

## The First Exhibitions of Jewish Artists in Kaunas (1920–1940) from the Art Critic’s Perspective

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The cultural heritage of ethnic minorities is an integral part of a country’s national culture. Due to the focus on the history and culture of the dominant national ethos, the significance of the role of ethnic minorities in contributing to national histories and cultures has been forgotten in many Eastern European countries. Today, largely on the initiative of Jewish-born authors, Eastern European Judaica is being studied all over the world—although it will take many years to fill in all the gaps pertaining to its history and culture. Because studies on the development of the Eastern European Jewish fine arts are scant, each and every research work in this field represents an important contribution towards revealing the multi-cultural character of multi-national Eastern European life.

Although it constitutes an important part of the research into the development of Lithuanian art and different aspects of Jewish art, Jewish artistic life in the interwar period in Lithuania still awaits a more comprehensive study. Many young Jewish artists who later gained international recognition—such as Neemiya Arbit Blatt,<sup>1</sup> Max Band, Zale Beker, Isaiah Kulwiansky, Esther Lurie, Jacob Lipshitz, Josef Shlesinger, Nolik Shmidt and others—were born, grew up, received an education, and reached maturity in Lithuania.

This article hopes to expand our knowledge of the artistic life of interwar Lithuania by examining the activities of Jewish artistic life during this period. It represents an attempt to provide a chronological overview of the first exhibitions of Jewish artists, concentrating particularly on the influence these exerted on the formation of the artistic preferences of Lithuanian artists, art critics, and public. The reconstruction of Jewish artistic life is based on publications from Lithuanian interwar periodicals published in Lithuanian, Russian, and Polish.<sup>2</sup> Special attention is given in this study to exhibition

1 Alternate European spellings are inserted the first time an artist’s name is mentioned. Thereafter, the Lithuanian spelling is preserved.

2 *Lietuvos aidas* (The Echo of Lithuania), *Dienos naujienos* (The Daily News), *Lietuvos žinios* (Lithuanian Tidings), *Bangos* (Waves), *Naujoji Romuva* (The New Romuva), *7 meno dienos*

catalogs, which contain both information on the exhibitions and reproductions of the works displayed.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Lithuania was still a Russian province. The 1917 revolution in Russia created an incentive for restoring Lithuanian statehood. Between 1919 and 1920, Soviet Russian and Polish forces alternately occupied Vilnius (Vilna), the capital of Lithuania that Jews called Lithuania's Jerusalem. For seventeen years, from 1922 onwards, Poland ruled Vilnius and the Vilnius territory. Although the political and economic situation of that time was confused and unstable, Kaunas, the temporary capital, was noted for the growth in its cultural and educational activities. Synagogues, kindergartens, religious and secular schools teaching in Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as theatres and choirs, all began to function.

The abundance of museums and galleries reveals the intensity of cultural life, the course of their activities and the quality of the exhibitions also indicating a tendency towards the modernization of social life and public tastes. In the early twentieth century, Lithuanian art criticism was still taking its first steps. Art-related publications appearing in the press primarily emphasized the social function of art and its moral mission. Most of the early Lithuanian art critics perceived works of art as reflections of reality, being dominated by the concepts of empirical realism and naturalistic art. They were not prepared to apprehend modern artistic language or to accept the new thinking being promoted by certain artists.

Interwar Lithuanian art developed in two directions. Some artists, especially those who lacked the opportunity to complete their training abroad, continued to abide by realist traditions, although often with certain impressionist and post-impressionist features. Others, who did benefit from the opportunity of receiving additional training abroad, adopted the ideas of modernism. While the works of the latter range from Symbolism to abstraction through Cubism and Constructivism, the dominating influence seems to have been Expressionism.

The first exhibition to introduce the works of a Jewish painter took place in Kaunas in the winter of 1920 and presented paintings by the outstanding Vilnius artist Bentzion Zuckerman. Judging by the press release and biographic data, we may conclude that Kaunas at that time could not boast of any local mature Jewish artists. Moreover, information regarding Jewish artists living and creating in Lithuania was very sparse. Adomas Jakštas wrote: "We have no certainty as to the fact that Mister Zuckerman is the only Jewish painter in Lithuania. In case there are more of them, it's a pity that *The Section of Jewish Culture* did not arrange for a joint Jewish artists' exhibition to enable a better comprehension of the message and the technical issues of their creation."<sup>3</sup> At the time the exhibition took place, most contemporary aspiring painters—such as

(Seven Days of Art), *Varpas* (The Bell), *Židinys* (The Hearth), *Litovskis kuryer* (The Lithuanian Messenger), *Dzień Kowieński* (The Day of Kaunas), etc.

3 A. Jakštas, "Knyga ir menas: B.Cukermano paveikslų paroda," *Laisvė*, 2 December, 1920, p. 4.

Arbit Blatt and Lipshitz—lived as exiles in Russia and Ukraine, while others, such as Band and Kulwiansky, had just begun their studies in Western Europe.

The first half of the 1920s saw very few painting exhibitions. Initially, only one exhibition was arranged annually in Kaunas. However, from 1923 onwards, with artistic life becoming more lively, the number of exhibitions increased to several a year.

Jacob Mesenblium (Jacques Missene) was the first of the Jewish artists to enter Kaunas artistic circles. Together with other well-known Lithuanian painters he participated in the annual exhibitions of 1921 and 1923. The exhibition of 1923 received a lot of attention both from the press and from the public. Lithuanian President Aleksandras Stulginskis, cabinet ministers, university professors, foreign guests, artists, and renowned cultural figures participated in its opening ceremony. Mesenblium presented three works: *The Jew*, *The Gate*, and *The Yard*. Although all three paintings received positive responses from the critics, *The Jew* was acknowledged to be the most successful work.<sup>4</sup>

During the first half of the 1920s, only three personal shows were arranged in Kaunas, the exhibiting artists all being Jewish. Mesenblium showed his paintings in 1923 and 1924, while Sarah Gorshein exhibited her sculptures in 1923. Sadly, as the press informs us, both shows “hardly aroused interest” and “failed to attract a public.”<sup>5</sup> Only Vytautas Bichiunas wrote a relatively comprehensive study on Mesenblium’s first show, noting that his works “deserve a certain mention.”<sup>6</sup> Although Bichiunas praised the content of Mesenblium’s works, he criticised his painting technique:

Some of his paintings are distinguished by a sweeping decorative stroke on the thickest and roughest canvas imaginable and therefore seem to be deprived of their actual value. Other pictures (sketches excluded) are painted on pasteboard to which the painter has obviously forgotten to give an adequate coating. I would like to remind J. Mesenblium that in speaking of painting, technical performance is often more important than the message that a painting contains.<sup>7</sup>

Before moving to Paris in 1924, Mesenblium arranged his second and last exhibition in Kaunas, which also failed to receive positive reviews. Save for a few positive articles, his creations were severely criticised. Paulius Galaune wrote:

It’s hardly possible to define, judging from his picture show, what kind of artist Mr. Mesenblium is. His works presented at the exhibition are so different from the point of view of the technique applied that it is difficult to decide whether

4 A. Jakštas, “Šiometinė gegužio Meno Paroda Kaune,” *Laisvė*, No. 124, 7 June, 1923, p. 2.

5 Spector, “Mesenbliumo Paveikslų Paroda,” *Gairės*, No. 4, 1923, p. 242.

6 Spector, “Mesenbliumo Paveikslų Paroda,” 242.

7 Spector, “Mesenbliumo Paveikslų Paroda,” 242.

he has a strong artistic individuality or is at most an imitator thus attempting to disguise his true image. As both Lithuanians and Jews are heavy-minded as regards the understanding of art, perhaps we could get them interested by suggesting a modern attitude. As to this last item, Mesenblium has done quite a lot. [...] We see him as a purposeless innovator. That's because we think of him as of someone who doesn't have modernism for his creative motto, but follows his principles seeking to overtake those who have reached the top of their profession; taking a superficial look, it's rather easy to take a leaf out of their book.<sup>8</sup>

From 1924 until his death in 1933, Mesenblium exclusively exhibited his works abroad. Already seriously ill in 1932, Mesenblium returned to Kaunas, where he died the following summer. Having failed to receive attention from critics or from the press during his lifetime, the painter became very popular in Lithuania after his death. His creations were exhibited at Lithuanian art shows in Riga and Tallinn. Two exhibitions presenting his works were arranged to commemorate the artist—a small show at the Jewish Real Gymnasium in March and one at the Independent Salon that spanned the different periods of his work from 1918 to 1932. Large crowds attended the latter exhibition sketching the painter's biographical data and works, and it received a good press. The exhibition included about 160 works: 120 paintings (mostly portraits and still-lives) and 40 drawings of decorations from Jewish cemeteries. Most of Mesenblium's paintings and lino cuts remained abroad.

In the second half of the 1920s, both artistic and cultural life in Kaunas began to flourish. Seven to fourteen exhibitions were organised annually. Gradually, alongside the emergence of recognised Lithuanian artists who had begun their career before the First World War, a new generation of Jewish artists arose: Arbit Blatt, Band, Sholom Zelmanovich, Akim Josim, Max Ginsburg, Lipshitz and others. Both Lithuanian and Jewish artists actively participated in exhibitions and organized individual painting shows.

In October 1925, the first exhibition of works by Max Band, a Paris-domiciled artist, opened at the Folk Theatre Palace. It included 15 paintings and 15 reproductions of his original pieces. Despite the fact that his works had already won recognition abroad, Band was virtually unknown to the Lithuanian public. His show consequently failed to arouse a wide response. Moreover, the Lithuanian art critics' attitude was emphatically disapproving. They accused Band of imitating different artistic trends and famous foreign artists. Disappointed by Band's creations, E. Gelmantas wrote:

Regarding the painting technique—it's neither Naturalism nor Futurism; though similar, these are different things. A rough colour scheme, distorted human

8 P. Galaunė, "Plastikos menas," *Baras*, No. 1, 1925, p. 88.

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FIG. 1: Max Band, *Portrait of a Girl*

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FIG. 2: Neemiya Arbit-Blatt, *A Man with Beard*

[120\*]

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FIG. 3: Cherne Percikovichiute, *Two Girls Prepare the Wall Newspaper*

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FIG. 4: Zale Beker, *Horse and Cart at the Market Square*

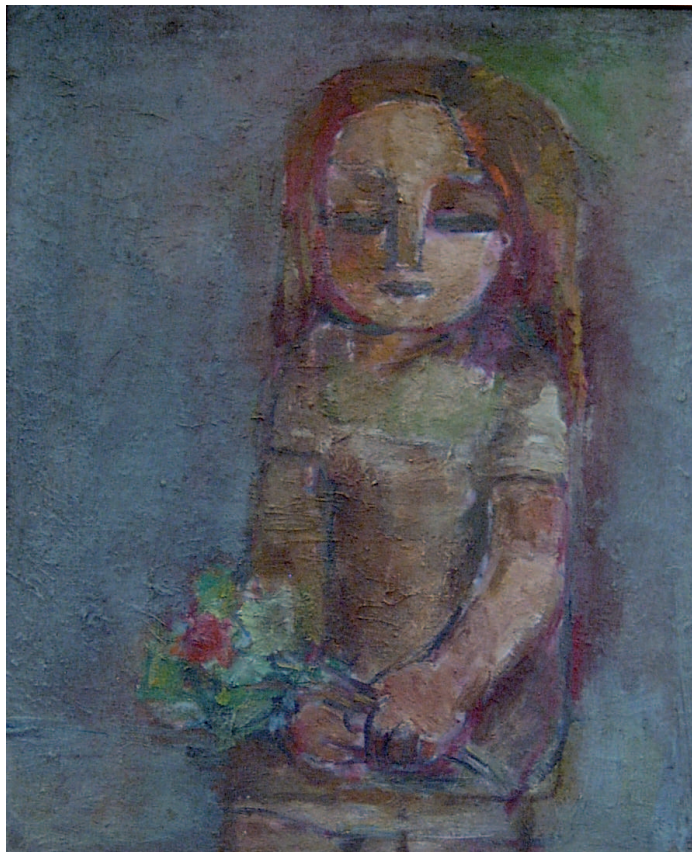


FIG. 5: Issai Kulvianski, *A Girl*

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figures and faces, disproportion in the depicted objects—all this denotes recent [art] for M. Band. [...] Landscapes—not bad, but figures utterly impossible.<sup>9</sup>

Band had two one-man shows in Kaunas, one in 1925 and the other in 1932. Most of his exhibitions were held in Berlin, Paris, and New York. In contrast to its predecessor, Band's 1932 show in Kaunas (FIG. 1) received a very flattering response from the public, the press, and art critics. Famous politicians and art and cultural figures participated in the exhibition's opening, well-known Jewish public figures also being among the guests. Lithuanian, Russian, and Polish newspapers and magazines published full-scale features on his works and background, as well as advertisements to the exhibition. Critics praised his works as "marked by supreme artistic quality and profoundness,"<sup>10</sup> "irreproachable."<sup>11</sup> A *Lithuanian News* reporter wrote:

Speaking of M. Band, we observe the perfect unity of external form and internal content while in most works of the artist one prevails over the other. However, artistic perfection is obtained when both elements form a synthesis. M. Band displays a full mastery of technique, which suggests imposing opportunities regarding form; nevertheless, he does not strive for spectacular effect, but concentrates on the inward, deeper content of his works. That's what is most important, and he's really good at that.<sup>12</sup>

The only somewhat critical response was by H. Kairiukštytė-Jacynienė who accused the artist of self-advertisement. She wrote:

Judging by the press, we could expect more "from a famous Parisian artist" as he found it necessary to inform Kaunas society. On the other hand, he certainly displays a certain artistic level. [...] In the artist's creations we do not observe a diversity of artistic goals: he refrains from large formats or large scale compositions, mostly doing joint portraits and unsophisticated fragments of nature.<sup>13</sup>

Though Band rarely visited Lithuania, he did not alienate himself from its cultural life and had many friends in artistic circles.

Neemiya Arbit Blatt was the most distinguished and productive Jewish artist of the late thirties in Lithuania. His early works and those of his contemporaries were

9 E. Gelmantas, "Trys tapybos meno parodos," *Lietuvis*, Nos. 51–52, 1925, pp. 15–16.

10 Edm. Dantas, "Atidaryta dail. M. Bando paveikslų paroda," *Dienos naujienos*, No. 196, Aug. 29, 1932, p. 3.

11 "M. Bando paveikslų paroda," *Lietuvos žinios*, No. 198, 31 August, 1932, p. 5.

12 Steb., "Meno pakilimas Kaune. M. Bando darbų paroda," *Lietuvos žinios*, No. 205, 9 September, 1932, p. 4.

13 H. Kairiukštytė-Jacynienė, "Dail. M. Bando paveikslų parodoj," *Lietuvos aidas*, No. 206, 7 September, 1932, p. 4.

showcased in the survey exhibitions of the Kaunas Art School. In 1926, at the age of eighteen, Arbit Blatt participated for the first time in the Lithuanian Artists' Spring Show with two works—*Still Life* and *A Type of a Philosopher*.

The year 1927 was memorable for Kaunas artistic life in general and for Arbit Blatt in particular. During this year, art critics and the public displayed an increasing interest in the up-and-coming young artists. The Spring Show that took place in May included *The Old Jew* by Arbit Blatt, which received a good press. In reviewing the 1927 painting exhibitions, Justinas Vienožinskis included a mention of Arbit Blatt's picture: "As we can see from *The Old Jew* by Arbit Blatt, this young artist has chosen the right way into the world of art. Young, virile and full of life, he doesn't shy away from nature or try to please anyone."<sup>14</sup>

In October 1927, Arbit Blatt arranged a one-man show in which he presented 39 works. Apart from portraits (FIG. 2) and figural compositions, there were still-lives and landscapes, charcoal sketches, and free compositions that were a play in paint. The show was much discussed in the press. Virtually all the major cultural newspapers and magazines published positive or negative responses with regard to the exhibition. Critics approved of the artist's sincere attitude, stressing as a positive feature the fact that he didn't run after "banal landscapes" but started from "man's psychological beauties."<sup>15</sup> However, his non-academic drawing, colour schemes, and free manner also aroused severe criticism. Ignas Šlapelis wrote:

Arbit Blatt is obviously up to date. This is not with regard to his thematic variety, but mostly due to his manner, which expresses a good deal of human active will. Hence that rejuvenating and buoyant effect. Unfortunately, he overdoes that broad thick line of paint, which in his case often ends in a fetish, put on a pedestal, ignoring all and everything [else]. This formalism just for the sake of formalism is a symptom of spiritual fatigue, characteristic of ruined and spent epigones: the only thing that is left for him is to rejoice in his glamorous though bygone past, because he sees nothing of worth in the future.<sup>16</sup>

In April 1930, Arbit Blatt arranged another successful one-man show. Although accused of "all kinds of experiments" and "inconsequence,"<sup>17</sup> he was recognised as a talented artist of "outspoken nationality and individuality."<sup>18</sup>

In 1933, Arbit Blatt's last pre-war survey was held at the Art Gallery, established by Arbit Blatt. Kaunas Mayor A. Graurogas and artists and journalists attended its

14 J. Vienožinskis, "Lietuvių meno parodos 1927 m.," *Pradai ir žygiai*, No. 2, 1927, p. 187.

15 Spec. Reporteris, "Pas Šimkūną ir Arbitblatą svačiuose," *Lietuvos žinios*, No. 231, October 13, 1927, p. 4.

16 Ign. Šlapelis, "Menas, kritika, parodos," *Pradai ir žygiai*, Nos. 3–4, 1927, p. 277.

17 Joh. Weisbarth, "Dar dvi parodos," *Vairas*, No. 5, 1930, p. 185.

18 Pr., "Dvi paveikslų parodos," *Lietuvos žinios*, No. 90, 22 April, 1930, p. 4.

opening, on which day around a hundred people visited the exhibition. It aroused a great deal of discussion and much debate, receiving a positive response from the critics. The show included 57 works of portraits, nudes, landscapes, still-lives, and compositions. As previously, art critics expressed their dissatisfaction with the formal side of Arbit Blatt's works, being critical of his disregard of composition and drawing techniques. Adolfas Valeshka wrote:

On the whole, N.A.'s works display hastiness and an inclination to sketch-like compositions, which altogether indicate the artist's creative temperament. Though his compositions seem to be attempting to communicate something, he fails to highlight the main idea. Undoubtedly N. A. possesses talent, diligence and a good deal of creative potential. However, he still lacks a more open attitude to the surrounding environment, while speaking of creation—displaying his beliefs and individuality.<sup>19</sup>

True, only the newest works were attacked; those pertaining to his early period, which had previously been criticized in the press, were now referred to as “manifesting superior artistic taste, balanced coloring and profound thought.”<sup>20</sup> According to Bichiunas, the new paintings of Arbit Blatt “display a youthful spirit and temperament, though less attention is being paid to the object itself. Some of the pictures are noted for a pretended neglect or accidental effects (scratched off dry paint, etc.), which are hardly compatible with the art of painting.”<sup>21</sup> It is virtually impossible to review all the shows arranged by this young and energetic painter during the interwar period in Lithuania.

During the 1930s the situation changed considerably. Most of the aforementioned artists left Lithuania. Arbit Blatt and Band settled in Paris; Mesenblium died. A new generation of Jewish artists made their appearance on the scene, including D. Lautenshlager, Leiser Kagan, Zale Beker, and Cherne Pertzikovich. About thirty Jewish artists contributed to the exhibitions held during this period, among them Meyer Aizin, Chaim Meyer Feinstein, Chaim Shtreikhman, Elias Kaplan, K. Gdaliya, Jacques Koslowsky, Hirsh Markus, Mina Karn, L. Kenskyte-Shaltuperiene, and Tsile Epshtein.

One of the most promising painters of the 1930s, Cherne Pertzikovich, introduced herself to the public in 1931 while still a student at the J. Vienozhinski Painting Studio. In 1931 and 1932 she took part in the students' painting exhibitions, which received a positive response from the critics. Most of the students, including Pertzikovich, were recognised as very promising painters.

19 A. Valeška, “N. Arbitblatas. Meno galerija”, *Naujoji Romuva*, No. 119, 9 April, 1933, p. 346.

20 V.B., “N. Arbitblato paveikslų paroda,” *Židinys*, No. 3, 1933, p. 271.

21 V.B., “N. Arbitblato paveikslų paroda,” 271.

Pertzikovich's debut show was held in 1934 (FIG. 3). Her first and only solo show had an ambivalent affect on the critics.

On the one hand her oddly stylised pictures aroused a favourable reaction, on the other—such accentuation of artistic expressive subjectivity exacerbates the perception of her creations. [...] Therefore, it will be interesting to follow the further development of her artistic individuality and make certain that she is capable of breaking off her subjective and individual tendencies and making her way to the higher, truly artistic forms of self-expression.<sup>22</sup>

Following her first one-man show, Pertzikovich became part of Lithuania's exhibition life. Critics invariably included her works in their reviews of the exhibitions. It is very unfortunate that the Second World War brought this promising painter's career to an end.

Zale Beker's first one-man show was held in 1933 and stood out from the whole spectrum of exhibitions. It included 45 paintings and drawings (FIG. 4). Most of his works were specifically Jewish, noted for their symbolic content—which was not always correctly interpreted by the Lithuanian art critics of that time. Bichiunas wrote of *The Crucified Jew*:

It is certainly difficult for an impartial onlooker to take in the tendency displayed in the paintings of Z. Beker. In the case of "The Crucified Jew" he uses the Lithuanian landscape, which is at least surprising. No Jew, so far, had been crucified in Lithuania. As well, the "proletarian" paintings of Z. Beker are as uncongenial to us as "The Crucified Jew."<sup>23</sup>

In truth, this Jew on the cross represented a protest against anti-Semitism in its widest implications. Moreover, it was not only the content that aroused the critics' discontent but also Beker's painting technique. His one-man show in 1935 included twenty new landscapes and genre paintings. One critic wrote of these: "In his landscapes Z. Beker seems to be sticking to a foreign contrasting paint 'flinging' technique. Each of Z. Beker's landscapes represents a study of the identical color range in the portrayal of the natural environment of different towns and suburbs."<sup>24</sup>

Kaunas' exhibition life between the years 1932 and 1933 was rich in events and new shows. Apart from those already mentioned, the cultural press of that time recognized Akim Josim, who first presented his works at the 1923 exhibition. J. Veisbartas wrote: "Akim Josim obviously stands apart from the other young artists. His stylized Jewish types in given surroundings are noted for a certain oriental touch. He is quite good

22 J. Vaisbartas, "Aikštinga tapyba ir skulptūriška impresija," *Vairas*, No. 5, 1934, p. 74.

23 V. B., *Židinys*, No. 4, 1933, p. 385.

24 Z.L. Str., "Bekerio paveikslų paroda," *Židinys*, Nos. 8–9, 1935, p. 205.

at painting Lithuanian landscapes with a kind of formal, but in no way formalist, ability.”<sup>25</sup>

In 1932, the first show of Isaiah Kulwiansky, a famous artist and colleague of Marc Chagall and Chaim Soutine as well as a member of the German *Novembergruppe*, was held in Lithuania (FIG. 5). Despite the fact that Kulwiansky was less well known to the Lithuanian public, his works received both negative and flattering responses in the press. Arbit Blatt presented a very positive estimation of Kulwiansky’s paintings:

In fact, our society, already attuned to a somewhat sweetish stock impressionism, may find his creation heavy. However, the time has come to define what the so-called solution of creative issues is. In the works of I. Kulwiansky there are all kind of things referred to as painting. His color scheme is intense and modest. He is primitive and antiquated, subject to simplicity of form.<sup>26</sup>

A. B. took a completely opposite attitude:

From the point of view of painting technique, the works of I. Kulwiansky lack finish. Speaking of the artistic aspect—they are untidy. One gets an impression that their author, in his attempt at originality, manifests his disability rather than his ability, he obviously fails to stick to some solid painterly form.<sup>27</sup>

In reviewing the exhibitions of the 1930s we should also mention the shows of the Jewish graphic artists Chaim Meyer Feinstein and Max Ginsburg. Feinstein launched himself into exhibition life in 1933. The M. K. Chiurlionis Art Gallery acquired as many as three of his works shown in that year’s exhibition: *Prayer*, *An Old Woman*, and *The Alley*. 1937 was a memorable year in Feinstein’s creative life. The Mokslas (Science) bookshop published a run of fifty copies of his iconic cycle *The Twelve of the University*, which had taken Feinstein three years to accomplish.

A certain amount of public attention was also paid to the graphic artist and caricaturist Max Ginsburg. Ginsburg participated in the Lithuanian and Latvian Jewish Artists exhibitions of 1929, 1930, and 1932, where his works were well received by the public. In fact, one of his works, *To Brazil and Back*, was stolen from the 1932 exhibition. In 1933, the first extensive and popular show of Ginsburg’s caricatures and cartoons was held, creating a lot of discussion among different social and political groups. Indeed, one of the caricatures—*Fascism*—was damaged and later returned with a note threatening the artist. Due to its politicised aspect, the exhibition was temporarily closed and the works that aroused the most dissatisfaction—*Fascism* and *Fighting the Dragon*—were removed. The exhibition received an ambivalent response from

25 J. Veisbartas, “Pretenziška tapyba ir nuoširdus meno supratimas,” *Vairas*, No. 12, 1932, p. 350.

26 N. A., “Dailin. Kulvianskio paroda,” *Naujoji Romuva*, No. 25, 19 June, 1932, p. 595.

27 A. B., “Kulvianskio paroda,” *Židinys*, No. 7, 1933, p. 58.

critics. While Bichiunas, the *Lietuvos Aidas* reviewer, praised Ginsburg's cartoons, he expressed quite a different opinion regarding his caricatures:

Regretfully, we get quite a different impression when looking at M. Ginsburg's graphic works and caricatures. With few exceptions, these may be defined as "komsomol" activism, reminiscent of the German Communist Grosz's "anti-bourgeois" drawings, at times more fitted to the Moscow "Bezbozhnik" illustrations than for presentation to a Kaunas public. To my mind, M. Ginsburg, who is obviously over-indulging in that leftist attitude rather than in true artistry, is making a major mistake, which may not be so easy to remedy.<sup>28</sup>

Bichiunas' article divided art critics into two camps. The first complimented the caricaturist on his courage and straightforward attitude towards social, economic, and political issues, while the other reprimanded him "for anti-social, anti-sacral and expressly bolshevist drawings."<sup>29</sup>

Summing up the Jewish artists' exhibitions held during the interwar period, we may conclude that artistic and exhibition life in Kaunas was quite intense. Jewish artists held one-man shows as well as joint ones with their Lithuanian colleagues. Provision was made for the many strata of Lithuanian society to gain an impression of the diverse visions of Lithuanian Jewish artists in the context of the Lithuanian artistic scene, and to become acquainted with the works of internationally-recognised Jewish artists.

The Lithuanian press provided full and particular information pertaining to current exhibitions, something not true of professional art critics, whose common practice was to review exhibitions only superficially, merely giving a general impression in addition to the artist's name and the titles of his/her works and a mention of the work's prevailing tendencies. In many cases, especially in the 1920s, art critics were reluctant to accept modern forms of plastic expression and the manifestation of modern artistic trends in the work of both Jewish and Lithuanian artists. We may thus conclude that in the 1920s some of the art critics and the public were not ready to accept modern art forms and ideas. Exhibitions distinguished for their high professional and artistic standards, as well for as the artists' refusal to please acknowledged tastes, hewed a path towards a better understanding of innovatory ideas in the 1930s, not only with regard to the Lithuanian public but also among the critics. Thus the trail for the emergence of modernist art was blazed in Lithuania, with expressionism particularly gaining ground in the 1930s.

28 Spector, "M. Ginsburgo paroda", *Lietuvos aidas*, No. 60, 15 March, 1933, p. 3.

29 Str. L., "Ginsburgo karikatūros", *Židinys*, No. 3, 1933, p. 270.

### Illustrations

1. Max Band, *Portrait of a Girl*, 1930, oil on canvas, 38.1 x 46.7 cm, The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania.
2. Neemiya Arbit Blatt, *A Man with a Beard*, 1927, oil on canvas, 78 x 100 cm, The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania.
3. Cherne Pertzikovich, *Two Girls Prepare the Wall Newspaper*, oil on canvas, 94 x 100 cm, The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania.
4. Zale Beker, *Horse and Cart at the Market Square*, oil on pasteboard, 96.8 x 71 cm, The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania.
5. Isaiah Kulwiansky, *A Girl*, 1930, oil on canvas, 44.5 x 54.1 cm, The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania.

