewish tradition. Yitzhak's interventions in and anachronistic treatment of the carpets' patterns highlight the inflammable potential of these places and the ownership thereof as a bone of contention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the Tower of David carpet, the citadel's Moslem minaret is adorned with a star of David as sort of a proof for its new national identity, and it is seen during a terrorist attack, after an ultralight

plane had crashed into it, with thick black smoke plume rising from it. The wording of the Hebrew and Arabic inscriptions at the bottom of the carpet resemble that of Israeli border signs ("Beware! No entry! Frontier ahead!"). At the top of the carpet, there is a group of generic silhouettes of soldiers with their weapons at the ready. The religious-military-national pastiche of the image also alludes to the September 11 attacks of New York's World Trade Center, which had ushered the current geopolitical era.

The Kidron Valley stone tomb known as "Yad Avshalom" (literally, hand of Avshalom) is traditionally ascribed to Absalom, King David's rebellious son. In Yitzhak's carpet, the tomb is represented hailed with stones and with a tongue of fire rising from its window. The stoning refers to the reportedly centuries-old custom of throwing stones at the tomb of the son who rebelled against his father. The inscription at the bottom of the carpet, "He who rebelled against his father, his hand shall be severed,"[14] refers to another legend associated with the tomb, according to which the tomb was once topped with the shape of a hand. This admonition is phrased like a personal and general moral imperative. The edifice is adorned with three flags: a flag with the star of David on top of the conical roof, a flag bearing the inscription BEZALEL beneath it, and underneath it a flag bearing the inscription HASCHKAFA (German transliteration of the name of the Hebrew periodical published by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda). The flags, originally sketched on a postcard as a comic commentary,[15] can be interpreted as a "territorial marking" of a place recently appropriated; in this case, the Tomb of Absalom, which was appropriated by the new Bezalel iconography.

[14] Quoted from Gates of Jerusalem by Moshe Reicher, an anthology of anecdotes, midrashim and memories from the author's tours of the holy places in and around Jerusalem, published in 1868 in Warsaw.

[15] A postcard sent by Ephraim Moshe Lilien, one of the period's leading illustrators and a cofounder of Bezalel, to his future wife in 1906. On the verso, Lilien described his experiences during his first visit to Palestine, and scribbled the flags on the photograph of the Tomb of Absalom printed on the recto.

The Oak of Abraham carpet (2.37) joins together several sacred sites, most of which are located in areas not controlled by present-day Israel. In the center of the carpet, is depicted the ancient oak tree known as "Abraham's Oak," which stands on the grounds of the Russian Orthodox Monastery in the West Bank city of Hebron, and in the background are seen – in an unlikely geographical pastiche – Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem and Mount Sinai. Some traditions identify this approximately 1000-year-old tree as one of Elonei Mamre, or Elon Moreh, places associated with Abraham and mentioned in the Book of Genesis. Beside the oak, there is another tree, "Herzl's cedar," which was planted by the visionary of the Jewish state near Jerusalem during his only visit to Palestine in 1898. In 1915, the cedar – or, actually, the cypress tree – was felled under unclear circumstances, which some attribute to a hostile act. Be it as it may, the felled stump was preserved and after the establishment of the State of Israel it was returned, in a glass box reinforced with steel bars, to the planting's original site in Motza Valley Park. A sort of an imaginary funeral of the stumped tree is depicted in the upper part of the carpet. The tree is carried by two men in accordance with the iconographic formula of the story of the men sent by Moses to spy the Land of Canaan, a popular motif in Bezalel due to its link to the ethos of the conquest of the country.[16]

As for the Oak of Abraham, Yitzhak hybridizes it with another legendary tree, the Islamic-Persian mythological tree from the island of Wak-Wak, on the branches of which grow human and animal talking heads symbolizing the origin of language and the divine word. At the end of the leafless branches of the oak, Yitzhak planted animated heads of Zionist leaders that disappear at sunset and grow again at sunrise and thus completing a season cycle in 24 hours like the fruits of the legendary Wak-Wak. The bearded head of Schatz in the middle refers to the tribal elder from the legend. Albeit mute, these heads bear the

[16] Dalia Manor, Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), p. 53.

tidings of political Zionism. The carpet is decorated in the margins with stars of David, kids, fawns and fish. The inscription on the upper part of the inner frame, "Know before whom you stand," is a phrase taken from the Rabbinic literature.

Another biblical/mythological motif is found in the Song of Songs carpet (1.01), an animation work inspired by the homonymous Marvadia carpet, in which a variety of Eretz Israel fauna and flora is seen through the straggling twigs and leaves of a vine. Yitzhak borrows representations of the local nature from the original carpet, but transplants into it the actual landscape of nowadays Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock in its center. In the foreground, the cityscape and skyline of Jerusalem are obstructed by a wall, not the ancient one known from the romantic representations of the city, but rather today's concrete separation barrier that violently blocks the view as a horizontal impenetrable bar. By juxtaposing the barrier with the outline of the Jerusalem landscape and by looking at the city from the outside, Yitzhak enacts a reversal: instead of a barrier separating between territories for supposedly defensive reasons, it is now a concrete belt enclosing the city and abolishing its independence. The revived animal specimens add a violent hallucinatory dimension to this paradise whose peace was disturbed: a wolf patrols the wall back and forth; a fox supervises from below and other animals are prowling at the foot of the wall. The pastoral idyll is over, replaced by a state of emergency or post-destruction anarchy. The carpet's Eretz Israeli zoological taxonomy, like that of the taxidermy animals and the jars of reptiles on the central wall, brings to mind the work of Israel Aharoni, the first Hebrew zoologist and the man in charge of the Museum's collection in

[17] "From the outset, the museum was not meant to serve as an art institution, of the museums of art variety. Right from the start, the museum served as an extension of the colonial enterprise by linking up nature study, archeology, ethnography, art etc. in service of the Zionist settlement of Ottoman Palestine" (Gideon Ofrat, Shkazim, Omanut, veShear Yerakot, 2013 in: https://gideonofrat.wordpress.com/2013/03/13/%D7%A9%D7%A7%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%90%D7%A8-%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%AA/, last accesses 4/23/2019). (in Hebrew.)

its first years. In those years, the collection was supposed to inspire the design of carpets and ornaments by the in-house artisans on the one hand, and serve as a colonialist tool for reinforcing the colonizers' control through collecting, cataloging and knowledge.[17]

Figures from Zionism's recent history, and first and foremost among them Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl, occupied a prominent place in the Museum's display layout, just as prominent as the biblical motifs and holy places. A myriad of items shown in the exhibition demonstrate the admiration and the cult of personality that surrounded Herzl, the founder of political Zionism.[18] *His impressive portrait, usually in profile, is the most prevalent portrait in Zionist art, and the Bezalel and general iconographication of his figure has produced a prolific souvenir industry. The portrait of Herzl adorned dozens of consumer's goods, from carpets, postal stamps, artifacts and porcelainware to greeting cards, ashtrays, watches and lockets.*[19] *By combining in the exhibition a plethora of objects extolling his person, Yitzhak reconstructs Herzl's personality cult of the time, which is somewhat echoed in the present-day nationalistic atmosphere. Among these objects, there are a bust of the founder of Zionism (1.05) and a gavel ascribed to him from the first Zionist Congress (4.01).*

Herzl also features in a series of works depicting landmark events in his life and in the early history of political Zionism. The Congress of Tears (2.01-2.03, 2.34-2.35), a series of portraits of Herzl and some of the delegates to the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel, recreates the drama that unfolded during the Congress's debates on the plan to settle Jews in Britain's East Africa Protectorate. In the middle, the figure of Herzl is projected onto contemporaneous poster, surrounded by copper

[18] "Already at the first Zionist Congress in 1897, Herzl's kingly appearance was enthusiastically merged into messianic expectations that were deeply rooted in the national movement, and then reflected back on the myth of Herzl: 'The myth of the reborn King Messiah evoked both the ancient Davidic kingdom and its glories as well as the theatrical methods of modern mass politics'." See: Manor, op. cit., p. 60.

[19] Ibid., pp. 59-60.



Pioneers, 2018, video projection on ceramic plate, sound, 2:08 min.

medallions with portraits of five delegates to the Congress, all of them from among the opponents of the so-called "Uganda Plan," proposed to Herzl by the British Government on the eve of the Congress. The delegates' figures, as well as that of Herzl, were sampled from a 1960 biographical film on Herzl's life Herzl – A Living Portrait produced by the Zionist Organization of Canada. The protagonists engage in vehement debate, complete with Hollywoodian pompous gestures and thick American accent – a synthesis that makes one wonder what would have become of the Bezalel School and the Museum, had the proposal was accepted: Would the local style have permeated into Schatz's aesthetic perception? The two oval portraits, Dreyfus Trial (3.09) and Portrait of Herzl (3.04), were also sampled from the same footage, but here the figures were silenced. Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish officer, who fell victim to an antisemitic libel, is shown stripped of his military ranks; whereas Herzl is seen in his iconic profile posture gazing at the horizon with both his hands determinedly folded on his chest, embodying as it were a dramatic moment of despair and hope.

* * *

> *"It is not enough for the cosmology of the Hebrew sky to inhabit the Museum, it has to be introduced to each and every home and turn its dwellers into subjects who are constantly dominated by a regime of modeling and subordination to goals designated as sublime, through its agents – the talking objects. There, in his room, man learns to know himself as both a Hebrew individual and part of a social, national entity of a unified homogenous identity."*
> *(Sarah Chinski, The Lacemakers from Bezalel, 1997)*

Jewish Types, the cycle of nine big animation works screened in the upper floor of the exhibition, combine ethnographic representations of traditional Jews of different ethnic backgrounds with the Bezalel's crafts. The typical figures of the Ashkenazi, Yemenite, Russian, Maghrebi (Moroccan), Sephardi, Persian and Tunisian Jewish men and of the Kurdish Jewish woman are based on ivory plaques by Moshe Murro, head of the Bezalel Kame'a (amulet) Workshop. All

of them are embedded in a black-and-white intricate composition, a moving assemblage of elements which pile on top of each other in a calculated way. The objects, a wide variety of Judaica and applied art items, anchor the ethnographic portraits in the general inventory qua attributive symbols. Nevertheless, the delicate balance between these ornamental items also alludes to the Museum's blind spots concerning the old Yishuv Jews as an object of orientalist fascination.

Ethnographic representations were abundant both in the Bezalel workshops and Museum. Similarly to movements of national revival throughout Europe, Zionism too looked for unmediated representatives of the nation and found them in oriental Jews in general and in Yemenite Jews in particular. This romantic fascination with oriental appearance, costumes, and way of life as well as with the Sephardic pronunciation (which was deemed closer to biblical Hebrew) tie together 19th century Orientalism and the Zionist project of revival. Yemenite, Bukharan, and Maghrebi Jews, whose numbers gradually grew in 19th century Jerusalem, were thus perceived as authentic representatives of the connection to the Land of Israel, as an integral part of the Middle Eastern region and as living proof to the nation's past. Schatz was familiar with the ethnographic motif as a national tool from his days in the Sofia Academy of Art, where students painted Bulgarian peasants and artisans in their folkloric costumes. Oriental Jews were anyhow present in Bezalel – as laborers and apprentices, who worked for measly, if any, wages at the silver and carpet workshops and in the workshops' affiliate cottage industries.[20] In the meantime, they were invited to pose as models in drawing classes, and even though they were framed in accordance with traditional portraiture, they remained anonymous and were only portrayed because of their ethnic origin. Moreover, but for depictions of Yemenite workers tilling the

[20] Their employment was part of the "productivization" mission, which was supposed to transform the Jewish sources of livelihood and stop the dependence on the Halukka funds. Schatz, on his part, strove to combine the practical Zionist "productivization" with the spiritual Zionist goal of turning the Land of Israel into spiritual-cultural center for the Diaspora Jews.

[21] Manor, op. cit., pp.62-6.

land (a task assigned to them by the Jewish National Fund), they only appear as passive objects of one's gaze, devoid of any active role or narrative context.[21]

The portraits of Jewish types shown in this section of the Permanent Exhibition are screened uniformly as if according to methodical rhythm of picture hanging. The metal objects glisten from the dark background reverberating the commercial albums that presented the Bezalel products and were preserved in the school's archives. However, here, instead of being displayed on a flat horizontal surface, the objects are vertically "arranged" by Yitzhak as if in a gravitation-defying exercise of acrobatics. All the objects belong to the domestic sphere: an assortment of amulets and lockets, a pipe, a letter opener, a jug and glasses, a samovar and fingerlike sugar bowl, Hanukkah menorahs as well as sculptures. Despite the latent tension of these slightly wobbly folkloric hybrids, they retain their balance and restraint. Beside the minute movements, momentary candlelike flickers of light lend the entire layout a mystical air of both holiness and commemoration.

By means of her gallery of Jewish types, Yitzhak reflects on the special status of the object as a unit that incorporates the complex relationship between "things" and "human beings," on the way in which people create objects, but are also objectified and constituted by objects. In the circumstances of its production and use, the Bezalel decorative object embodies not only the starting point of "Hebrew folk art" as an invented, implicitly modern, albeit thematically conservative, tradition, but also the Bezalel enterprise as an educational project, which sought to harness the productive forces of its subjects – according to ethnic and gender keys – in the service of comprehensive social reform.[22] *The conspicuous presence of portraits of oriental Jews on decorative domestic objects reveals and at the same time conceals these power relationships, which were imposed on, to borrow Sarah Chinski's*

[22] Sarah Chinski, "The Lacemakers from Bezalel," Theory and Criticism 11 (winter 1997), pp. 177-205.

[23] Ibid., p. 179.

words, "whoever was assigned the role of an object in the social world of the Zionist project."[23]

* * *

Echoing the historical sign that hanged at the entrance to one of the Museum's display halls, "Permanent Exhibition" goes back more than a century to the beginning of the 20th century, when Eretz Israeli art was born ex-nihilo, as it were. The wording of the sign implies a desire for stability and continuity, a wish for settling down and establishing facts on the ground by founding a museal and educational institute, which together with other national institutions was designed to solidify the control over and the possession of the land. What we see in Permanent Exhibition reveals a distorted Zionist ideology, as articulated and displayed by the founder of the first Eretz Israeli museum, an ideology patched out of a potpourri of past and future fragments. Yitzhak's critical take on the Museum allows one to revisit and reevaluate it as well as its period and its role as an instrument of structuring a collective national identity. In its layout and multiple items, the exhibition provides a subversive contemporary perspective on many of the underlying truisms and conventions of the national ethos.



The Song of Songs Carpet, *2018*,
animation projection on linoleum, *1:00 min.*

On the cover: Unknown artist (Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Jerusalem), undated ink, watercolor and graphite sketch on paper, 278x217 cm, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Center for Contemporary, Tel Aviv
The Rachel and Israel Pollak Gallery

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