

# THE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT WITH

# PHOTOGRAPHY

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MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER

WHY HELMUT GERNSHEIM'S JEWISHNESS MATTERS

MICHAEL BERKOWITZ

HELMUT GERNSHEIM: PIONEER COLLECTOR AND HISTORIAN OF PHOTOGRAPHY

CLAUDE W. SUI

STILL HERE (2012)

LYDIA GOLDBLATT

JEWISH PHOTOGRAPHERS' IDENTITIES: FROM THE SOCIAL TO THE POLITICAL

MILKY HEYD

YVA: SUCCESSFUL BETWEEN SURREALISM AND KUEHN

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WHERE ARE YOU FROM? (2011-2013)

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SPARKS IN THE LENS: BENJAMIN AND PHOTOGRAPHY

ERIC LEVI JACOBSON

IMAGE MIGRATIONS: LEE FRIEDLANDER AND R.B. KITAJ

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ORTHODOX EROS (2002)

LEA GOLDA HOLTERMAN

OLDENBURGISCHE BEITRÄGE ZU JÜDISCHEN STUDIEN 22

MICHAEL BERKOWITZ AND MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER (EDS.)



OLDENBURGISCHE BEITRÄGE ZU JÜDISCHEN STUDIEN  
VOLUME 22

in a publication series by the study course *Jüdische Studien*  
and the *Fakultät IV* of the *Carl von Ossietzky Universität*

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with the

*Vorstand des Studiengangs Jüdische Studien*  
and the dean of the *Fakultät IV*

With the research program »Jüdische Studien« (Jewish Studies) of the *Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg*, a new area of research enters the public sphere, annually publishing its research in the monograph series *Oldenburgische Beiträge zu Jüdischen Studien*. The series aims at raising awareness of the Jewish contribution made to German and other European cultures. Therefore, study and research are interdisciplinary. Presented are different thematic complexes, focusing on Jewish history, politics and society, from antiquity to the present. Another emphasis lies on biblical and post-biblical religion. Additionally, topics such as Jewish art, literature, music, education, and science are covered.

These differentiated research areas also address regional aspects, insofar as how they intersect with society's relation to old-Israelite or Jewish religion, where they deal with anti-Semitism, or give general information about Jewish individuals in the Northwestern region of Germany; and they are expected to include the *Shoah* during *National Socialism*. A great deal of information remains untouched in archives' files or undiscovered in private collections and personal memories. These documents are closely tied to people's personal fates. We consider it an important task to disclose these and the living conditions of Jewish families and institutions for scholarly historiography, which is propelled forward within this monograph series.

**THE EDITORS**

## **32. BIELEFELDER FOTOSYMPOSIUM**

THE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT WITH PHOTOGRAPHY  
FORSCHUNGSSCHWERPUNKT (FSP) FOTOGRAFIE UND MEDIEN /  
FACHHOCHSCHULE BIELEFELD / RESEARCH CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY AND  
MEDIA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES BIELEFELD  
DEPARTMENT OF HEBREW AND JEWISH STUDIES / UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON (UCL)  
THE BOOK IS BASED ON TALKS HELD AT THE FELIX-NUSSBAUM-HAUS OSNABRÜCK  
ON THE 29./30. NOVEMBER 2012

### **TRANSLATIONS FROM GERMAN**

CHRISTO WILKINS

### **DESIGN**

CHRISTO WILKINS / TIM WIMMER

### **IN COOPERATION WITH**

FACHBEREICH GESTALTUNG / FACHHOCHSCHULE BIELEFELD  
FELIX-NUSSBAUM-HAUS OSNABRÜCK  
JÜDISCHE STUDIEN / CARL VON OSSIETZKY UNIVERSITÄT OLDENBURG  
FÖRDERGESELLSCHAFT DER FACHHOCHSCHULE BIELEFELD

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MICHAEL BERKOWITZ / MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER (EDS.)  
**THE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT WITH PHOTOGRAPHY**



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**OLDENBURG, 2017**

**PRINTING, BINDING, PUBLISHING**

BIS-VERLAG DER CARL VON OSSIETZKY UNIVERSITÄT OLDENBURG  
POSTFACH 2541  
26015 OLDENBURG

**BISVERLAG@UNI-OLDENBURG.DE**  
**WWW.BIS-VERLAG.DE**

**ISBN: 978-3-8142-2349-0**





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The engagement of Jews in photography, leaving an unmistakable imprint of women and men of Jewish origins on photography's history, is clearly perceivable in countless theoretical reflexions and photographic positions. Nonetheless, even in light of these facts, research regarding specific roles of Jews and patterns of ethnic differentiation, their reach within photography has up until recently rarely been taken into account. This book is based on contributions made at a conference dedicated to this very aspect of photographic history held between the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 at the *Felix-Nussbaum-Haus* in the city of Osnabrück. Its realization is the result of a cooperative effort between the *Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies* of *University College London* and the *Research Centre for Photography and Media* at the *University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld*.

The manifold of meanings, stemming from Jewish historical situations, and deriving (however indirectly) from Judaism per se, are noteworthy in the thought about, and practice of photography. To the present day these are vital in diverse realms of visual culture. We appreciate having had the opportunity to contemplate the social, cultural, and religious factors that could have been the impetus for, and helped to shape Jews' interventions in photography. Our work here is not only in the interest of history and Jewish Studies, but seeks to raise questions and offer preliminary insights for better comprehending contemporary directions within photography.

The visual, theological, psychological, philosophical, and expressly historical approaches in this volume have a common goal: to expand the discourse concerning this artistic, even everyday-used medium, so that new trajectories of interpretation and aesthetic understanding of photography might be developed. Examples of current artistic approaches, which reflect on Jews and photography (however contested), have been added to compliment the academic contributions.

The editors wish to express their thanks to all of the participants in the Osnabrück symposium and to CHRISTO WILKINS for his assistance in the preparation of this publication.

**MICHAEL BERKOWITZ AND MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER**

LONDON | BIELEFELD, JUNE 2016

MICHAEL DAXNER

PREFACE

Two years ago, when I accepted ROMAN DEPPNER's request to write an introduction for this edition, I was not aware how deeply involved I would be with diaspora, academically and politically, during 2016. Not the Jewish, but without the Galut the theory and phenomenology of diaspora would have surely not progressed as far as it has. My work follows the Afghan *Diaspora* in Germany in light of the Refugee Dilemma and the immigration from their war-torn country.

KITAJ's *Diasporism* and its vehemently traceable consolidation, has already entered the critical discourse and cultural political scene. Here I can offer a parallel term from political sociology, ambiguity.\* For in reality, oftentimes with and without any ideological framework, there exists more than a singular truth. The decision of art to pursue such ambiguity could be trivialised—so? It could also summarise experiences, which begin to allow these ambiguous intuitions, and with it, however difficult, make them accessible.

What ITALO CALVINO undertakes in the *Invisible Cities* (orig. 1972), is an entry point into *Diasporism*. He neither presents a timeline that runs linear nor cyclical, but merges every layer, every minute detail in the structure and view of the cities into a sign, a memory, and a wish. The Jewish reflexion with their own diagnoses of the present, from which art arises, becomes fruitful with comparable methods.

Nothing is what it seems, without the referent of the exile and the hope of returning home. This last aspect must not be confused with the confidence of return, or our search for a divine plan that ends in vain. That there is no return creates a secular distance between the religious revocations of history. In exile, the home of the past becomes part of the future, and the possibility for it to progress so far, is simultaneously a tale of woe and a cause for hope.

Whether photography waited, for the Jewish perception to emerge? For what the image cannot, the photograph accomplishes: creating a non-synchronistic simultaneity, one that we can understand and interpret further upon. How we process these ambiguous truths of reality, exposing and shadowing, is part of that experience, with which the Exile compels us. *Bodenheimers Teilnehmen und nicht dazugehören* (1985) (Participate and not belong to it) might give expression to this. If we do not participate, we cannot see what the world makes of us. If we belong to it, then there no longer exists a reason for hope.

*Diaspora* is a form of higher social order,  
one of perpetual preliminaryity.

\* KÜHN, FLORIAN: »We are all in this together... Deutschland in der Ambiguität der Afghanistan intervention in: MICHAEL DAXNER (ed.): *Deutschland in Afghanistan*, Oldenburg 2014, BIS, pp. 193–211.



THE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT WITH PHOTOGRAPHY  
MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER



ERICH SALOMON:  
Aristide Briand montre du doigt  
Erich Salomon et s'écrite:  
Ah! Le voilà! Le roi des indiscrettes  
Paris, 1931



In 1992, the Berliner and documentary filmmaker ANTONIA LERCH visited three photographers in North and South America. She was in search of lost feminine points of view in photography, discovering it in the form of exiled Jewish women who had left Germany after 1933: ILSE BING, GRETE STERN, and ELLEN AUERBACH.<sup>1</sup>

Each of them were already successful in Germany and after emigration not only asserted themselves but also developed photographically. Exile set the stage for verifying a complex *Diasporatic* way of perception developed in Jewish culture. A multilaned, intercultural experience, became a modern and stimulating mindset in the medium of photography. ILSE BING, after a post doctorate in art history and a turn towards architectural photography, emigrated from

Frankfurt via Paris to New York. She summed up this process with the words: »We came as refugees to the United States and had to rebuild our lives. Naturally I, living in New York, had new influences and other experiences. Especially the atmosphere, the light transformed my seeing, without destroying my German-French way of perceiving. And when they asked, I replied: I'm an international cocktail.«<sup>2</sup>

In 1997, KLAUS HONNEF and FRANK WEYERS curated the exhibition at the *Rheinischen Landesmuseum Bonn* called: *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen... müssen*. [And they left Germany... unwillingly] The presentation of over 170 photographers made it abundantly clear what loss Germany had suffered. Leading figures in photojournalism such as ALFRED EISENSTAEDT and FRITZ COHN, fashion photographers like HELMUT NEWTON, WILLY MAYWALD and ERWIN BLUMENFELD as well as artistically motivated positions, for instance, those of LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY, BETTINA OPPENHEIMER and RAOUL HAUSMANN are among them.<sup>3</sup>

In 1998, the independent film *High Art*, directed by the Canadian-American LISA CHOLODENKO frames the fictitious life of a renowned Jewish female photographer named LUCY BERLINER played by ALY SHEEDY. At the height of her success, Lucy retreats into the underground scene to escape the art market. The film's bleak colors and lighting are reminiscent of the photographer NAN GOLDIN who garnered fame in the 90s. Furthermore, the film alludes to the personal life and circumstances of DIANE ARBUS, an American photographic legend of the 50s and 60s. Fictitious and vicarious accounts of women are combined, who as Jews and likewise photographers take on an important role in

the history of photography. The film moreover reveals a journey of a lesbian love, with a seemingly forlorn entanglement with another relationship connected with drug abuse, ultimately leading to tragedy.

LUCY BERLINER's mother is a Manhattanite Holocaust survivor, and the daughter's drug addiction is shown as related to unresolved tensions with her mother. On the basis of the aforementioned varying examples and enactments, we may ask: what significant contribution do photographers connected to Jewish traditions and coming from diverse backgrounds have in regard to the augmentation and development of the photographic medium? Wherein lies the motivation for this engagement—that cannot be pinned down stylistically—or its multi-articulated motivations? Does this engagement stem from

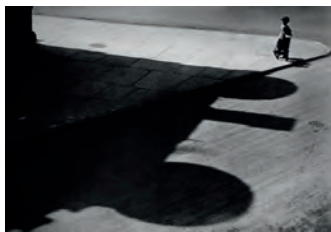
Jewish traditions, complicated paths that converge towards the modern? In the *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur* [Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture], HANNO LOEWY writes: »Photography... brought forth a new, visual age in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many photographers where of Jewish heritage, taking pioneering roles in the visual culture of image making. The obvious Jewish affinity to photography,« LOEWY theorizes, could be understood as an expression of historical experiences and a result of an attuned social awareness. Migration and the resulting marginalized status are mentioned as the horizons that cultivated these *Diasporatic* ways of perceiving.<sup>4</sup>

Acquisition and also the interpretation of photographs by Jews are often a reaction to the economic situations resulting from their immigration into the United States, where this new medium generated new fields in which to operate. The act of being a photographer or an employee in a photo studio, in press and journalism, and also the development of the now historic photographic technologies and their Jewish inventors, (*Kodak*, *EASTMAN*) is a part of this creation. Distributing, relaying and collecting of photography as new forms of perceiving.<sup>5</sup> Especially iconic imagery from the 1930s and 40s are connected in very particular ways to *Jewish Photography*. The images of ERICH SALOMON, through their indiscreet views, became the embodiment of modern photo journalism, like the shots of the freed inmates of the *Buchenwald Concentration Camp* by MARGRET BOURKE-WHITE, ROBERT CAPA's falling soldier in the



LÁSZLÓ MAHOLY-NAGY:  
From the radio  
tower, Berlin, 1928

PAUL STRAND:  
People, Streets of New York,  
83rd and West End Avenue  
New York, 1916



Spanish civil war and YEVGENY KHALDEI's photo showing the raising of the Soviet flag over the *Reichstag* in Berlin. JOE ROSENTHAL's much-contested photo, that depicts soldiers hoisting the American flag on Iwo Jima also belongs among the most iconic photographs early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with ALFRED EISENSTAEDT's legendary kiss in time square, shot on victory day in the Pacific conflict of 1945. ROMAN VISHNIACS photo documentation focusing on remnants of Jewish life in Eastern Europe needs mention. A transition was started with the displacement of Jewish photographers from Europe to America, which resulted in the exodus of the most important photographic positions. Representative of this are the works of influential photographers from Hungary such as: BRASSAI, ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ, MARTIN MUNKÁCSI and LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY.

Perhaps the vision of Jewish immigrants of America was exemplary for other photographers in sharpening their own views regarding issues of social marginalization, and was beneficial in forming a multilaned awareness that later became an accepted phenomenon of the *Modernist* and *Postmodernist* eras. This first hand experience of a social marginalization combined with an identification with a cultural *Diaspora* was clearly crucial for what was conveyed by the camera, a hybrid perspective that turned into a different photographic perspective, one that attempts to escape the medium constrained viewing axis. PAUL STRAND combined his earlier social documentarian style with artistic *pictorialism*, ALFRED STIEGLITZ expressed the right to interpret the world in an artistic yet unconventional way through the medium of photography. It could be said that by using the medium to display the naked truth consequently advances and promotes the medium as interpretative commentary, and at the same time glimmers of Jewish commentary culture appear (*exegesis*), originating from the traditional religious concept/notion that the words inscribed in the Holy Scripture need to be interpreted and commented upon.<sup>6</sup>

In view of this, the photographers of *straight photography* are shown not simply as documenters. ROBERT FRANK for example, found his motifs in people on the edges of society that were discriminated against because of their origin, skin color or for being offbeat. His interpretation of unhindered perceiving (straight viewing) raises awareness with regards to marginalization, which does not portray with superficial gestures of dismay, but interprets

the seen for its social and cultural consequences. Even though FRANK focused on Americans, he led the social conversation way beyond national ideologies. DIANE ARBUS always questioned the conventional views of society, readily commenting within the means of image making. Focusing on misfits, social outcasts, and others on the edge, ARBUS devaluated their suffering and made them a subject of discussion in America. The *Diasporastic* view, a vision, that knows no point of return and scattered experiences contributes to the diverse character of the image as a decentered photographic reality, a hacked and fragmented aesthetic, as portrayed by LEE FRIEDLANDER.<sup>7</sup>

These and other photographic works represent without a doubt the presence of the moment that the medium of photography, the medium of capturing the moment, had been hard-wired with. Recognizing that they are enticed by the »magic of the fleeting« likewise elicits doubt, in the reference of the chosen places and captured events.

The experience of transition is that with

which the passing moment became the signum of the modern, one that signifies the accelerated time in a structured era. A similar experience of transition is present in Jewish culture, since their displacement to Babylon and the second destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (ca. 70 C.E.) Motifs of exile, return, and redemption likely also contributed, in that the history of photography is connected to Jewish culture on every level. Decentered photography should also be understood as the transformation of light, demonstrated by HELMAR LERSKI as a dissolution of a recognizable portrait to the point of ambiguous physiognomy. His practice, using recognizable and valid structures of photography, concentrating on the male likeness raises the question of how photography may relate to biblical questions such as our gullibility towards images and their critical analysis.<sup>8</sup>

MAN RAY for instance, used the light dominance in photography with photograms, to objectify light in abstract ways, it becoming a subject of its own, not the reality reflected by the camera. If you interpret the photo as writing with light, derived from the original Greek word »phōs–graphein« [light–writing/drawing], a comprehension as text becomes apparent, a transformation into words, turning it into a form of critical appraisal of the image, even a denial of the image. The conversion into words would



ROBERT FRANK:  
Funeral - St. Helena  
South Carolina, 1955

MAN RAY:  
Rayographie, 1924



thus be understood in accordance with Jewish written culture. Photography as a medium of reproducing reality, which constantly reveals a referent in the image, viewed from this perspective can be seen as a medium of verbal codes.<sup>9</sup> This inquiry, even doubt in the image, is not only raised in experimental photography, with its solarisation, multiple exposures or collages, but also in the popular theatrical-self-enactments of CINDY SHERMAN. In an infinite number of rolls and characters, SHERMAN demonstrates how the credence of an image can be deconstructed as images of illusions and castings. They appear as disparate fragments of an illusion, are a product of *Diaspora*.<sup>10</sup> SHERMAN was labelled »the iconoclastic Jewish photographer« due to her History Portraits.<sup>11</sup> VILEM FLUSSER understood the contribution that Jewish culture had for the modern era in constructing models: Models for social behaviour, philosophical, science, but also for daily interactions. He describes photography not as model of the world, but as a reflexion of it.<sup>12</sup> Disparate fragments in a constructed image, as SHERMAN created, do not simply approximate an image of *Diaspora* or a contrast to it. It is part of its world of signs and establishes *Diaspora* as an alternative model of awareness and vision.<sup>13</sup> Thus photography could be understood as a model of construction, whose images are built from reflecting signs. These do not necessarily copy or depict, but deviate and through the caused frictions and motions of thought, own meaning is generated. In regard to the question of the Jewish engagement with photography, following the quite recently rekindled interest with the question of the cultural importance of Judaism for the present in general. In written media there is already an abundance of studies into how impulses from Jewish tradition influenced the structure of scientific theories, for instance in research on literature. Even concerning artistic expressions investigations (mostly studies from the USA, Israel and England) have observed a connection to Jewish tradition.<sup>14</sup> A starting point in researching Jewish tradition and thought structures in regard to photography, with the multitude of positions and ideologies in photography, is the work of photo and media theorists such as WALTER BENJAMIN, SUSAN SONTAG, VILEM FLUSSER, SIEGFRIED KRACAUER; furthermore, the photographic collection, for instance the famous *Gernsheim-Collection* of the

photo pioneer and historian HELMUT GERNSHEIM, which reflects on questions posed here. In social-scientific and academic history, the inclusion of photography in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* by PETER POLLACK, published in 1971, could be considered as the first attempt to reprocess the Jewish engagement within photography.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, it has been the recent work of MICHAEL BERKOWITZ and HANNO LOEWY who continue this idea.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, in 2002 at the exhibition *New York: Capital of Photography* in the *Jewish Museum of New York*, presented the Jewish element in photography as a reflection of big city life (*street-photography*).<sup>17</sup> In DANIEL MORRIS's recent book *After Weegee: Essays on Contemporary Jewish American Photographers*, investigated the ambivalent connections embodied by many different artists

such as JIM GOLDBERG, LEE FRIEDLANDER, ANNIE LEIBOWITZ or ALLEN GINSBERG with regards to Jewish identity. MORRIS's focus is on the chronicler of crime who was born as ARTHUR FELLIG in Galicia and came to America as WEEGEE. Through unflinching and fear inducing imagery he is depicted as revitalizing photojournalism. It was alleged that he was quicker to the scene of the crime than the police. At same time, WEEGEE was on the lookout for images that created ironic confrontations. One of his most famous images called *Simply Add Boiling Water* shows a burning apartment building. The signage on the building, already

anticipated the fire brigades attempts to extinguish the fire. WILLIAM MORRIS calls WEEGEE's photos »Textifying Images« and implies that WEEGEE's photographs have a substantial and untapped interpretational value.<sup>18</sup> The hesitant incrementalism towards the phenomenon of the Jewish engagement in photography in a multitude of photographic positions cannot be overlooked, which is not only explained through a heterogenic starting point of the material. The transformation of a Jewish religious understanding into a cultural, more specifically photographic one, without a doubt belongs to the most difficult chapters in the history of photography. It comes across as an apparent contradiction between the traditional writing-oriented Jewish culture and the creation of the photographic image,<sup>19</sup> which is crucial in the present discourse on visual culture. This contradiction can be resolved insofar that the Jewish tradition of writing can be interpreted as a



WEEGEE (ARTHUR FELLIG):  
Simply Add Boiling Water, 1937

mobile identity space. This insight allows for an understanding of Jewish tradition, which goes against one-dimensional mindsets and becomes a modern synonym for a polymorphous intercultural existence. The written Hebrew language, consisting of twenty-two characters, creating a mobile system of thought heralding the »triumph of spirituality over sensualism« as SIGMUND FREUD called it. This did not simply motivate a fantastical interpretation practice, which early on was accompanied by the Hebraic bible (*Torah*). Interpretations and comments kept in the *Talmud* add to the *Torah* and together to this day creates a principle, which at its core endorses and encourages dialogue, dialogue with an abstract and hidden power.<sup>20</sup> This dialogue with *The Other* gives rise to a discourse with a different type of language, with (photographic) Images. Another contradiction—between the banning of imagery and photographic interests—can be resolved by arguing that the photograph can be interpreted »as a captured image, not a creation, but a reflexion of light « as formulated by HANNO LOEWY.<sup>21</sup> Viewing photography in this manner with reference to Jewish tradition shows that there was never an effective prohibition on the engagement with the medium. Such reflections on photographic practice can help us to explore the significance of the act of creating images and interpreting the images in and of themselves. Both fields, the one photography, the other writing, both of which need to and must be commented upon and interpreted, with photography being reflections of light versus (new-)creation, put this up for discussion. The core of these presented views towards photography comply with those developed by WALTER BENJAMIN, coined »*Schriftbildlichkeit*« [writing pictorially],<sup>22</sup> which led to, among others, his theory to view and interpret images as writings. Like the revelations of God in the biblical-Judaic deliverance as a trace of reflexive imagery, as the voice in the burning bush, so may these be seen as signs of God that underlie interpretation—signs forming a branched discourse in a world where they then overlap. The distance between presence and absence becomes the center of thought.<sup>23</sup>

The apparent certainty of the truthfulness of a photographic reference, that since its invention was insisted upon by *Talbot*, simultaneously leads others to inherent questions, or even doubt. The recent discussion of the constructed nature of photography, which bit by bit turned into a cultural critical perspective towards photographic imagery, can at its core be attributed to traditional opinions of imagery in Jewish culture. Another connection between Jewish thought patterns and photography might be of interest.



With the help of the camera the revealable »Optical-unknown«, which WALTER BENJAMIN also ascribes to film, suggests that the instrumental image of the photograph is not the recording of a reflexion, but a revelation of integrated trace inside the image.<sup>24</sup> This trace can only be revealed through the act of interpretation, the analysis. The distance between presence and absence in the Judaic understanding of God may also help with an understanding of photography. SIGMUND FREUD explains his theory of the unconscious by comparing it to the negative (image). Both are in states in which they have to be filtered. The reflective unconscious corresponds to, in this context, relevant photographic practices, for instance the

development of photographic negatives or creation of photographic positives in a lab.<sup>25</sup> Even here there is a parallel: following Jewish understanding, the hidden unconscious is always embedded, as a photograph reveals something of its referent. In this constellation of understanding the image it can also be situated as *Bildakt* [the act of making images] that views the image as an active actor in the process of visual

communication.<sup>26</sup> Revealing the unknown and generating various dimensions of meaning in photographic images corresponds in unexpected ways to Jewish interpretative practices of scripture. The visual becomes the recognizable character of the medium. Such interpretation supplies meaning which opposes the notion that photography is a reflection of »reality« but underlines its structured nature. This overview is an effort to provide an intellectual framework through which to understand photography with regard to Jewish thought, traditions, and innovations in the realm of the creation, and interpretation of images, from various perspectives. Originating from migration, from *Diaspora* and experiences as a marginalized group with the associated sensibilities and self-interpretations that marks the habitus of Judaism in numerous photographic positions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it may be asked: do these perspectives heighten the awareness of a fleeting referent, which results in a remarkable affinity towards photography? A multispectral visual language is created, constantly transforming and adapting, as a sort of image culture in *Diaspora*. Photography's accompanying function to record the viewed and store the memory, closely resembles the rites and festivals linked to remembrance and strongly perpetuates the impression that photography transfers the



JEFF WALL:  
Overpass, 2001



important function of imprinting;<sup>27</sup> Even orthodox *Rabbis* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not averse to photography.<sup>28</sup> Their imprinting trait made photography an important asset in archiving as an individual and the social form of organizing knowledge. This may be seen as related to the fact that ABY WARBURG revolutionized art history, building upon the reproducing characteristic of photography, creating a pictorial atlas dedicated to remembrance, the legendary *Mnemosyne Atlas*. He developed a mobile system detailing changes over time not only to archive the knowledge of art history, but also to generate new knowledge. The impetus for this was the shift in references in the photographs and artworks from different eras he he archived. It proves that the reference, which relies upon its memory potential, is a mobile store of images which provides a context to art historical research.<sup>29</sup> The multitude of positions in *Street Photography* like those of ROBERT FRANK, HELEN LEVITT, DIANE ARBUS and LEE FRIEDLANDER, the *New Color Photography* (SAUL LEITER, JOEL STERNFELD) and the artistic orientated photography (NAN GOLDIN, JEFF WALL, CINDY SHERMAN etc.) can be connected when refracted through Jewish identity in the *Modernist* and *Postmodernist* movements. Regarding this, it is necessary to analyze to what extent Jewish theology aligns with the contemporary cultural interpretation and what consequences these alignments have in the mindsets and practices of photography. Modes of comprehension lay the groundwork in which one may detect continuity between Jewish thought from the Biblical heritage through the processes of secularization as a productive impulse.

The notion of a hidden God is a fundamental theme of Judaism. God has been possibly understood as akin to a field of energy, which predates creation.<sup>30</sup> To grasp the construction of the photographic image not only as reflections of light, but as a creation that occurs because of the conversion of light energy, and to harness it creatively, could be a bridging thought. Furthermore to see the negative of analog photography, as a hidden and unknown trace, is like the hidden God in the Judaic concept of a negating, creating God. A culture of continual commenting that tries to interpret the mystery of negation and seclusion, is likewise central to the understanding of Jewish tradition. The creation of photographs can also be seen as generating images of thought, which require analysis in the context of cumulative commentary. Perhaps at the core of these reflections is an understanding that photography is continually in a process of transformation from a medium of reproduction to a medium of generating and creating.

- 1 Cf. ANTONIA LERCH: *Drei Fotografinnen, drei Filmportraits von Antonia Lerch*. ARTE EDITION. Produced by HARUN FAROCKI 1993, in cooperation with ARTE and ZDF; since 2007 distributed by *absolut Medien*.
- 2 ILSE BING in: KLAUS HONNEF/FRANK WEYERS: *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen... müssen*. exhibition catalogue, *Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn*. Köln 1997, p. 71.
- 3 Cf. KLAUS HONNEF/FRANK WEYERS: *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen... müssen*. exhibition catalogue, *Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn*. Cologne 1997.
- 4 HANNO LOEWY: *Fotografie*, in: DAN DINER: *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, Vol. 2. Stuttgart/Weimar 2012, pp. 361–366.
- 5 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
- 6 Cf. REINHOLD MAYER: *Der Babylonische Talmud. Ausgewählt, übersetzt und erklärt von Reinhold Mayer* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Munich, 1980.
- 7 Cf. DANIEL MORRIS: *After Weegee. Essays on Contemporary Jewish American Photographers*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse/New York 2011.
- 8 Cf. HANNO LOEWY: *Fotografie*, in: DAN DINER, *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*. Vol. 2, Stuttgart/Weimar 2012, p. 364.
- 9 Cf. PHILIPPE DUBOIS: *Der fotografische Akt, Versuch über ein theoretisches Dispositiv*. edited by and with a introduction by HERTA WOLF, Amsterdam/Dresden 1998, pp. 41–106.  
»Symptomatisch für eine solche Einstellung, eine solche Verlagerung, sind etwa die fotografischen Arbeiten von DIANA ARBUS, die, so lautet die von SUSAN SONTAG vorgeschlagene Analyse, ihre Modelle bewusst eine Pose einnehmen lässt und sie gerade dadurch, durch und über den Code, ihre eigentliche Wahrheit zum Ausdruck bringen lässt. Durch die bewusst angenommene Künstlichkeit der Pose erreichen die Subjekte ihre wahre Wirklichkeit, wahrer als die Natur.« *Ibid.*, p. 47.  
Cf. SUSAN SONTAG: *Amerika im düsteren Spiegel der Fotografie*. in: SONNTAG: *Über Fotografie*. Frankfurt am Main 1980, pp. 29–49.
- 10 Cf. HANNO LOEWY, *Fotografie*, in: DAN DINER, *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*. Vol. 2, Stuttgart/Weimar 2012, pp. 365/366.
- 11 DANIEL MORRIS: *After Weegee. Essays on Contemporary Jewish American Photographers*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse/New York 2011, p. 193.
- 12 Cf. VILÉM FLUSSER: *Jude sein. Essays, Briefe, Fiktionen*. Mannheim 1995.  
VILÉM FLUSSER: *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie*. Göttingen 1983.
- 13 Cf. MARK H. GELBER: *Diasporismus und Zionismus – Begriffe der jüdischen Zentren und Peripherien von der Antike bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, in: MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER (Ed.): *Die verborgene Spur. Jüdische Wege durch die Moderne*. exhibition catalogue *Felix-Nussbaum-Haus Osnabrück*, Bramsche, 2008. pp. 32–47.
- 14 Cf. MATTHEW BAIGELL / MILLY HEYD (Eds.): *Complex Identities. Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, London 2001.  
Cf. MARTIN KÜMPER, BARBARA RÖSCH, ULRIKE SCHNEIDER and HELEN THEIN (Eds.): *Makom. Orte und Räume im Judentum*. Hildesheim/ Zürich/New York 2007.  
Cf. EDWARD VAN VOOLEN: *Jüdische Kunst und Kultur*. München, Berlin, London, New York, 2006.  
Cf. BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT and JONATHAN KARP (Eds.): *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*. Philadelphia 2008.  
Cf. ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG, MATTHEW BAIGELL and MILLY HEYD (Eds.): *Jewish Dimensions in Modern Visual Culture*. Brandeis University Press, Hannover and London 2010.
- 15 PETER POLLACK: *Photography* (1971), reprinted in: MICHAEL BERENBAUM and FRED SKOLNIK (Eds.): *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Detroit, 2007. pp. 125–126 expanded by YESHAYAHU NIR until p. 131.  
Cf. also: WILLIAM MEYERS: *Jews and Photography*, in: *Commentary* 115. 2003, Issue 1. pp. 45–48.

- 16 Cf. MICHAEL BERKOWITZ: *Jews in Photography: Conceiving a Field in the Papers of Peter Pollack*, in: *Photography and Culture*. Vol. 4, Issue 1, March, 2011. pp. 7–28.
- 17 Cf. MAX KOZLOFF: *Jewish Sensibility and the Photography of New York*, in: *New York, Capital of Photography*. New York, 2002. pp. 69–77.
- 18 DANIEL MORRIS: *After Weegee. Essays on Contemporary Jewish American Photographers*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse / New York, 2011. p. 24ff.
- 19 Cf. in regards to the relevance of the biblical picture ban for the discourse on images of the present: GOTTFRIED BOEHM: *Die Lehre des Bilderverbotes*, in: BIRGIT RECKI / LAMBERT WEISING (Eds.): *Bild und Reflexion. Paradigmen und Perspektiven gegenwärtiger Ästhetik*. München 1997, pp. 294–306.
- 20 Cf. GÜNTER STEMBERGER: *Der Talmud. Einführung. Texte. Erläuterungen*. München 1982.
- 21 HANNO LOEWY, *Fotografie*, in: DAN DINER, *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*. Vol. 2, Stuttgart / Weimar 2012, p. 365.
- 22 Cf. SYBILLE KRÄMER, EVA CANKI-KIRSCHBAUM and RAINER TOTZKE (Eds.): *Schriftbildlichkeit: Wahrnehmbarkeit, Materialität und Operativität von Notationen*. Berlin 2012, pp. 66, 307–310.
- 23 Cf. MICHA BRUMLIK: *Schrift, Wort und Ikone. Wege aus dem Bilderverbot*. Frankfurt am Main 1994.
- 24 Cf. WALTER BENJAMIN: *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, second edition, in: *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Werke I/2*, p. 500 ff.
- 25 Cf. SIGMUND FREUD: »Einige Bemerkungen über den Begriff des Unbewußten«, in: SIGMUND FREUD: *Werke aus den Jahren 1909–1913. Gesammelte Werke. Vol. 8*, ANNA FREUD / EDWARD BIBRING / WILHELM HOFFER et al. (Eds.), Frankfurt am Main, 1990. pp. 430–439.
- 26 Cf. HORST BREDEKAMP: *Theorie des Bildakts*. Frankfurt am Main, 2010.
- 27 Cf. YOSEF HAYIM YERUSHALMI: *Zachor: Erinnere Dich!– Jüdische Geschichte und jüdisches Gedächtnis*. Berlin, 1988.  
Regarding the Dimension of the photographic memory, cf. JESSICA NITSCHKE: *Walter Benjamins Gebrauch der Fotografie*. pp. 223–307.
- 28 Cf. MICHAEL BERKOWITZ: *The Jewish Self-Image. American and British Perspectives. 1881–1930*, London 2000.
- 29 Cf. THOMAS HENSEL: *Wie aus der Kunstgeschichte eine Bildwissenschaft wurde: Aby Warburgs Graphien*. Berlin, 2011.
- 30 Cf. GERSHOM SCHOLEM: *Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen*. Frankfurt am Main, 1980. pp. 285–290





**WHY HELMUT GERNSHEIM'S JEWISHNESS MATTERS**

MICHAEL BERKOWITZ

in honor and memory of Ulrich Beck (1944-2015)

This chapter discusses the entry and initial impact of HELMUT and WALTER GERNSHEIM in the realm of photography in Britain from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. While it has been recognized that HELMUT GERNSHEIM was of Jewish origins, and that he came to Britain to escape *Nazi* persecution, the significance of his Jewishness on his unusual career has rarely been addressed. WALTER GERNSHEIM scarcely has a place in the history of photography despite his immense role in reconfiguring the relationship of photography to the study of the fine arts. The imagination of photography's rightful place in humanistic scholarship, which was essential for both men, seems inconceivable without considering their imposed identities as Jews and situation as refugees in Britain.

PHOTOGR. ART. HERMANN TIETZ:  
 GERNSHEIM children, with their mother, dressed as German soldiers in the GREAT WAR, Munich 1915



The pioneering research of HELMUT GERNSHEIM (1913-1995) remains vital for the historical exploration of nearly every aspect of photography. Yet he is ignored to a greater extent than he is heralded. GERNSHEIM was preeminent in ushering photography into fine arts, and in particular, he made possible the inclusion of photography's history in humanities scholarship. Along with his brother WALTER (1909-2006), HELMUT GERNSHEIM radically transformed the place of photography in the fine arts in Britain from the 1940s to the 1960s. But because the cultural and arts establishment repeatedly rejected the offer of GERNSHEIM's unmatched collection, and his material legacy was divided between the *University of Texas* in Austin and the *Reiss-Engelhorn Museum* in Mannheim, even two decades after his death HELMUT GERNSHEIM remains an embarrassment to the genteel British arts world. If he is remembered at all it is usually to be scoffed at or derided. HELMUT GERNSHEIM's Jewishness has been noted as significant solely due to the consequence of his being classified as a Jew under *National Socialism*, and therefore, the cause of his having to flee *Nazi Germany*. I will argue that the character of HELMUT's career, and the revolutionary impact he and his brother had on the relationship between the *Fine Arts*, humanities scholarship, and photography, makes little sense without considering the importance of

not only their Jewish origins, but how Jewishness, as a secular identity, played out throughout much of their lives. Jewishness also helps to explain the limits of their achievements and absence from history. Before the *Nazi* rise to power the GERNSHEIMS had not had any notable encounter with photography as such. Like almost everyone else of their generation, they had family photos taken in the studio at the renowned *Hermann Tietz department store* in Munich.<sup>1</sup>

HELMUT GERNSHEIM's Jewishness is important in several respects, in addition to being a basic fact of his origins and the cause of his exile from Germany. First: After his brother made his way to Britain, HELMUT wished to follow. His brother advised that the careers he should consider—which seemed relatively open to refugees in Britain—were dentistry and photography. Because the photography course in Munich was shorter, that is what HELMUT chose. He feared that if he took up training to be a dentist he might be trapped in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Second: one of

HELMUT's early important position as a photographer was under the auspices of the *Warburg Institute*. Historian EMILY LEVINE has recently explained that the Institute was a product of circum-

stances unique to both the city of Hamburg in the early twentieth century and to German Jewry's particular intellectual trajectory.<sup>3</sup> While not an expressly Jewish institution, upon its relocation to London the *Warburg* ardently strove to enhance its approach to photography and to provide employment for Jewish refugees.<sup>4</sup> WALTER GERNSHEIM's connection to the *Warburg*, under its director, FRITZ SAXL, was crucial for HELMUT's hiring as a photographer for the *National Buildings Record* project. HELMUT drew on that work for nearly two decades. Although HELMUT had a bitter falling out with the *Warburg*, his photographs commissioned by the Institute were featured in his early books

along with those he had produced for his student portfolio in Munich. Third: photography publishing in the 1940s and 50s was a relatively open avenue for HELMUT as a Jewish refugee. *Fountain Press* (now defunct) had numerous, if not a majority of Jewish and foreign authors. Jewish refugees founded pictorial publishing enterprises such as *Adprint* (later *Thames & Hudson*), *Focal Press*, and *Phaidon*. HELMUT himself was aware that his most cutting-edge work would never have been published in Britain if not for the »refugees« who produced photographic books. In particular, he feared his work on LEWIS CARROLL as a photographer would not be accepted by an establishment press, so he sought out WALTER NEURATH at *Adprint*, who led him to MAX PARRISH.<sup>5</sup> But photography publishing is where the good fortune of HELMUT's Jewishness, in Britain, hit a wall.

After 1951, when he staged an exhibition on Victorian photography for the *Festival of Britain*, HELMUT GERNSHEIM made repeated attempts to have his vast photography collection absorbed by an appropriate institution in Britain. He also tried locating a European partner. Having failed in the early 1960s, it was the cigar-chomping LEW FELDMAN who brokered the deal that brought the bulk of his British and French collection to the *University of Texas* in 1962. The \$300,000 paid by Texas was by far the largest amount ever spent on photography until that time. It is said frequently in Britain that the *Gernsheim collection's* migration

WALTER GERNSHEIM:  
Self-portrait





HELMUT GERNSHEIM:  
Henry III,  
Westminster Abbey



to Austin was unavoidable due to the riches of the United States. Yet it was never HELMUT GERNSHEIM's goal to simply maximize a profit from his collection. He sincerely desired to keep it in Britain, in large measure as a way of expressing his gratitude to the country for taking him in as a refugee. To say the least, Austin and Mannheim's gain was Britain's loss.

I began my investigation in 2006, assuming that GERNSHEIM was on the extreme side of what can be considered » a non-Jewish Jew.«<sup>6</sup> To my surprise, I discovered that his Jewishness had consistently been important to him, and that he himself thought seriously about the significance of the vast overrepresentation of Jews in photography. He included himself on lists of notable Jews in photography, and saw himself part of as distinctly German Jewish historical legacy. HELMUT was so Jewish that he became active in Jewish circles, and in particular, the *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*. Then he did the most Jewish thing imaginable: he had a falling out with the Jewish establishment. To experience *broymes* with the Jews, inciting ,agitation, anxiety, and anger',<sup>7</sup> to me, really marks someone as *Jewish*.

Some years ago in the midst of research I was having difficulty figuring out the identity of the wife of WALTER GERNSHEIM. It seemed that he had two wives named GERTRUD, both of whom assisted him in photography. I tracked down ELISABETH BECK-GERNSHEIM, a well-known sociologist in Germany, who is a niece of HELMUT and WALTER. She answered my question and expressed keen interest in the subject. Eventually she read the book-in-progress, which has appeared as *Jews and Photography* in Britain. I asked if she thought I had overstated the Jewish element. She assured me that I had not. » They only talked about it every day,« she said.

The biography of HELMUT GERNSHEIM has been well delineated by CLAUDE SUI and ROY FLUKINGER, his leading curators, respectively, in Mannheim and Austin. Born in Munich in 1913 to a Catholic mother, HELMUT was baptized and raised in an a-religious home. If not for the Nazis he probably would have followed a well-worn path of many in his family into academe, specifically, art history. But when the Nazis came to power he was faced with the fact that training as an art historian in Germany would be pointless. He decided in 1934 to prepare to make his

way to Britain, following his brother, who fled relatively early after the Nazi takeover of power. WALTER advised HELMUT to learn something practical that might form the basis of a vocation in Britain—either dentistry or photography. The subtext of this advice was that these seemed to be areas that were relatively open to those who came to the country as Jewish refugees. HELMUT enjoyed his studies in Munich, was well-treated despite the hostile atmosphere, and became a superb photographer. To date he is largely unknown as a photographer—despite the best efforts of myself and CHRISTY ANDERSON, a historian of architecture in Toronto, who is mainly concerned with HELMUT's relationship with the architectural historian RUDOLF WITTKOWER. ANDERSON is one of the first to assert that GERNSHEIM's architectural photography is fine art, in itself. During his brief tenure as a photographer for the *Warburg Institute* in the 1940s and works he later published in his own books, HELMUT might be seen as the *anti-Benjamin*: he showed that the photograph of a work of art or architecture could be creative, in a different way, from the object photographed—but a work of art in its own right. GERNSHEIM also insisted that the photographer always be credited for the picture. He was not alone in this approach to presenting photography of art as art. The photographer who most closely resembled GERNSHEIM in conceiving photographs of art, and the working spaces of artists, as another form of art, was ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ (1894-1985), now hailed as genius.<sup>8</sup>

I also wish to dwell on the significance of HELMUT's older brother, WALTER GERNSHEIM. Many art historians are aware of WALTER for his service to research in their field, but he is almost unknown in the history of photography. Overall the GERNSHEIMS did not simply transplant what they practiced and knew from Germany to Britain. Partly due to their marginal status and intellectual freedom they enjoyed as Jewish refugees, they adapted and re-created ways of conceiving photography's role in, and relationship to the fine arts, and photography's place in a universal, humanistic culture. Their senses of themselves as bearers of culture, stemming from their German-Jewish identity, was part-and-parcel of how they reimagined photography.

WALTER GERNSHEIM realized early on that there was little chance of a refugee making it as an art historian in 1930s Britain. Having had mixed success in running an art gallery, he surmised that the most practical way for a foreigner to establish a livelihood in the arts in Britain was through photography. WALTER then

pioneered and institutionalized a novel use of photography in art history. With his (first) wife he conceived of meticulously and thoroughly photographing *Old Master drawings* and selling them on a subscription basis, with the aim of serving the world-wide scholarly community. He began systematically photographing Dutch and Italian drawings, and illuminated manuscripts and prints of any origin, as a resource for scholars, museum professionals, and collectors. The cataloguing of WALTER and GERTRUD dismissed the notion of » race « or essentialized national cultures out of hand. This is part of the reason why this work has had such lasting value. WALTER and GERTRUD GERNSEHEIM were able to pursue this project because no one else had thought of it, or thought it worthwhile. At any rate, nobody stopped them, and apparently no institution tried to curtail this activity.

His brother HELMUT, an underappreciated photographer himself, was one of a small group who launched the field of the history of photography and systematic collecting of photography as akin to art in 1940s Britain. While HELMUT sought to examine and focus attention on the achievements of British and French photographers, notably, LEWIS CARROLL, his work overall was transnational and immune to notions of a national or *Völkisch* ethos. Combining the history of mechanics, optics, and chemistry, along with political, social, and economic history, HELMUT GERNSEHEIM's studies of photography transcended national and even disciplinary boundaries.

Let us revisit HELMUT GERNSEHEIM at the port of Liverpool in the summer of 1940. There he boarded the ship, *Dunera*, on which he came close to losing his life in the north Atlantic.<sup>9</sup> The rickety ship's capacity was one thousand six-hundred, but well over two thousand were aboard. Most were Jewish refugees packed among »genuine prisoners of war«— around two hundred Italians and two hundred fifty Nazi soldiers.<sup>10</sup> After being damaged the *Dunera* was diverted to Australia, despite being ill-equipped to undertake such an arduous trip.

HELMUT had not wished to share the dismal fate of his brother and sister-in-law who were interned on the Isle of Man since early June 1940. Part of the reason why WALTER and GERTRUD were left to languish for so long was because there was no appreciation for what they did as photographers. Although the *Gernsheim corpus* is now held in the highest esteem,<sup>11</sup> the work they had undertaken since 1937 did not make any impression on British authorities in the 1940s. GERTRUD's family emigrated to Britain, but they were not able to offer the couple much help. WALTER GERNSEHEIM's future

father-in-law, FRITZ LANDAUER, was famous as a synagogue architect,<sup>12</sup> especially known as the designer of the synagogue in Augsburg and the Jewish museum in Frankfurt. WALTER GERNSHEIM had, in a way, re-entered the Jewish fold by becoming engaged to a Jewish woman.<sup>13</sup> When WALTER began studying art history, archaeology, and Slavic philology at the University of Munich in 1928, he had no reason to think his heredity would make a difference. But most of the Professors with whom WALTER studied were unlikely to enhance his academic career abroad. This partly explains his turn to photography. In retrospect, the most interesting thing about WALTER GERNSHEIM's presentation of himself during his early months in London, 1934-35, is that there is no mention of any expertise or even interest in photography—which would become the thrust of his career.

Most likely with the assistance, if not outright suggestion of FRITZ SAXL, WALTER tried to provide for himself by merging his knowledge of art history and photography. In early November 1934, WALTER GERNSHEIM thanked the *Academic Assistance Council* for sponsoring his »subsidiary work at the *Courtauld Institute*,« a cooperative photographic venture between the *Warburg Institute* and the *Courtauld*. SAXL was instrumental in arranging GERNSHEIM's initial appointment as well as its extension.<sup>14</sup> A long memo in 1935, apparently from the Council, depicted GERNSHEIM's job »prospects« as bleak.<sup>15</sup>

But the mention of »retraining« most likely encouraged SAXL to suggest that WALTER GERNSHEIM move in a photographic direction. He was, it seemed, at the end of his rope.<sup>16</sup> Given that this was, at best, a tenuous proposition, WALTER assumed that he would have to find another means to earn a livelihood, which he would do by founding an art gallery. Not surprisingly, support for this came from a Jewish connection arranged through SAXL — OTTO SCHIFF (1875-1952), who was one of the most effective advocates for refugees and exercised his own private charity with discretion.<sup>17</sup> WALTER GERNSHEIM himself might not have known that critical funds came from SCHIFF.<sup>18</sup> WALTER held exhibitions of *Old master drawings* (1 February to 6 March 1937), »drawings of the *Bolognese school*« (May 10<sup>th</sup> to June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937), and »representative drawings by living French sculptors« (June-July 1938).<sup>20</sup>

HELMUT GERNSHEIM:  
Edith Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, 1946



He also exhibited photographs of his brother, HELMUT, in October 1937.<sup>21</sup>

Apparently this was the first time, in London, that *old master drawings* and *avant-garde, neue Sachlichkeit* («new objectivity») photographs had been displayed in the same space.<sup>22</sup> Many of the photographs shown were probably those Helmut used in his first book, *New Photo Vision* of 1942, the ideas for which had germinated in Australia, to be discussed. Not even the GERNSHEIM brothers themselves appreciated how revolutionary this was. London had no equivalent to either ALFRED STIEGLITZ or JULIEN LEVY, who were the first to present photography with painting and sculpture.<sup>23</sup> It seems that no one bothered to review it. Interestingly, the only portrait he included in his representative work for *The Man Behind the Camera* (1948) was of EDITH MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY, patron of WALTER.

In writing about architect FRITZ JOSEF LANDAUER and his industrial-designer son, WALTER LANDOR, both of whom are praised for their creativity and modernist sensitivity, there is only a passing reference to FRITZ's daughter, and WALTER LANDAUER/LANDOR's sister, GERTRUD. FRITZ was ultimately unable to reestablish himself in British architecture, ending his career as a stone mason. In contrast, his son made a fortune as an advertising designer in the United States. It stands to reason that given her father's association with the *avant-garde* in the applied arts, including the *Bauhaus* and International movements, that GERTRUD may have seen the potential for merging photography and art. She received her MA at the *Courtauld* in 1934, when the various photography schemes were launched.<sup>24</sup> Certainly photography was significant in her father's world. While in Germany WALTER increasingly employed photography in his research, and trained himself with great proficiency.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps both WALTER and GERTRUD had come to this fusion together. From the beginning the ventures of both GERNSHEIMS had been partnerships: WALTER with GERTRUD, and HELMUT with his wife ALISON (née EAMES). The most famous partnership in photography, which also has bearing here, was that of BEAUMONT and NANCY NEWHALL.

In over three years of internment on the Isle of Man, WALTER GERNSHEIM tried repeatedly, to no avail, to return to photographing art.<sup>26</sup> WALTER argued that the same logic behind the *National Buildings Record* project, which sought to detail the architectural and artistic treasures of Britain while they were threatened by Nazi bombardment, should be applied to his enterprise. In addition to claiming OTTO SCHIFF's support, WALTER

pleaded that »SIR KENNETH CLARK, who was a subscriber for the *National Gallery*, would be able to extend his help to me.«<sup>27</sup> There is no small irony in the fact that CLARK (1903-1983), who could be hostile to Jews, was the guardian angel of the *Warburg*. Ironically, WALTER GERNSHEIM was arrested in June 1940 while he was on a visit to Aberystwyth, making photographs as specified in a government contract. The work, then, »came to an end«.<sup>28</sup> When WALTER and GERTRUD GERNSHEIM were released from internment November 15, 1944 they had no means of support, and the Ministry of Labour had »not given definite written permission to continue« their »former photography of *Old Masters*.«<sup>29</sup> But within less than three years the re-established *Photographicum* seemed to have momentum. This was, after all, a time of great expansion for American universities, as the GI bill meant that thousands of ex-servicemen would have the opportunity for higher education. In 1948 WALTER GERNSHEIM wrote a letter to the *College Art Journal*.<sup>30</sup> It was a way of publicizing the project and also to castigate those who had not yet joined the bandwagon of the *Corpus Photographicum of Drawings*. Its confidence and authority could not be a more striking contrast to his utter despondence as an internee.<sup>31</sup> Not worried about being taken as immodest, he asserted that »a surprising number of early *Renaissance* drawings have come to light through my work.« He self-consciously attempted to enhance and expand the field. Many *Renaissance* artists were »well published, but many were totally omitted,« and there were »unreproduced versos of reproduced rectos.« This sounds simple but it took someone to act on it. The fronts and backs of things deserved to be photographed, as they often contained important data or images. This was similar to his brother HELMUT's seeing the benefit of cleaning statues before photographing them.

As had been the practice at the *Warburg*, WALTER GERNSHEIM stressed that scholars needed as much detail as possible. Concerning major artists, now scrutinized by growing numbers of students, »it is essential to make photographs available to all... to give the only documentary evidence of the existence of a drawing, which in our troubled age has become a cultural responsibility.« To be sure, it was a means for GERNSHEIM to make money. But in this appeal for »cultural responsibility« and the need to spread scholarly resources as far and wide as possible, GERNSHEIM was taking up the mantle of the *Warburg Institute*, and the democratizing efforts of scholars and even art patrons such as PAUL CASSIRER from before the First World War.<sup>32</sup>

But if this was all so important, such a vast advance making the work of scholars more efficient and comprehensive, why the plea? WALTER GERNSHEIM could not admit outright what he knew: that photography, even as a means to better and more creative scholarship, was not as respectable as it should be. The reason for the relative ignorance of his enterprise, GERNSHEIM wrote, »lies in the very conditions of the undertaking. As I have no financial backing from any institution, the scheme ought to be self-supporting on the subscriptions but alas it is not; the subscriptions up to now covering only part of the expenses. So, with the funds at my disposal, having the choice between going ahead with the scheme at a loss—or publicity for the scheme, I chose the former hoping that in the end work will win«<sup>33</sup>

One might say that WALTER GERNSHEIM helped to create the now highly lucrative market for *Old Master Drawings* by giving them greater visibility and accessibility. In this case, the value of 'the work of art through its mechanical reproduction' enabled its esteem, and even its cash value, to skyrocket. But while WALTER and GERTRUD GERNSHEIM languished at the Isle of Man and even after the end of the Second World War, the possibility to re-establish the project, and its potential to be a source of a decent livelihood, was an open question.

His brother HELMUT saw no choice but to get away from London, and the country, in the midst of the Battle of Britain—in which he was neither invited nor allowed to serve as a soldier. HELMUT assumed that volunteering for an agricultural assignment in Canada would leave him in good stead of His Majesty's government when the hostilities abated.<sup>34</sup> As CLAUDE SUI has noted, the bizarre episode on the *Dunera* and the *Hay camp* helped fashion HELMUT GERNSHEIM into the distinctive figure he was to become in the next decades in Britain.<sup>35</sup> But he rarely spoke about this experience, and it is not mentioned in his substantial, sympathetic *Dictionary of National Biography* entry.<sup>36</sup> GERNSHEIM did, however, dwell at some length on this in his interview with VAL WILLIAMS, for the oral history of British photography project, in 1995.<sup>37</sup>

When the miserable *Dunera* finally landed in Australia, however, photography was not an option. The internees were there, after all, because it was thought that they presented a security risk. Everything of value they had had on board was stolen by the troops »guarding« them. They would not, then, be free to use something like a camera—an instrument for subterfuge that was second only



to a two-way radio or a firearm. But a prohibition from taking photographs did not take GERNSHEIM's mind off photography.

Later HELMUT said that the *Hay compound* looked like a concentration camp, with an electrified fence, but its inmates were unmolested. Soldiers avoided entering the camp. It had, in fact, »been planned for Nazi prisoners.«<sup>38</sup> *Hay* was tiny and insignificant, so remote from any metropolitan area, 750 kilometers west of Sydney, that the term »isolation« did not do it justice.<sup>39</sup> The extreme heat, parched desert environment, and sight of kangaroos made it even more strange. Although the conditions were harsh there were a host of liberties offered to internees. Such excessively liberal perquisites were a result of the British having admitted that a great injustice had been done to the internees'<sup>40</sup> in the glare of *Fleet Street*. There would be no limit on the number of magazines and books an internee could receive, as long as these passed censorship.

GERNSHEIM had a number of friends and family members in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, who were able to send him the books and periodicals he requested.<sup>41</sup> Some of his relatives, especially in New York, were well-off, and kept him supplied.<sup>42</sup> In addition to photographic journals, which would form the basis for much of his later work, he also received an English translation of ERICH STENGER's *Die Photographie in Kultur und Technik. Ihre Geschichte während hundert Jahren* (1938).<sup>43</sup> HELMUT's friends and relatives also took the opportunity to send him books they thought would interest him. »A fellow prisoner,« CLAUDE SUI writes, »lent him the paperback on photography by LUCIA MOHOLY that he had already read in England.« That, along with the STENGER history, »awakened his interest in the history of photography and served as the basis for the lectures he held for camp inmates. These were his first steps as a historian of photography, and he began to take notes for the his first publication, *New Photo Vision*.«<sup>44</sup>

A number of refugees established study circles and formed, GERNSEIM recalled, »a kind of university.«<sup>45</sup> The diversity of perspectives and experience among the inmates was vast. Their ranks included »doctors, social democrats, Talmudists, anarchists, professors, communists, entrepreneurs, individualists, skilled artisans, Zionists, Catholics, missionaries for vegetarianism, artists of all varieties, and manual laborers...«<sup>46</sup> and a dozen professional photographers.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps some of them were among the ten or twelve who attended GERNSEIM's classes.<sup>48</sup> In his encounters with fellow internees, which were unavoidable, GERNSEIM was



pleased to learn that there was quite a lot of interest in photography.<sup>49</sup>

Although SUI is no doubt correct that the camp ignited GERNSHEIM's quest for the history of photography, it also is true that his twin passions for art history and photography coalesced in a different direction. It was in Australia where GERNSHEIM began to formulate his complex view of photographic history and practice in Britain, in particular. The camp at *Hay* was not an environment where one had to watch what one said.

One of the few things that united the diverse Jewish captives was their sense of injustice at the hands of the British.<sup>50</sup> GERNSHEIM certainly believed that Britain had a great and glorious photographic history, providing many of its path-breakers and most illustrious practitioners. Yet he found that its conventions since the First World War were retrograde, if not downright mediocre—especially compared to Germany. Given the books and other material he was regularly receiving, it became clear to GERNSHEIM that he could offer not just a lecture, but an entire series of classes on photography's history. Because most of his cohort were from Central or East Central Europe, largely middle-class Jews, it is little wonder they were sympathetic to GERNSHEIM's perspective. One did not have to be an intellectual or critic to see Britain as backward. Especially with their bitter handling aboard ship, it would have been easy to agree that the British lacked sophistication. Most likely, in October 1941, GERNSHEIM was mainly imagining a book about photography in Britain. He desperately sought to become part of the British photographic establishment but he also wanted to, emphatically, put it in its place. Over time GERNSHEIM turned the history of photography into a cogent field. Although he did not entirely give up taking photographs himself, upon his return to London his energy was devoted increasingly to collecting photographs, curating exhibitions, and writing histories of photography. HELMUT GERNSHEIM was aware that he was charting new branches of cultural production and knowledge. Of course there were others who had collected photographs. But when he began he did not know of anyone who had collected with an eye to assembling a historically representative collection, and conceptualizing a comprehensive history of the field. These were, of course, complimentary activities.<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned earlier, HELMUT GERNSHEIM's main institutional home during World War II, apart from the *Dunera* excursion, was the *Warburg Institute*. He saw the *Warburg* as his best prospect for employment because it already was known for offering

assistance to refugees, as it did for WALTER; it had established large-scale photography projects; and it was involved in the *National Building Record* project. His wife ALISON had seen press reports about this and informed HELMUT while he was still in Australia.<sup>52</sup> Both of them assumed HELMUT's main occupation would be as a photographer.<sup>53</sup> At the end of December 1941, presenting himself to the *Warburg Institute*, GERNSHEIM stated that in addition to his formal education and work experience in Germany: »In this country I did all the photographic work for the *Sabin Gallery*, for Mrs. MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY, Mr. HELMUT RUHEMANN, for the sculptor GEORG EHRLICH and EWEIN [ERVIN] BOSSANYI, occasional work for the Studio etc. I also have taken a number of photographs of *St. George's Chapel* in Windsor which I should like to show you. When war broke out I offered my services to *His Majesty's Government* and was duly enrolled in the *Central Register of the Ministry for Labour and National Service*. In August of last year I received an appointment as professor for photography at the Laboratory for Anthropology at Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.p.A., but alas I had been interned in the general invasion fever in July and was on my way to Australia. Four weeks ago I returned to this country from Australia having been released from internment by the Home Secretary for my special qualifications. May I add in conclusion I am brother of Dr. WALTER GERNSHEIM, formerly of 5, Stratford Place, W. 1.«<sup>54</sup> GERNSHEIM appealed to the director, SAXL, on the basis of his professional qualifications, but also from his status as a stateless refugee. His most relevant previous work had been photographing German churches. But GERNSHEIM also was counting on his connections to the orbit of German Jewish émigrés, especially his brother, to help secure a position. For several months the *Warburg Institute* served HELMUT well as a way station par excellence, which was due, in part, to attitudes toward photography that derived from the (albeit secularized) Jewishness of the institution.

Inspired by the *Osnabrück symposium* (2012), it is only recently that evidence of GERNSHEIM's concern for Jews and photography has come to light. This was mainly something HELMUT had discussed with a select group. Most likely his thought on the matter would have materialized in publishable form had the opportunity to teach at *Jerusalem's Hebrew University* emerged as he would have liked. It is possible that HELMUT GERNSHEIM got wind of the fact that PETER POLLACK was invited to write the article on »*Jews and Photography*« for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in the late 1960s.<sup>55</sup> He also may

MICHAEL GERNSHEIM:  
Judenbischof of Worms,  
CA. 1705-1792



have heard that ARNOLD NEWMAN was asked to lecture on the subject, as NEWMAN contacted BEAUMONT NEWHALL for assistance.<sup>56</sup> Around that time GERNSHEIM began thinking about the importance of his own Jewishness, related to his realization that the over-representation of Jews in photography was no mere coincidence. From the early 1970s to the end of his life (1995), he seems to have found a community of affinity within the circle of those he knew from his varied photographic interests, whose company he had not only relished, but with whom he also shared an intuition that there was something special about the Jewish engagement with photography: TIM GIDAL, GISELE FREUND, and FERENC (FRANZ) BERKO.<sup>57</sup>

It may be said that GERNSHEIM came to full-flower in his Jewishness by joining, helping to cultivate, and then becoming disaffected with the small-scale movement he himself had partly sparked. One of the high points of his fascination with the issue of Jews and photography was his featured appearance at a conference held at the *Hebrew University of Jerusalem* in the summer of 1988. He also was keen to pursue a teaching appointment there, which probably would have included special attention to Jews and photography. But the position never materialized, and he soured on his informal association with *Hebrew University* and the *Israel Museum* when it seemed that their respective administrators mainly wished to exploit him for fundraising purposes.<sup>58</sup> GERNSHEIM's apparent turn to the Jewish fold was not as abrupt as it might seem. After returning from Australian internment, he regularly socialized with his *Dunera* shipmates.<sup>59</sup> In presenting himself to Anglo-Jewry upon the launch of his »*Victorian Photography*« exhibition at the Festival of Britain in 1951, GERNSHEIM identified emphatically with the *Jewish* people, although not in a religious sense, and professed to »take a personal interest in *Zionism* and the progress of Israel.«<sup>60</sup> The narrative he related to London's *Jewish Chronicle* was, not surprisingly, a Jewish story of his life and current aspirations. His concluding remark was highly significant: »It is my ambition... that this collection shall form the nucleus of a national museum of photography. In this way I hope to be able to express my gratitude to Britain.«<sup>61</sup> While most of his energy was devoted to building his collection, writing, staging exhibitions, and trying to find a permanent home

for his mushrooming research material, GERNSHEIM ardently followed politics in Germany—especially alert to evidence of smoldering *Nazism*. In 1953 he sought to express his dismay at the »*Naumann affair*« and similar developments in the pages of the *New Statesman & Nation*, but his letter was unpublished.<sup>62</sup> His antifascism was the chief article of his secular faith, as it was for thousands of other non-religious Jews at the time.<sup>63</sup> On the one hand, GERNSHEIM seemed to have no inhibitions about dealing with Germany and Germans in the wake of *Nazism*. But he drew a firm line between those who he believed denied the depth of German culpability for *Nazism* and the Holocaust and those who he felt were more honest.<sup>64</sup>

Consistent with his interview in the *JC*, the only substantial (known) publication of HELMUT GERNSHEIM outside of photographic matters was a history of his own family, *The Gernsheims of Worms* which appeared in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1979). The *Leo Baeck Institute (LBI)*, named after the leading progressive rabbi in Nazi Germany to have survived the Holocaust, was (and remains) the foremost institution dedicated to the history of German Jewry. Based in New York, it has branches in London, Jerusalem, and (more recently) Berlin. The placement of this article was a thoughtful decision on GERNSHEIM's part: he apparently wished to situate his family in the pantheon of German Jewish history.

»*The Gernsheims of Worms*« sprang from an ongoing discussion with TIM GIDAL. Upon GIDAL's suggestion, GERNSHEIM's initial thought was to prepare some entries about his own historically significant family members for a »*Jewish Lexicon*« planned by the *LBI*. GIDAL then surmised it would be better for GERNSHEIM to write about the family as a whole, and he asked the editor of the *LBI Year Book*, ARNOLD PAUCKER, to solicit an article from GERNSHEIM.<sup>65</sup> »I shall be happy,« GERNSHEIM responded, »to write a more extensive essay on the contributions the *House of Gernsheim in Worms* made both to Jewish History and German and British cultural life.«<sup>66</sup> The (projected) section on Britain would be focused on himself.

GERNSHEIM presented PAUCKER with a dense, three-page letter summarizing his family history—much of which would be repeated in the published article. Not surprisingly, the letter is more conversational, and includes a number of personal references that are not as explicit as in the article. Among GERNSHEIM's suggestions is that a picture of his ancestor, MICHAEL GERNSHEIM, »*the last Judenbischof*,« be included: »A contemporary painting

in my brother's possession shows him in his colorful Bishop's robes and the Doge-like pointed cap.«<sup>67</sup> The greatest difference between GERNSHEIM's prospectus and the published article was the omission of his own story. GERSHEIM regaled PAUCKER with »my own pioneering work in photo-history in England after World War II, three years of which I spent making extensive photographic surveys of the most important buildings and sculpture in the London area for the *National Buildings Record*. There were a number of exhibitions of my work at the *Courtauld Institute*, the *Churchill Club*, and the *National Gallery* [and] a one-man show at the *Royal Photographic Society* in 1948.«<sup>68</sup> This was not completely accurate. Although the exhibitions GERNSHEIM mentioned did indeed feature his work, they did not show his photographs exclusively, and at the time his name was not mentioned as the photographer.

GERNSHEIM was, however, on the mark about the importance of this endeavor, overall. Far more significant, however, in the history of photography, was the scathing criticism to which the *Royal Society* and its followers had been subjected in his first book, *New Photo Vision* (1942). On the one hand GERNSHEIM exaggerated the degree to which he was feted by the establishment. On the other he minimized the extent to which he had challenged, and even threatened the field. It was, after all, his *radicalism* that attracted the attention of BEAUMONT NEWHALL and was the thrust behind his original publications. What is most interesting in this self-presentation is that GERNSHEIM underscores his accomplishments within and as recognized by the mainstream—with which he was almost continuously at odds.

Along with the article on his family GERNSHEIM took up at least one other highly personal project constituting a departure from his earlier work. In 1972 he composed, then in 1993 revised, a poem interweaving the history of photography and the perpetration of the Holocaust, which was first presented by CLAUDE SUI at the symposium from which this volume derives.

It is not known if GERNSHEIM ever sought to publish this, or even showed it to anyone. It strongly echoes the feelings he confided to VAL WILLIAMS, about his abhorrence of Germans he met who claimed to have known nothing about the fate of the Jews, and those who denied widespread German culpability for the Holocaust. Perhaps even more important is that this seems to be the only place in his writing where GERNSHEIM deals with the relationship between *modernity*, *aesthetics*, and *antisemitism*.

Although Jews were not exclusively the founders of trends in the new photography, certainly they were overrepresented, and were among its greatest practitioners and enthusiasts. A similar interpretation about Jews at photography's cutting edge was articulated by TIM GIDAL in his article, »*Jews in Photography*« (1987), which issued in part from his relationship with GERNSHEIM.<sup>69</sup>

Despite such a stark drawing up of accounts, GERNSHEIM was far from having given up collecting and writing. His acquisitions after 1960, including the superb color photos of FRANZ BERKO, would form the heart of the collection bequeathed to the *Reiss-Engelhorn Museum* in Mannheim, which also would acquire the correspondence and books that had not been given to Texas. Perhaps the greatest failing of GERNSHEIM's précis submitted to the *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, after obfuscating the extent to which he had both created and unsettled a field, was not the inaccuracy of individual points. In highlighting himself as a lone wolf, it ignores something that he was only beginning to discern: that connections between Jews were important to the history of photography. While GERNSHEIM was waiting for a response from PAUCKER about the article, GIDAL repeated his support: »I do hope you will write that essay! No excuses here, you Semite!«<sup>70</sup> Said in jest, this was a clear affirmation of their shared sense that GERNSHEIM needed to claim his place in Jewish history. Around that time GIDAL and GERNSHEIM discussed writing a book together, composed of their conversations, which they referred to as »*GG Gespräche*« or »*G3*«. <sup>71</sup> Discussing his own preparations for teaching a course about the history of photography at the *Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem*, which was tied to the *Hebrew University*, GIDAL then proposed that GERNSHEIM teach the history of photography course. Having GERNSHEIM teach would mean »*that, die Lehre geht aus von Jerusalem.*« Overall the situation in Israel was turbulent, but, GIDAL boasted, it was »the most beautiful, most exciting country in the world, and Jerusalem is her crown, pardon the monarchistic chauvinistic express[ion], no leftypinky listening right now.«<sup>72</sup>

It is worth dwelling on GIDAL's comment, »*die Lehre geht aus von Jerusalem.*« Literally it translates as »*From Jerusalem will go forth the teaching (or »instruction,« or »the law«).*« It is, though, a slight misquote of the biblical expression: »*From Zion will go forth Torah*« or »*For instruction shall come forth from Zion.*« GIDAL was secularizing the prophecy of *Isaiah* 2:1-4 which is closely repeated in *Micah* 4: 1-3. It had been applied in many ways by Jews throughout their history, but probably most prominently

as a foundational ideal of the *Hebrew University of Jerusalem* for those of GIDAL's generation.<sup>73</sup> It was not simply a geographical or descriptive term: it inferred that sage-like wisdom and 'oracles' would issue from a restored Jewish presence in their ancestral home of Zion, in Jerusalem. The main point here is that GIDAL thought it appropriate that the greatest font of wisdom about the history of photography, HELMUT GERNSHEIM, have a platform at *Jerusalem's Hebrew University*.

From that moment on, until about 1990,<sup>74</sup> GERNSHEIM would engage in a number of Jewish and Israeli-centered activities. But for the time being the pressing issue was the piece that GERNSHEIM was itching to write. But the *LBI* did not want to publish an account of his achievements as an émigré.<sup>75</sup>

GERNSHEIM obviously was looking for a venue to situate his family and himself in Jewish history. There was, alas, to be no more continuity: »As the last three male GERNSHEIMS have no issue the name will unfortunately die with us,...« GERNSHEIM bluntly stated.<sup>76</sup> The prospects of the name were not as dire as he feared, in part because of his narrow definition of »issue« as male offspring. GERNSHEIM's niece, ELISABETH, would choose to carry the name herself, in combining it with the name of her late husband, ULRICH BECK, both of whom continued the family tradition of being renowned scholars. HELMUT GERNSHEIM's family account made it into the 1979 volume of the *LBI Year Book*, a fairly long gestation. Surprisingly, GERNSHEIM does not appear in GIDAL's article on *Jews and photography* of 1987 in the *LBI Year Book*, even though his discussions with GERNSHEIM had to have influenced his work.<sup>77</sup> Though HELMUT GERNSHEIM's own life and work did not feature in the published family history, he did situate himself in the text by referring to »my grandmother«, »my grandfather«, »my uncle«, and a »cousin.« Along with the Jewish enclaves of Speyer and Mainz, the Jews of Worms were one of the three foundational communities of *Ashkenaz* (Central European Jewry). All three were devastated, but not totally destroyed, in the *Crusades* long before HELMUT's ancestor reached the city in the late sixteenth century. The core history of his family resonated deeply with his own. »The founder of the GERNSHEIM family,« he begins, »came to Germany as a refugee from Spain following the expulsion of the Jews from that country in 1492. Nothing is known about him, not even his name; merely the fact that this *Sefardic* Jew settled in the little township of GERNSHEIM on the Rhine from which he took his new name.«<sup>78</sup>

GERNSHEIM's claim that his family is *Sephardi*, that is, originating from medieval Spain or Portugal, may be apocryphal. It was typical for German Jews of the nineteenth and early twentieth century elite, as well as their Anglo-Jewish counterparts, to claim a *Sephardic* background — because this suggested a status superior to Jews stemming from Eastern Europe.<sup>79</sup>

But however questionable or clouded in mystery were the GERNSHEIMs' beginnings, the family's endpoint was clear. »The last GERNSHEIM in Worms,« HELMUT wrote, »DR. MED. FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM,« a namesake of the musician, »committed suicide with his wife on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1938 in order to escape a worse fate at the hands of the Nazis. Thus we can look back on 400 years of family genealogy and history.«<sup>80</sup> This statement, undoubtedly true, is perhaps of greater historical interest than he realized. Had the double suicide occurred in the context of the *November Pogrom* of 1938, it would have been less remarkable. FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM and his wife became so distraught already in the summer of 1938 that they took their own lives. It is no accident that GERNSHEIM commences his article with his forebear entering Germany as a refugee and not as a migrant seeking a better future. Nazi stigmatization framed this fascinating, deeply personal portrait.

As GERNSHEIM was becoming better known world-wide as an authority on photography, he also was increasingly recognized as a Jew. He was informed in 1986 that a biographical entry on him was being prepared for the *Encyclopedia Judaica Year Book*, a series of supplements to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* of 1971. GERNSHEIM was happy to furnish information, far more than what was asked. This would allow for the kind of reckoning that he had not been permitted in the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*. No doubt he was happy to be honored and acknowledged in this way. But he did find one aspect of the proposal unsettling. »Miss (Yael) MAMAN mentions,« GERNSHEIM wrote tersely to Professor YESHAYAHU NIR, »that the forthcoming *Year Book* will include an article on *Jews in Photography*. Such a list was prepared by me in 1981 and copies were given to Dr. TIM GIDAL, an American journalist working on the staff of *Popular Photography*, and a few other interested people. I enclose a copy of my list and wonder who has had the audacity to copy me?«<sup>81</sup> The identity of the American journalist is not known. The others in addition to TIM GIDAL may have included GISELE FREUND and FERENC (FRANZ, to GERNSHEIM) BERKO. Whether there was, in fact, much Israeli interest in photography's history, as conceived by GERNSHEIM, is unclear.<sup>82</sup>



GERNSHEIM did, though, create at least three different »lists« on the subject of Jews and photography. I was shown one of these in Austin in 2010, and CLAUDE SUI revealed two others in his Osnabrück presentation. The first of GERNSEHEIM's extant lists, titled »*Jews Prominent in Photography*« is subtitled »*Including people of Jewish extraction.*« A note at the top states that it was »*Compiled by H.G. 1981.*« It was written sometime after June, 1980: by then GERNSEHEIM had learned that ANSEL ADAMS, and possibly others, were not members of the tribe.<sup>83</sup>

This evidently was the first of at least three such lists. There are a few errors—such as HUGH WELCH DIAMOND,<sup>84</sup> GERMAINE KRULL and YOUSEF KARSH. And there are some strange omissions—such as NAHUM LUBOSHEZ, historian and collector EDWARD EPSTEAN, and historian HEINRICH SCHWARZ, whose work was well-known to GERNSEHEIM. The second list added a few more: »BARON (born NAHUM),« that is, STERLING HENRY NAHUM; CHARGESHEIMER (CARL-HEINZ HARGESHEIMER), who worked in post-war West Germany; KASPAR FLEISCHMANN, a young, dealer from Switzerland; RALPH GIBSON; FRANCOISE HEILBRUN, a French photo historian and curator; and the animal photographer, CAMILLA KOFFLER (1911-1955), known as YLLA. GERNSEHEIM may have composed this list after he entered discussions about an exhibition of his own photography to be held in Hamburg. The show ran originally in Hamburg, at the *Galerie F.C. Grundlach*, then went to the *Spectrum Photogalerie* in Hannover's art museum, and finally, to his own former hometown, at the city museum of Munich.<sup>85</sup> Around the same time there was a proposed exhibition of photographs of FELIX H. MAN in the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin.<sup>86</sup>

For the latter GERNSEHEIM told GIDAL that he would »contribute a foreword to the catalogue« that would be »outspoken on the Jewish question.«<sup>87</sup> For the first time, in print, GERNSEHEIM addressed what the Nazi antisemitic campaign meant to photography.<sup>88</sup> In the same piece GERNSEHEIM called attention to the Jewishness of STEFAN LORANT. »In June 1940,« he wrote, »the German troops were 20km off the coast of England.« The country faced imminent invasion. »STEFAN LORANT went to America. He, as a Jew, did not want to be HITLER's Prisoner a second time.«<sup>89</sup> GERNSEHEIM was right that LORANT's identity figured prominently in his departure—but it had not, as we have seen, been LORANT's choice. GERNSEHEIM, though, had no reason to doubt the widespread belief that LORANT had »fled.«

The next known Jewish list of GERNSHEIM's was prompted by correspondence from GEORGE GILBERT, who was preparing a book about Jews and photography. GILBERT, as discussed by CLAUDE SUI, was not a historian, but a quirky photography journalist. Most likely, GERNSHEIM sent a copy of a list of Jews in photography before the one sent to GILBERT in September 1994.

It is not surprising that GERNSHEIM helped GILBERT.<sup>90</sup> Throughout his career GERNSHEIM had given everything from single bits of data to storehouses of information to anyone who asked. GILBERT was far from the most brilliant or esteemed person to seek GERNSHEIM's advice. GERNSHEIM not only helped him, but praised the project—which certainly was not up to his own standards.<sup>91</sup> Certainly GERNSHEIM knew it was not a great book. But his endorsement may be seen as indicative of the fact that he did, indeed, wish to see Jews in general, as well as himself, get more credit for animating the entire photographic field.

Perhaps the most intriguing figure missing from GERNSHEIM's lists and GILBERT's problematic survey, in the nexus between Jews and photography, is the New York book dealer LEW D. FELDMAN. FELDMAN was not simply a broker for GERNSHEIM. He took on the role of an advocate for GERNSHEIM's legitimacy, if not preeminence, in the arts, book, and manuscript world generally, and for photography to have a place at the table with the established fine arts. Moreover, he had remonstrated to HARRY RANSOM and other officials of the University and State of Texas, that GERNSHEIM was so important as the leader of the nascent field that all of the material related to photography also was worth a tidy sum. But there is no doubt that his primary loyalty was to HARRY RANSOM. At bottom, though, was FELDMAN's conviction that GERNSHEIM's collection was an authentic treasure that would prove to be of immense value.

In a long and thoughtful letter to FELDMAN of August 20, 1962, RANSOM explained why it would be best to withdraw from the purchase, however painful it was.<sup>92</sup> His priorities were filling »gaps« in existing fields of strength, and supplementing those areas where *University of Texas* already was distinguishing itself, such as Latin American material and »the theatre collections« for which they had attracted substantial foundation support.<sup>93</sup> Until this time, photography had not been part of its acquisition strategy. Despite this reasonable and sincere response, FELDMAN refused to take »no« for an answer. He pressed RANSOM to see him personally.<sup>94</sup> Although there is no paper trail to document RANSOM's change of heart, FELDMAN's forceful, personal intervention turned

the tide. Final terms were agreed by GERNSHEIM, FELDMAN, and RANSOM in a letter of June 13, 1963. FELDMAN convinced the GERNSHEIMS to relent on a number of their demands, especially their role as custodians of the collection, and got RANSOM to agree to what was, in the early 1960s, the highest price ever paid for photography: \$300,000.«<sup>95</sup>

Although FELDMAN has never been recognized as having a special interest in photography, there were at least two impulses behind his adamant push for the *Gernsheim Collection*. Once he saw it in London he felt that it had to end up in RANSOM's hands. The photographs in themselves were extraordinary, and many of them, especially those by LEWIS CARROLL, were obviously part-and-parcel of a more comprehensive body of knowledge integral to literature and culture generally. Surely he was moved by the brilliant photographs by ALFRED STIEGLITZ, for which GERNSHEIM's appreciation grew around that time.<sup>96</sup> FELDMAN was, after all, a »Hoboken Jew« like STIEGLITZ. His was willing to go to extraordinary lengths to make sure the *Gernsheim Collection* was established in Austin.

Perhaps one of FELDMAN's greatest contributions toward making the deal a success flew totally under the radar: the role he played in getting the purchase approved by the *State Board of Control (of Texas)*, bundling it into a number of purchases amounting to 1.2 million dollars. This most likely helped to prevent the price paid for the photographs from becoming scandalous.<sup>97</sup> This is not in itself unusual. But the way that FELDMAN embedded the *Gernsheim Collection* among the other purchases was both highly creative and at least somewhat misleading. It remains a question, though, if anyone bothered to read the document.

In the anthology dedicated to him by the *Forum Internationale Photographie* of the *Reiss-Engelhorn Museum* in Mannheim, HELMUT's second wife, IRENE, avers that »Being Jewish, there was no future for HELMUT GERNSHEIM in the Germany of the 1930s. And it was thanks to photography that he was able to leave the country in 1937 and make a new life, and a career for himself, in London.« But a crucial element is missing from this statement. Why photography open to him, as a Jew? When the collection (he had carefully cultivated with ALISON) mushroomed, he sought to establish a museum in London. After that failed, he tried »Paris, Stockholm, and a variety of German cities.«<sup>98</sup> In his interview with VAL WILLIAMS, GERNSHEIM is emphatic that being forthright about »Auschwitz« influenced his choices about suitable partners in

Germany.<sup>99</sup> His close friend, GISELE FREUND, had mixed feelings about »the effort of the Germans to ,recuperate‘ me« which he probably shared.<sup>100</sup>

One might also ask: would a German institution have initiated a relationship with HELMUT GERNSHEIM had he not been a refugee from the Nazis? Similar to the restitutive, ›affirmative action‹ [Wiedergutmachung] efforts of German institutions to embrace ALFRED EISENSTAEDT, ERICH SALOMON, JOSEF BREITENBACH, and GISELE FREUND, reaching out to GERNSHEIM is partly a consequence of trying to recapture a history of brilliance and forward-thinking in photography that was savaged by antisemitism and the Holocaust. Film and photography are now regarded as major, sparkling elements in ›Weimar culture.‹ It is to their credit that GERNSHEIM's partners and custodians of his legacy in Germany were oblivious to the fact that they had passed a litmus test concerning Auschwitz. By no means was GERNSHEIM anti-German: but he was dismayed, even angered, when Germans claimed that they had ›known nothing‹ about the fate of the Jews.<sup>101</sup>

HELMUT GERNSHEIM was treated less than sympathetically in the attempt to establish his collection as the foundation of a national photography center in Britain. In contrast, a burgeoning society of publishers in London, energized by fellow émigrés, emerged as a hospitable partner in his path-breaking photo-historical mission. On the one hand he showed the British how tremendous were their early contributions to photography. But on the other hand ›he kicked them in the ass‹ for being so conservative, even ossified at the midpoint of the twentieth century. The country expressed no remorse for shipping GERNSHEIM off on the *Dunera* and later, for obliging him to sell his fabulous photography collection to Austin and Mannheim. Despite the laudatory and incisive entry on GERNSHEIM in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and generous words of COLIN FORD,<sup>102</sup> the conventional wisdom of many in British photographic circles is that Britain did not lose much to Austin and Mannheim.<sup>103</sup> If it is admitted that the country did sustain a vast cultural hemorrhage, this often is qualified with the contention that it could not have been avoided—given the wealth of America and Germany. This is wrong. The acquisition of the *Gernsheim Collection* by the University of Texas in 1960s was controversial, even revolutionary. Photography had never been bought for such a price. In retrospect it is possible to say that everyone, except for the British, got a lot of out this deal. HELMUT GERNSHEIM, however, wished for his col-

lection to stay in Britain, and worked assiduously toward that end. His Jewishness, tied to his »foreignness,« certainly played a part in his collection leaving the country, and it helped steer the course of his life from the 1960s onward.

GERNSHEIM seriously contemplated, at one point, changing his name to »HARRY GRESHAM« in order to ease his acceptance in England but did not follow through. »Of course I would have had more success,« he said, laughing. But upon opening his mouth anyone »would have known I was a bloody foreigner.«<sup>104</sup> His foreignness, which was inextricably connected to his Jewishness, impinged significantly on the paths open to him, or not. Had he indeed been HARRY GRESHAM, a born and bred Englishman, would his eyes ever have been open to the complex relationships between photography and art, and the history of photography?

- 1 On the department store in German as a Jewish space, see PAUL LERNER: *The Consuming Temple: Jews, Department Stores, and the Consumer Revolution in Germany, 1880-1940*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 2015, pp. 5-6.
- 2 I thank Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim for this important fact.
- 3 Cf. EMILY J. LEVINE: *Dreamland of Humanists: Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky, and the Hamburg School*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2013.
- 4 Cf. MICHAEL BERKOWITZ: *Jews and Photography in Britain*. University of Texas Press, Austin 2015, pp. 134-176.
- 5 Ibid., p. 229.
- 6 This formulation derives from ISAAC DEUTSCHER: *The non-Jewish Jew and other essays*. edited with an introduction by TAMARA DEUTSCHER. Oxford University press, London 1968.
- 7 While it does not appear in the Oxford dictionary, *broyges* does appear in an online blog of Oxford Dictionaries; see: *From cherub to jubiless: Hebrew's influence on today's English*; available at [blog.oxforddictionaries.com/?s=broyges](http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/?s=broyges) [accessed July 2015]. *Broyges* is mainly known as a Yiddish term.
- 8 Cf. MICHAEL BERKOWITZ: *André Kertész in London* in: *eutopia*. 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015, available at [www.eutopiamagazine.eu/en/michael-berkowitz/columns/andre-kretesz-london](http://www.eutopiamagazine.eu/en/michael-berkowitz/columns/andre-kretesz-london) [accessed July 2015]
- 9 Cf. KLAUS WILCZYNSKI: *Das Gefangenenschiff*. Verlag am Park, Berlin 2001. p. 5.
- 10 Cf. *The Dunera Boys - 70 years on after notorious voyage*. BBC News, UK 10<sup>th</sup> July 2010, available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/10409026?print=true](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10409026?print=true).
- 11 Cf. *Gernsheim Photographic Corpus of Drawings*. in: ARTstor Digital Library, available at [www.artstor.org/what-is-artstor/w-html/col-gernsheim.s\(?\)html](http://www.artstor.org/what-is-artstor/w-html/col-gernsheim.s(?)html).
- 12 Cf. SHARMAN KADISH: *Landauer, Fritz Josef (1883-1968)*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. Jan 2011.
- 13 Cf. HELMUT GERNSHEIM: interview with VAL WILLIAMS as part of the *Oral History of British Photography* project, recorded in March 1995; C459/66. An online guide is available to this extensive interview, comprising nearly twenty taped segments, prepared by the author. This interview will be cited as HGVW, followed by the tape number; HGVW, tape 1.
- 14 Letter from WALTER GERNSHEIM to the *Academic Assistance Council*, stamped 7<sup>th</sup> November 1934, dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 1934, with a note from SAXL attached. *Society of the Protection of Science and Learning archive*. Radcliffe Library. University of Oxford [hereafter cited as SPSL]
- 15 Memo on pink paper, unsigned, most likely from SAXL concerning WALTER GERNSHEIM, dated 14<sup>th</sup> Dezember 1934. *Walter Gernsheim file*, SB SL.
- 16 A note indicating the termination of a temporary research fellowship from Munich, covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> November 1934 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 1935, undated note. *Walter Gernsheim file, Society of the Protection of Science and Learning archive*. Radcliffe Library. University of Oxford.
- 17 Unsigned memo on pink paper, apparently from SAXL, dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 1936. GERNSHEIM across the top, *Walter Gernsheim file, Society of the Protection of Science and Learning archive*. Radcliffe Library. University of Oxford.
- 18 Cf. A. J. SHERMAN and PAMELA SHATZKES: *Otto M. Schiff (1875-1952), Unsung Rescuer*. Leo Baeck Institute Year Book. Vol. 54 Issue 1, 2009. pp. 243-71
- 19 Card announcing exhibition, *Walter Gernsheim file, Society of the Protection of Science and Learning archive*. Radcliffe Library. University of Oxford.
- 20 Cf. for example: *Exhibition of drawings of the Bolognese school: May 10<sup>th</sup>-June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937*. W.GERNSHEIM, Warburg Institute Library. London 1939.
- 21 Cf. CLAUDE W. SUI: *Chronology. Helmut Gernsheim: Pionier der Fotogeschichte / Pioneer of Photo History*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz 2004. p. 334; WILLIAMS/GERNSHEIM, tapes 1, 7, 22.

- 22 Many of these photographs appear in HELMUT GERNSHEIM's first book *New Photo Vision*. Fountain Press. London 1942.
- 23 Item from the journal of NANCY NEWHALL on the relationship between ALFRED STIEGLITZ and JULIEN LEVY, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942. *Levy, Julien file*, papers of BEAUMONT NEWHALL and NANCY NEWHALL [hereafter cited as BN-NN] at the Getty Research Institute [hereafter cited as GRI]
- 24 The name GERTRUD LANDAUER, *MA 1934* appears a spring 2004 newsletter of the Courtauld Institute, in an effort to trace alumni with whom they have lost contact. available at [www.courtauld.ac.uk/newsletter/spring\\_2004/cafs.shtml](http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/newsletter/spring_2004/cafs.shtml)
- 25 HELMUT GERNSHEIM, biographical statement, Gernsheim Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas. Austin [hereafter cited as HRC].
- 26 Cf. Letter from WALTER GERNSHEIM. 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1944. *Walter Gernsheim file*, SPSSL.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 FRITZ SAXL to ESTHER SIMPSON. 11<sup>th</sup> September 1944. file of GERNSHEIM, Dr. WALTER (1909-). File 1934-45, Mp. p.P.p.L, 490/4, SPSSL.
- 29 Undated memo from J. B. SKEMP, *Dr and Mrs Gernsheim*, handwritten, *Walter Gernsheim file*, SPSSL.
- 30 WALTER GERNSHEIM: *Corpus Photographicum of Drawings* in: *letters to the editor*. College Art Journal, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter 1948-49). pp. 136-7.
- 31 Letter from F. J. LANDAUER to FRITZ SAXL. 31<sup>st</sup> August 1944. *Walter Gernsheim file*, SPSSL.
- 32 Cf. VERA GRODZINSKI: *French Impressionism and German Jews: The making of Modernist Art Collectors and Art Collections in Imperial Germany 1896-1914*. Phd dissertation. University College London. 2003.
- 33 Cf. WALTER GERNSHEIM: *Corpus Photographicum of Drawings*.
- 34 Cf. Account of ALBERT KAROLYI » 3.9 Belief on Dunera that Internees are Heading for Canada, «. in: *The Dunera Affair*. pp. 191-2.
- 35 Cf. CLAUDE W. SUI: *Chronology* in: *Helmuth Gernsheim: Pionier der Fotogeschichte / Pioneer of Photo History*. Hatje Cantz, Ortsfildern-Ruit 2003. p. 336
- 36 Cf. HELEN BARLOW: *Gernsheim, Helmut Erich Robert (1913-1995)*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford University Press. 2004 [[www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58543](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58543), accessed 17<sup>th</sup> August 2011]. hereafter cited as BARLOW, GERNSHEIM, DNB.
- 37 HGVW, tape 3.
- 38 Cf. CLAUDE W. SUI: *Chronology*. p. 336.
- 39 Wilczynski. pp. 199, 201
- 40 HGVW, tape 3.
- 41 HGVW, tape 4.
- 42 HELMUT GERNSHEIM: *The Gernsheims of Worms*. Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute, Vol. 24 (1979). p. 249.
- 43 ERICH STENGER: *Die Photographie in Kultur und Technik. Ihre Geschichte während hundert Jahren*. E.A. Seemann. Leipzig 1938; translation by EDWARD EPSTEIN is entitled *The History of Photography: Its Relation to Civilisation and Practice*. Mack Printing Co.(?) Easton, Pennsylvania 1939; SUI: *Chronology*. p. 336.
- 44 CLAUDE W. SUI: *Chronology*. p. 336.
- 45 »3.30 The Camp School and University, Hay.« *The Dunera Affair*. pp. 4-263
- 46 WILCZYNSKI. p. 219.
- 47 PAUL R. BARTON with GABRIELLE EISEN (Eds). *The Dunera Affair*. p. 387
- 48 WILLIAMS / GERNSHEIM, tape 3.
- 49 CLAUDE W. SUI: *Chronology*. p. 336.
- 50 WILLIAMS / GERNSHEIM, tape 3.
- 51 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to L. W. SIPLEY. Ms. Gernsheim, Letters, H, 11 Teel to the American Museum of Photography 1953-1963, HRC.
- 52 HGVW, tape 2, 3, 4.
- 53 HGVW, tape 4.
- 54 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to F. SAXL, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1941. Warburg Institute Archive, General Correspondence.

- 55 Cf. MICHAEL BERKOWITZ: *Jews in Photography: Conceiving a Field in the Papers of Peter Pollack in: Photography & Culture*. Vol. 4, Issue (Nr.) 1 (March 2011). pp. 7–28. By 1975 Gernsheim was definitely aware of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, which included an article about his renowned composer ancestor, FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM; TIM GIDAL to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1975 and 21<sup>st</sup> December 1975. Helmut Gernsheim Collection, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museum [hereafter cited as RE].
- 56 Arnold Newman to Beaumont Newhall, 15th February 1968. uncatalogued Arnold Newman material, Arnold Newman paper (in process) [hereafter cited as AN]
- 57 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to FRANZ (FERENC) BERKO, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1990. RE.
- 58 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to MEIR MEYER, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1990. RE.
- 59 PETER W. JOHNSON (formerly WOLFGANG JOSPERHS) to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1960. RE
- 60 *Victorian Photography: The Gernsheim Collection*, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1951 in: *Jewish Chronicle*, 5.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 BERKOWITZ: *Jews and Photography in Britain*. p. 249.
- 63 F. R. BIENENFELD: *The Religion of the Non-Religious Jews*. Museum Press. London 1944.
- 64 WILLIAMS / GERNSHEIM, tapes 11 and 12.
- 65 ARNOLD PAUCKER to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1975. RE.
- 66 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to ARNOLD PAUCKER, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1975. LBI Archives, Center of Jewish History. New York.
- 67 Ibid., p. 1.
- 68 Ibid., p. 3.
- 69 NACHUM T. (TIM) GIDAL: *Jews in Photography*. Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, Vol. 32 (1987). pp. 53–437.
- 70 TIM GIDAL to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1976. RE.
- 71 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to TIM GIDAL, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1976. RE.
- 72 TIM GIDAL to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1976. RE.
- 73 Cf.(?) DAVID N. MYERS: *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*. Oxford University Press. New York 1995.
- 74 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to MEIR MEYER, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1990. RE.
- 75 ARNOLD PAUCKER to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1979. RE.
- 76 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to ARNOLD PAUCKER, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1975, 3.77 GIDAL: *Jews in Photography*. Leo Baeck Institute Year, Vol. 32 (1987). pp. 53–437. In his later publication GIDAL reproduced the picture of MICHAEL GERNSHEIM, the Jews' Bishop, but there is no reference to HELMUT. see (cf?) Nachum T. Gidal: *Jews in Germany from Roman Times to the Weimar Republic*, trans. HELEN ATKINS, PATRICIA CRAMPTON, IAIN MCMILLIAN, TONY WELLS. Könenmann. Köln 1998. p. 106
- 78 *The Gernsheims of Worms*. pp. 247–257.
- 79 ISMAR SCHORSCH: *The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy*. Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, Vol. 34, Issue 1 (1989). pp. 47–66
- 80 *The Gernsheims of Worms*. p. 247.
- 81 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to Y. (YEHOSHUA) NIR, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1986. RE
- 82 YESHAYAHU NIR: *Camera Judaica*. Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book (1987). pp. 45–139
- 83 Postcard showing Mt. McKinley and Wonder Lake. Mt. McKinley National Park, Alaska 1947 (photo by ANSEL ADAMS), from ANSEL ADAMS to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1980. RE.
- 84 According to SANDER GILMAN, there is no information about DIAMOND's (?) background that would justify his identification as Jewish or not.
- 85 HELMUT GERNSHEIM: *Photographien, 1935–1982*. Galerie F. C. Grundlach. Hamburg 1983.
- 86 FELIX H. MAN: *Bildjournalist der ersten Stunde*. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Berlin 1983.
- 87 HELMUT GERNSHEIM to TIM GIDAL, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1983. RE.



- 88 HELMUT GERNSHEIM: *Felix H. Man*. in: *Felix H. Man. Bildjournalist der ersten Stunde*. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Berlin 1983. unpaginated.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 GEORGE GILBERT: *The Illustrated Worldwide Who's Who of Jews in Photography: Photographers, Scientist, Israel and Women*. published by the author. New York 1996
- 91 Personal communication with FRANK DABBA SMITH concerning GILBERT's publication *The Freedom Train*. copy of correspondence from 21<sup>st</sup> September 2010, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013.<sup>92</sup>
- HARRY RANSOM to LEW FELDMANN, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1962. file Feldman Lew 1962, Harry Ransom Files. HRC.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 FRANCES HUDSPETH, personal assistant to HARRY RANSOM, to LEW FELDMAN, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1962, file Feldman Lew 1962, Harry Ransom Files. HRC.
- 95 The terms were summarized in a letter requested by GERNSHEIM, in order to enable him to purchase property. HARRY RANSOM to GERNSHEIM, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1964. Gernsheim, Helmut (1960-1972) file, Harry Ransom Collection. HRC.
- 96 See (Cf.) HELMUT GERNSHEIM: *The Return to Realism* in: *MOTIF*, No. 2 (February 1959). pp. 35-48.
- 97 HARRY RANSOM to WILLIAM J. BURKE, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1964. Gernsheim, Helmut (1960-1972) file, Harry Ransom Collection. HRC
- 98 IRENE GERNSHEIM: *The Fascination of Photography*. p. II in: HGPF; see also CLAUDIO DE POLO SAIBANTI: *Meeting Helmut Gernsheim*. p. 15 in: *Helmut Gernsheim: Pionier der Fotogeschichte*; CLAUDE W. SUI: *Helmut Gernsheim: Pioneer Collector and Historian of Photography*. p. 19; CLAUDE W. SUI: *Chronology*. pp. 38-330.
- 99 HGFW, tape II.
- 100 GISELE FREUND to JOAN DAVIES, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1986. folder 7, general correspondance, Gisele Freund papers. Washington State University Special Collections. Pullman, Washington.
- 101 HGFW, tape II.
- 102 COLIN FORD: *Helmut Gernsheim and Julian Margaret Cameron - A Personal Tribute* in: *Helmut Gernsheim: Pionier der Fotogeschichte*. pp. 77-81.
- 103 MARK HAWORTH BOOTH interviewed by VAL WILLIAMS, August 1992. Oral History of British Photography Collection, C459/24; F3062-F3066, part 7.
- 104 HGFW, tape 15.





**HELMUT GERNSHEIM: PIONEER COLLECTOR AND HISTORIAN OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

CLAUDE W. SUI

HELMUT GERNSHEIM was a pioneer and contemporary witness to the history of photography. He is considered one of the people who helped pave the way for a new science of art because, based on his critical sensitivity and extensive specialist expertise, he recognized photography quite early on as an autonomous medium, and this at a time when photography was not accorded today's artistic appreciation alongside the traditional arts. On the suggestion of BEAUMONT NEWHALL, the sometime curator at *The Museum of Modern Art in New York*, he laid the foundation in 1945 for the world-famous *Gernsheim Collection*. GERNSHEIM discovered forgotten masterpieces from the early history of photography and unearthed the world's earliest surviving photograph, a *heliography*, taken by JOSEPH NICÉPHORE NIÉPCE in 1826.



The family tree of the GERNSHEIMS extends back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to an old family tradition their ancestors originated from the expulsion of Jews Spain in 1492. They found sanctuary in the small German town of Gernsheim on the Rhine, in the present state of Hesse, and adopted the name of the city; most likely out of gratitude. (This was a good three hundred years before *Napoleon's edict* of 1808 requiring Jews in the Rhine regions annexed by France to adopt the name of the community in which they lived.) Later the family moved to the city of Worms. Among the first distinguished GERNSHEIMS was the Rabbi MICHAEL (MACHOL) GERNSHEIM (born in Worms

around 1705; died in Worms on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1792). As an elected leader of the Jewish community, he was active in city's administration and judiciary and remained in office into the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the »last bishop of the Jews« (*episcopus Iudaeorum*) in Worms. This was a position that could only be held by a person who led a exemplary life and

was prosperous enough to carve out time for community affairs. Many members of the GERNSHEIM dynasty were merchants and traders, including tanners and leather dealers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the leather manufacturers *Gernsheim & Söhne* grew prosperous as military suppliers. Other members were active in the food and wine trades, one owning a famous vineyard in Worms that produced the genuine *Liebfraumilch*. The history of the GERNSHEIMS living in Worms ended tragically with the suicides of the physician FELIX »FRITZ« FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM (1872–1938) and his wife ROSA, who both ingested poison before the Nazis could deport them. HELMUT (ERICH ROBERT KUNO) GERNSHEIM was born on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1913, the third son of KARL THEODOR GERNSHEIM (born in Worms on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1879, died in Munich on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1927) and his wife, HERMINE (née SCHOLZ) (born in Freiburg im Breisgau on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1880; died in Freiburg im Breisgau on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1954), at Reitmorstrasse 30 in Munich. KARL GERNSHEIM was a literary historian and taught in an honorary capacity at *Munich University*. HELMUT's oldest brother, HANS (born in Berlin on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1907; died in Traunstein on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1975), studied business and ultimately became a senior government councillor in the *Statistisches Landesamt* of Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart. His daughter ELISABETH BECK-GERNSHEIM received a doctorate in sociology in 1973 and held a professor at *Erlangen*

*University* from 1994 till 2009. Since 2013 she has been a senior research fellow at the *Institute for Cosmopolitan Studies* at the *University of Munich*. ELISABETH's late husband, ULRICH BECK (born 15 May 1944, Slupsk, Poland; died 1 January 2015, Munich), with whom she often collaborated, was one of the world's leading sociologists, at the forefront of historically-grounded theoretical discussions of globalization. ELISABETH's uncle, HELMUT GERNSHEIM's second brother WALTER (born on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1909) studied art history with WILHELM PINDER in Munich and became an important connoisseur of old master drawings, which he sold in his gallery in London. Today he lives in Aubonne, Switzerland and Florence, Italy. In 2003 the collectors WALTER and JUTTA GERNSHEIM generously

donated their 175,000 photographic reproductions of drawings from public and private collections to the *Bibliotheca Hertziana* in Rome, known as the *Gernsheim Corpus of Drawings*, which is discussed in this volume by MICHAEL BERKOWITZ. Two members of the GERNSHEIM family had also achieved renown as musicians, e.g. the composer FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM (1839–1916) and WILHELM GERNSHEIM (1899–

1975).<sup>1</sup> HELMUT GERNSHEIM's father, KARL THEODOR GERNSHEIM; a culturally assimilated Jew who had converted to *Protestantism* and then married a Catholic, was a literary historian and handwriting expert at the library of *Munich University*. HELMUT and his brothers were raised in a »half-Jewish« family and received a *humanistic* education. KARL THEODOR's ancestors had come from Gernsheim on the Rhine, in the present state of Hesse, who later moved to city of Worms. They mostly traded in leather, foodstuffs or wine. However, Even as a child, HELMUT GERNSHEIM proved himself a passionate collector, assembling samples of butterflies, minerals, and other objects. HELMUT GERNSHEIM attended the *Wilhelm-Gymnasium* in Munich. During the years of hyperinflation, his parents sent him to live in the countryside (from September 1923 to April 1925) as food was far more plentiful there. He also had the privilege of receiving private lessons. He returned to Munich and the *Wilhelm-Gymnasium* (May 1925 until July 1927), then from September 1927 until March 1930, the Progymnasium in Nördlingen, and finally, from May 1930 until March 1933, the *St.-Anna-Gymnasium* in Augsburg, where he took his graduation exam. In school he was exposed to Anti-Semitic hostility because of his Jewish-sounding name.

GERNSHEIM family portrait.



HELMUT GERNSHEIM  
during his schooldays in Munich.



#### HELMUT GERNSHEIM AS A STUDENT IN MUNICH

With an interest in art first kindled through books in his father's extensive library, HELMUT GERNSHEIM had been sure, since the age of fifteen, that he would become an art historian. Initially it seemed that his desire was to be fulfilled. In April 1933 he began his studies in art history at *Munich University*, attending lectures by WILHELM PINDER, who was also supervising the doctoral research carried out by his brother, WALTER GERNSHEIM.<sup>2</sup> After two semesters, however, and on WALTER's advice, HELMUT opted for a practical training in photography, which would allow him, if necessary, to earn his living abroad. This decision led HELMUT GERNSHEIM to the *Bavarian State School of Photography*, also in Munich, which at that time had the best international reputation of all comparable institutions in Germany and could already look back on a great tradition.<sup>3</sup> Although by this time the Nazis had already risen to power, and the school was only able to admit a much smaller percentage of students with a Jewish or 'half-Jewish' background,<sup>4</sup> HELMUT GERNSHEIM was nonetheless able to start his training as a photographer on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934. Throughout this two-year course, from which he graduated *summa cum laude* (July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936),<sup>5</sup> he was largely spared any direct experience of antisemitism. GERNSHEIM's approach to the photographic image was deeply imbued with the spirit of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), with a distaste for *Pictorialism*, the artistic photography of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries against which ALFRED STIEGLITZ also rebelled. It struck GERNSHEIM as overly manipulative and a mere imitation of painting. He preferred, instead, to explore the latest developments in color photography.<sup>6</sup> In due course, the liberal approach of the *Bavarian State School of Photography* also succumbed to the ideological pressure from the new régime in Germany. Yet while the visual language of the German illustrated press in the 1930s largely kept in step with the propagandistic aesthetics of the Nazis,<sup>7</sup> at the Institute itself the influence of the *avant-garde* from the 1920s was not altogether eradicated. In retrospect, GERNSHEIM would later describe his own training as a photographer as »progressive« and »modern«.<sup>8</sup> It had fostered both his capacity for artistic expression and his individual creativity.

HELMUT GERNSHEIM:  
Munich Puppet Theatre.

From September 1<sup>st</sup> until October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1936, GERNSHEIM headed the *Pigorsch Portrait Studio* in Küstrin, a garrison city on the Oder River. There he was responsible for taking passport photos, but also diverse tasks, such as taking photographing prisoners and bodies in the morgue. From November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1936 until July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1937, he was employed as a photographer at the firm of *Preiss & Co.* in Munich which specialized in color photography. Here GERNSHEIM deepened his practical knowledge using the process known as *Uvachrome*. This expertise proved beneficial upon his emigration to England, because the *Institute of British Photographers* had persuaded the British government to not allow any more foreign professional photographers working in black and white into the country. A corresponding decree was issued in 1936, just as GERNSHEIM was finishing his training as a photographer. In October 1937, GERNSHEIM was to be drafted into military service. As part of his thesis he had written an extensive report on the *Munich Puppet Theatre* and had become friends with the theatre's director, a man named HILMAR BINTER. When GERNSHEIM induction into the military was imminent, BINTER foresaw that his friend would likely face grave difficulties and probably the end of his career due to his »half-Jewish« ancestry. So when the ministry of propaganda needed some German guest exhibitions for the *World's Fair* in Paris, BINTER helped arrange GERNSHEIM's trip abroad. On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1937, HELMUT GERNSHEIM emigrated to London. At the time, only two other photographers in Great Britain were working in color. From September 1937 until 1939, GERNSHEIM worked as a freelance photographer in London. He received advertising commissions from large firms, taking photographs in color and black & white; including interiors and luxury cabins on passenger steam liners (for clients such as *P.&O.*, *Ellerman Shipping Lines* and *Rolls-Royce Limited*), he also photographed paintings for the *National Gallery* and for the auction houses *Sotheby's* and *Christie's*. While in London he worked with the Munich firm *Uvachrome* and for other artists & friends. The first solo exhibition of GERNSHEIM's photography took place in October 1937 at his brother WALTER's gallery at Stratford Place in London. The subject matter was mainly landscapes taken in Munich between 1934 and 1937, as well as architectural photography, still-lives, close-ups of flowers,



and portraits. Around this time, he met LUCIA MOHOLY, author of *A Hundred Years of Photography*,<sup>9</sup> who had separated from her husband LÁSZLÓ, GERNSHEIM came to value her very highly. The steamer company *P.&O. (Pacific and Orient)* offered GERNSHEIM

the opportunity to join a cruise from the 7<sup>th</sup> until May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1938, in order to take photographs for advertising purposes. This trip took him to Istanbul, Athens, Venice and Dubrovnik. GERNSHEIM first met his future wife ALISON, on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1938 while she was still married to her first husband, BLEN WILLIAMS, a senior accountant with the aircraft manufacturer *De Havilland*. The *Second World War* broke out in September 1939, and roughly a year and a half later the Germans took Dunkirk. In Great Britain, all male foreigners between the ages of 16 and 60 were interned, fearing that they were spies or Nazi sympathizers. All Germans immediately became *Enemy Aliens*. Those who

had left Germany on grounds of political or racial persecution, were however, categorized as *Friendly Enemy Aliens*. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1940, all foreigners were gathered in London at the Kempton Park racetrack, where they had to spend the night. The next day they were transferred to an internment camp in Huyton, near Liverpool. It was here that GERNSHEIM became acquainted with NIKOLAUS PEVSNER, whose art lectures at the *Courtauld Institute*

and *Birkbeck College* in London had made a lasting impression on him. GERNSHEIM volunteered to emigrate to Canada, since his only alternative would have been to spend his time in an English internment camp until the end of the war. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940, the cargo ship *Dunera* left the harbour of Liverpool with 2,200 passengers on board, including GERNSHEIM (see

PAUL R. BARTROP, ed., *The Dunera Affair*. Victoria, 1990). In clear violation of international law the interned foreigners were treated as prisoners of war and guarded below deck by British soldiers whose weapons were equipped with bayonets. The prisoners were permitted ten minutes of fresh air daily, and only within a small area of the deck enclosed with barbed wire. The cargo ship was attacked twice by German *U-Boote* [submarines].



Prisoners disembarking  
from the Dunera;  
The Sydney Morning Herald,  
September 6, 1940

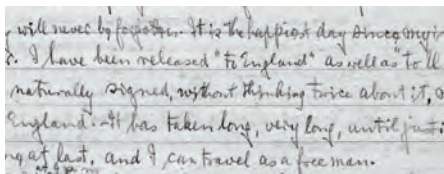


Hay Internment Camp,  
Australia

TN], and only narrowly escaped sinking. After that the captain suddenly changed course. Rather than heading for the original destination in Canada, he had orders to sail to Australia. The ship reached Sydney on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940, after fifty-eight days. The journey ended with a train ride to the internment camp of Hay on the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales, on the edge of the desert. For the British soldiers, Hay was a synonym for hell, since the temperatures there easily exceeded forty degrees Celsius during the day. Many of the prisoners were not accustomed to this extreme climate and the frequent dry desert winds, and thereby suffered from heart and circulation problems. The camp had been planned for *Nazi* prisoners and consisted of two large wooden barracks, secured with a four-meter tall barbed-wire fence and watchtowers with machine guns and searchlights. GERNSHEIM was held captive in this internment camp from September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1940 until May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941. Some of the internees sought to overcome this impasse with meaningful activities. Barracks were constructed for the administration but also for singing and theatre performances; a choir, a theatre company and various other interest groups were formed. Among those imprisoned, there were many scholars and specialists, and during the long sea voyage GERNSHEIM had been able to garner a small circle to discuss aesthetic questions regarding photography. Some others were interested in the knowledge and experience that he had collected in Germany and England. Friends of GERNSHEIM sent him photography journals and the book *The History of Photography: Its Relation to Civilization and Practice* (1939), the English translation of ERICH STENGER's *Die Photographie in Kultur und Technik* (1938) <sup>10</sup>. A fellow prisoner lent him the paperback on photography by LUCIA MOHOLY that he had already read in England. These two books reawakened his interest in the history of photography and served as a basis for the lectures he held for the camp inmates. These were his first steps as a historian of photography, which would materialize as *New Photo Vision*. After some time, the commandant of the camp asked GERNSHEIM to take passport photos of inmates, which were required for visa applications for other countries. GERNSHEIM was issued a *Kodak* roll-film camera and a tripod, he also improvised a small studio. Accompanied by a soldier, he was permitted to travel to Hay to purchase the necessary film. Developing and printing were done at a local drugstore.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941, GERNSHEIM was moved to another camp located in Orange, New South Wales, northwest of Sydney, and

Excerpt from  
HELMUT GERNSHEIM'S diary,  
October, 1941



will never be forgotten. It is the happiest day since my  
I have been released "to England" as well as "to U.  
naturally signed without thinking twice about it, to  
England. It has taken long, very long, until just  
at last, and I can travel as a free man.

and remained there until July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1941. The living conditions were more bearable in this camp, which had been originally constructed for Japanese prisoners of war. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1941, GERNSHEIM was relocated once again to the *Tatura Camp* near Shepparton, north of Melbourne, where he stayed until his release on October

1<sup>st</sup>, 1941. The camp, in which Italian nationals from England had originally been interned, was situated in an attractive area surrounded by meadows and eucalyptus trees. The climate was pleasant, and conditions were excellent. The camp

inmates had the opportunity to place orders for goods by mail and make the necessary bank payments. Catalogs, newspapers, and magazines were also distributed. The men were able to take up farming and generally allowed to spend their time as they wished. From newspapers in *Tatura* the prisoners finally learned that their situation had come to the attention of the general English public and had been debated in Parliament. GERNSHEIM noted in his diary on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1941: »This day will always remain unforgettable. It is the happiest day since my internment in July of last year. I am free to leave for »England« or, just as good, for »the USA... , and I can travel as a free man« (diaries in the *Gernsheim Papers*, *Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen*, Mannheim). On October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1941, he began his journey home on the *Sterling Castle*. The route led him to Auckland, New Zealand; Cape Horn; South America; through the Panama Canal; and finally back to Liverpool, which is to say all around the world—but unfortunately without a camera, as GERNSHEIM later mourned. PETER HUNTER, the son of the photojournalist ERICH SALOMON, was on the same ship, and GERNSHEIM took the opportunity to take up contact with SALOMON. After his release from the internment camp GERNSHEIM had a choice of staying in England or emigrating to America, where friends offered him a post as a curator at the *Museum of Santa Fé*, New Mexico. There was however, no possibility of direct emigration from Australia to America, since the Australian government would not recognize a prisoner's release on Australian soil, and the United States was not permitted to issue visas to prisoners.

All those who wanted to travel to America first had to return to England and then apply there for a visa following their official release. About twenty-five of those interned, among them

GERNSHEIM and his cousin ERWIN FABIAN, who later established himself as a sculptor in Australia, were released on the basis of their possessing professional qualifications important for the English state. The British government generally favored applicants who had already received permission to emigrate to another country

or to enlist in the British army, but also for those who could perform important services for Britain. GERNSHEIM met these conditions. He was thus able to apply for work at the *National Buildings Record*, a newly established institution for the protection and preservation of buildings and monuments of national significance that were threatened by wartime bomb attacks. His landlord had emptied his former apartment in London and had his furniture placed in storage, since he had not been able to pay rent in his absence.

Therefore GERNSHEIM stayed with his cousin LILO FABIAN. Barely three months after his arrival, the director of the *National Buildings Record*, SIR JOHN SUMMERSON, advised GERNSHEIM to contact the *Warburg*

*Institute* in London, which was seeking to employ a photographer in London. However, It took some time before GERNSHEIM could secure the job, as he needed the approval of the *Ministry of Labour*, the military authorities, the Navy, and even the church. GERNSHEIM's work for the *Warburg Institute* consisted of a photographic surveys of the most important historical buildings and monuments in London such as *Westminster*

*Abbey*, *St. Paul's Cathedral*, the *British Museum* and *Number 10 Downing Street*. Thanks to this project, led by the art historian RUDOLF WITTKOWER, GERNSHEIM documented the historical monuments in detail with the help of three five-hundred-watt floodlights. Already an employee of the *Royal Photographic Society* since 1940, GERNSHEIM was elected a member in November 1942, though he soon became disgusted with the prevailing aesthetic of *Pictorialism*. In the fall of 1942, GERNSHEIM, photographed the rooms of CHURCHILL at *Number 10 Downing Street*. A brief encounter with CHURCHILL ensued, in which the politician addressed him and asked about his profession, GERNSHEIM responded: »Taking photographs for the *National Buildings Record*.« When



HELMUT GERNSHEIM  
London, 1946



ALISON and HELMUT GERNSHEIM  
London, 1951

questioned about his origins, he answered: »Well, the last place of residence was Australia.« CHURCHILL then inquired: »But you are not an Australian, are you?« to which GERNSHEIM replied: »No, sir, I'm not. I am a refugee from Germany, (I) volunteered to go to Canada and found myself in Australia instead.« CHURCHILL answered:

»Ah, I remember. That matter caused us a lot of trouble. But we brought you back. I hope everything is all right now.« With that he vanished into his study.<sup>11</sup>

After his internment and return London November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1941, GERNSHEIM was able to complete and publish his first book, *New Photo Vision*, based on the lecture notes he had made in the camps.<sup>12</sup> He was assisted in this project by his future wife, ALISON, who typed and edited the manuscript in the evenings after returning from her secretarial job. This small publication was a severe critique of the persistent adherence of English photographers to the *Pictorialism* of the turn of the century and a call for a new, more truly photographic approach.<sup>13</sup> It also led to a fateful meeting with BEAUMONT NEWHALL, who had been curator of the photographic collections at the *Museum of Modern Art* in

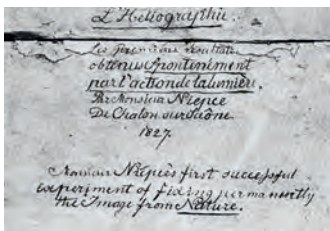
New York before enlisting as a photojournalist in the U.p. Army. When NEWHALL was stationed in Cairo he bought a copy of GERNSHEIM's book, not knowing that its author had already sent one to him in New York. In the letter of thanks that GERNSHEIM was to receive later, NEWHALL explained: »I purchased your *New Photo Vision* in Cairo in the summer of '43, and found it a » most interesting and stimulating book.«

»I well remember the satisfaction I found in your thesis, so in agreement with my own philosophy of photography. There has been so little genuine aesthetic criticism of photography as an independent art form that it is a real pleasure to make the acquaintance of a fellow critic. Perhaps our paths may cross; I look forward to meeting you.«<sup>14</sup> In December 1944, NEWHALL spent two weeks with the GERNSHEIMS in London. He had been commissioned by the U.p. Army to obtain information there on the efficacy of the German V2 rockets. After this first meeting, during which the two men became close friends, GERNSHEIM wished to

JOSEPH NIÉCEPHORE NIÉPCE:  
View from the window at le Gras  
Saint-Loup-de-Varennès, 1827



Back of the world's oldest photograph,  
lettered by FRANCIS BAUER  
Saint-Loup-de-Varennès, 1827



present NEWHALL with a parting gift of several stereo photographs, but NEWHALL declined them by telling him: »They should be the foundation stone of your own collection.«<sup>15</sup> For GERNSHEIM this became the stimulus for collecting old photographs. Between 1945

and 1963, HELMUT GERNSHEIM's collection of old photographs grew to become the largest of its kind, comprising some 40,000 images, a library of 3,500 books, 200 albums of photographs, and 200 pieces of photographic apparatus. It included many incunabula from the early days of photography, primarily by artists of the Victorian era, as well as the oldest surviving photograph, a so-called *heliogravure* by JOSEPH NICÉPHORE NIÉPCE. In the first half of the twentieth century HELMUT and ALISON GERNSHEIM pioneered the study of the history of photography; *The History of Photography. From the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the Eleventh Century up to 1914* was published in 1955 in an edition of 3,000 copies. The success

of this volume was only made possible by the close collaboration with ALISON GERNSHEIM who must be considered co-author of this work. Until her death in 1969, ALISON GERNSHEIM collaborated on all of HELMUT GERNSHEIM's book projects. The growth of the collection and the ever greater demands it imposed on GERNSHEIM soon prompted him, along ALISON, to consider the possibility of using it as the basis for a photography museum. The GERNSHEIMS tried for some twelve years to have their collection accepted by an arts or cultural institution, but to no avail. In an interview GERNSHEIM summed up the situation: »I spent twelve years offering my collection to a total of thirty-four cities and institutions. Not a single one took up my offer.«<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the main reason of their failure was their apparently excessive conditions. The acquisition of the collection was subject to the condition that HELMUT be appointed as its director and ALISON as his curatorial assistant, with lifetime contracts and pensions for both of them. After a series of setbacks the historical part of the collection was acquired by the *Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center* at the *University of Texas* in Austin for US\$ 300,000 (GERNSHEIM claimed in an interview that by 1992 the estimated value of this material had risen to US\$

ALISON and HELMUT GERNSHEIM's  
rediscovery of NIÉPCE's heliogravure, 1952





40 million).<sup>17</sup> In 1964, GERNSHEIM's collection of duplicates did go to Sweden where it served as the foundation for the photography department of *Stockholm's Moderna Museet*.<sup>18</sup> In the mid-1960s HELMUT GERNSHEIM, by then based in Lugano, Switzerland, began to compile a new collection of contemporary photography that he would expand until his death in 1995. This collection embraces a wide range of genres, such as photojournalism, object reproductions, portraits, landscapes, animals, dance, and theatre. It also includes experimental and artistic photography and thus offers a comprehensive retrospective on twentieth century photography. At the beginning of 2002, this collection, together with the entire GERNSHEIM estate, was added to the holdings of the *Forum for International Photography of the Reiss-Engelhorn Museums* in Mannheim. It comprises some 7,000 photographs, including numerous negatives and prints of GERNSHEIM's own photographic work, as well as a library of about 4,000 books. The estate includes correspondence with many of the most important figures in photography, personal notes and other documents, such as notebooks and family photographs, as well as manuscripts of GERNSHEIM's own books and lectures held at various universities. The wealth of material is of inestimable value as a basis both for future research on the history of photography and for the *International Symposium on Photography* held regularly in Mannheim.

#### HELMUT GERNSHEIM'S APPROACH TO HIS JEWISH ROOTS

HELMUT grew up in Munich in the early 1910s and 20s and lived there until 1937. GERNSHEIM was two years old when the *First World War* (1914) broke out and he was 26 when the *Second World War* (1939) started. He experienced the *German Empire* (1871–1918) or a more literal meaning »German Realm« (1871–1918), the *Weimar Republic* (1918–1933), also known as the *German Reich*, and then the *Third Reich* (*Nazi Germany*) (1933–1945). GERNSHEIM bore witness to ADOLF HITLER's seizure of power. Discrimination and prosecution of Jews began immediately after HITLER's acquisition of power in June 1933, HELMUT GERNSHEIM wrote a poem in German (which he revised in 1992) where he reflected upon the political and social situation of the 1920s and 1930s, in which he also included aspects of art and photo history. It is an extraordinary document that shows GERNSHEIM's specific point of view about this epoch, beginning with the *Weimar Republic*, to HITLER's rise to power and the *Nazi Ideology* of »racial purity« till after the end of *World War II* and the Holocaust. In it he also reflects on the founding of the State of Israel.

*In the unstable twenties  
-before and after the inflation-  
Moholy-Nagy created  
photograms of abstraction.  
Renger-Patzsch transformed the  
environment into new scenes,  
Sander's immortalised the German bourgeois  
of all strata,  
Salomon displayed famous men  
in unguarded moments.  
Man and Weber<sup>[19]</sup> presented the lives of the folk  
in photo-histories.*

*In the thirties Riefenstahl<sup>[20]</sup> glorified  
the power of the Nazi dictatorship.  
Heartfield's clairvoyant photomontages  
revealed Goebbels' <sup>[21]</sup> mania of lies  
and reported on the destruction of German cultural.  
The intelligentsia -whether Jew or Christian-  
emigrated.*

*Who couldn't felt the barbed wire  
in concentration.  
The Nazis claimed  
The Jews are to be blamed  
therefore they took their lives and property.*

*Ziegler<sup>[22]</sup> decided what is art  
and Goebbels what is decadent.  
For the best were forbidden to produce art,  
and the rest followed the trends.  
Yes, »nice« times you Germans endured  
From the specter of the »Thousand-Year Reich«  
that was over after a twelve-year incarceration.  
The diary of the Jewish Anne Frank<sup>[23]</sup>  
survived Adolf's paranoid racial battle.<sup>[24]</sup>  
What Nazis considered decadent  
is now art again,  
and where violence reigned  
reason finally prevailed.*

*Six million Jews were murdered in cold blood,  
but the death strengthened the survivors  
in their demand of an own Jewish State.<sup>[25]</sup>*



In this poem GERNSHEIM tries to describe this epoch and its political character, specifying the *avant-garde* of photography, artists who had been stripped of their rights during the Nazi regime. Though most of them could emigrate; The Jewish-Hungarian artist LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY (1895-1946) had been ostracized and denounced as a degenerate artist after the Nazis came to power. In 1934, he briefly operated in the Netherlands, doing mostly commercial work, before moving to London (1935-1937).

In 1937, MOHOLY-NAGY emigrated to Chicago to become the director of the *New Bauhaus*. AUGUST SANDER (1876-1964) was forced into internal exile. His work and personal life were greatly constrained and destroyed under the *Nazi Regime*. His son ERICH, who was a member of the left wing *Socialist Workers' Party (SAP)*, was arrested in 1934 and sentenced to 10 years in prison, where he died in 1944. ERICH SALOMON (1886-1944), pioneer of photojournalism, fled to the Netherlands with his wife and continued his photographic career in The Hague. He and his family were trapped in the Netherlands after Germany invaded in 1940. SALOMON and his family were held in the *Westerbork Transit Camp*, for almost five months in *Theresienstadt Concentration Camp* and then were deported to the *Theresienstadt Family Camp* in May 1944. He died in *Auschwitz* on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1944. FELIX H. MAN (1893-1985) was banned from his profession after he refused to become member of the German press (*Reichspressekammer*) during the *Nazi Regime*. He emigrated in May 1934 to England and became one of the leading photographers of *Picture Post*. JOHN HEARTFIELD (1891-1968) was a pioneer in using art as a political weapon. Some of his photomontages were anti-Nazi and anti-fascist statements. HEARTFIELD lived in Berlin up until April 1933, when the National Socialists took power. On *Good Friday*, the SS broke into his apartment, and HEARTFIELD escaped by jumping from his balcony. He left Germany by walking over the Sudeten Mountains to Czechoslovakia. All these artists were victims of an inhumane regime, who either had to leave their homeland, or were murdered under a barbaric racial agenda. *The Tausendjährige Reich* [Thousand-Year Reich. TN] that HITLER proclaimed so proudly emerged as a chimera but only lasted twelve years. The Human values as represented by ANNE FRANK's diaries, which speaks for the six million murdered, attained far greater value than HITLER's paranoid ideological ramblings written in his screed *Mein Kampf*.

In GERNHEIM's poem written after the unimaginable atrocities of the Holocaust, this ordeal not only strengthened the will of the

survivors, but gave hope and established the expectation in demanding their own Jewish state. GERNSHEIM's poem was at the same time an attempt to focus on the subject, and a processes of coping. That GERNSHEIM was interested in Jewish photography is proven with a list which he had created 1981. He compiled in alphabetical order from A to Y (from ADAM-SALOMON to YLLA) all prominent Jewish photographers known to him (among them publishers and HELMUT GERNSHEIM himself) of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. In total the list shows 140 individuals who are/were working in the field of photography. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1994, GERNSHEIM sent a more elaborate list of Jews prominent in photography with greater details (e.g. birth dates and short biographical remarks) to GEORGE GILBERT. At the time, GILBERT was planning to publish a book that could be considered an encyclopaedia on Jews in photography. GERNSHEIM did not live to see the published book as he died on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1995. But GILBERT quoted GERNSHEIM's statement regarding this project on the back of his book, which was simultaneously its endorsement. GERNSHEIM's focus on this topic may have been strengthened by his friend TIM GIDAL. TIM N. GIDAL (born as IGNATZ NACHUM GIDALEWITSCH, 1909 in Munich—died 1996 in Jerusalem) was a German-Israeli photo journalist and university lecturer. He wrote his PhD thesis on the subject matter »Photographic Reporting in the Press« in Basel and he was himself pioneers of modern photo journalism. He published books about Jerusalem and his masterpiece was his well-known pictorial documentation *The Jews in Germany from Roman Times until the Weimar Republic* (*Die Juden in Deutschland von der Römerzeit bis zur Weimarer Republik*).<sup>26</sup> GERNSHEIM wrote GIDAL a letter of effusive praise (September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1988) about this book: »...[I] am delighted about the huge information and rare illustrations which you have collected over years. Without doubt it's your masterpiece and a standard work.«<sup>27</sup> GERNSHEIM was also thankful to GIDAL for including GERNSHEIM's family with the picture, *The Last Jew's Bishop*.<sup>28</sup> GIDAL replied to GERNSHEIM's letter (September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1988) in German, that he was very pleased about GERNSHEIM's opinion about his book, as well as for his suggestions and corrections about other Jewish photographers. GERNSHEIM recommended including FELIX H. MAN, for GIDAL's 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. GERNSHEIM thought that GIDAL—who was not a close friend of FELIX H. MAN—had his name omitted intentionally. GIDAL refuted this and in his answer to GERNSHEIM he outlined the concept of his book: »I have only mentioned Jews or people with Jewish origin in the book!«<sup>29</sup> Indeed, FELIX H. MAN

was not Jewish; he emigrated to London for political reasons. In another letter from GIDAL to GERNSEIM (March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989) GIDAL wrote that his project, *The Jews in Germany from Roman Times until the Weimar Republic* would be presented in Munich. He emphasized in this letter his concept of »...why so many Jews in *Diaspora* were in the *avant-garde* and led social movements etc., and in which completely assimilated generations this influence was visible.«<sup>30</sup> This letter exchange alone, between GERNSEIM and GIDAL, proves that GERNSEIM was confronted with the assimilated Jews in Germany in the fields of science, commerce and culture.

He was also aware that in his own collection, he had amassed photographs from Jewish photographers with whom he had close contact and friendships. This is revealed in his extensive correspondences with other Jewish photographers in the GERNSEIM archive at the *Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim/ Forum Internationale Photographie (FIP)*. But regardless of nationality, GERNSEIM's main criteria for his collection was quality and what he considered a »good picture.«

- 1 FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM: born 1839 in Worms; died 1916 in Berlin, a composer, conductor, and friend of JOHANNES BRAHMS. WILHELM GERNSHEIM born 1899 in Mannheim; died 1975 in Göteborg.
- 2 Cf, WALTER GERNSHEIM: *Die Buchmalerei der Reichenau*, Ph.D. dissertation. Munich University, 1934.
- 3 Cf, ULRICH POHLMANN and RUDOLF SCHEUTLE: *Lehrjahre, Lichtjahre. Die Münchner Fotoschule 1900–2000*, exhibition catalogue *Münchner Stadtmuseum*, Munich 2000, pp. 6, 37, 38. The Institute in Munich was founded in 1900 on the initiative of the *Süddeutsche Photographen-Verein*. Its founding director, GEORG HEINRICH EMMERICH, and the leading *Pictorialist* photographer FRANK EUGENE SMITH, who taught there, soon ensured its international renown. With the advent of a cult of objectivity in photography in the 1920s, the Institute adhered to its old *Pictorialist* principles, thus found it difficult to shake off an association with aesthetic conservatism. Nonetheless, the work of some students and teachers testified to the influence of the new approach to photography, and these were to some extent able to hold their own against the aesthetic of National Socialism (cf. p. 6 of the exh. cat. cited above).
- 4 Ibid, p. 40. The Marburg art historian ARTHUR SCHLEGEL, who headed the *Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Lichtbildwesen* from 1932 to 1945, was forced to find ways to deflect the accusation that he had exceeded the permissible quota for »non-Aryan« students. He was able to escape censure by making the somewhat bureaucratic point that he had, in fact, kept precisely to the prescribed percentage of »non-Aryans« for he had taken into account the ruling that »half-Aryans« and »non-Aryans« whose fathers had served in the German armed forces were to be treated as »Aryans«. It is important to illuminate such aspects of the background to the events of this period so as to promote a better understanding of the fact that, even after the Nazis gained power in 1933, a certain number of Jewish students were able to receive an education in photography. Later, however, there was greater pressure on training institutions to exclude »non-Aryans« and »half-Aryans«.
- 5 The final examination consisted of a theoretical part and a practical part; for the latter the students were allowed a three-month period of preparation [see the documentation in the Archive of the *Bavarian State School of Photography* (*Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Lichtbildwesen*)].
- 6 Cf, PAUL HILL and THOMAS COOPER: *Dialogue with Photography*. London and New York 1979, pp.161, 162.
- 7 Ibid, pp.162, 163.
- 8 Ibid, p.163.
- 9 LUCIA MOHOLY: *A Hundred Years of Photography. 1839–1939*. London and Aylesbury 1939.
- 10 ERICH STENGER: *Die Photographie in Kunst und Technik: Ihre Geschichte während hundert Jahren*. Leipzig 1938. And ERICH STENGER: *Siegeszug der Photographie in Kultur, Wissenschaft, Technik*; revised and english edition, Seebrock am Chiemsee 1950. The cited english edition was published in New York in 1939 and was translated by EDWARD EPSTEAN. It was thanks to his friend and colleague, BRIAN EPSTEAN, that this translation was published in spite of the outbreak of war. On this point, cf. BODO VON DEWITZ: »Viel Arbeit bleibt da noch zu tun!« *Erich Stenger und seine Sammlung zur Kulturgeschichte der Photographie*. Kölner Museums-Bulletin Issue 1, 1997. It is necessary to add a word here concerning STENGER's political affinity with the *Nazi Régime*. Among the illustrations to his volume of 1938, p. 94, STENGER included a propaganda photograph taken by HEINRICH HOFFMANN, showing HITLER with MUSSOLINI. In his chapter on »photo-reportage«, he wrote admiringly of HOFFMANN as personal photographer to HITLER and photo-reporter for the *Third Reich*: »...his photographs recording HITLER's life and the [National Socialist] movement have, in our view, a deep connection with the [German] people and will also be seen in this light by future generations; they reflect the unification and strengthening of the nation, contribute to its development and its re-fashioning, and serve the cause of peace.«

- 11 PAUL HILL and THOMAS COOPER: *Dialogue with Photography*. New York 1979, p.176.
- 12 HELMUT GERNSHEIM: *New Photo Vision*. London 1942.
- 13 Cf. HILL and COOPER. 1979 (cf. note 7), p.178.
- 14 Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1944 from BEAUMONT NEWHALL to HELMUT GERNSHEIM, in the *Gernsheim Archive, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen*, Mannheim. The letter bears the following file memorandum: »Hq, 5<sup>th</sup> Photog Gp, Rcn/APO 520, U. p. Army/Italy, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1944.«
- 15 BEAUMONT NEWHALL: *Focus: Memories of a Life in Photography*. Boston and London 1993, pp. 84, 85.
- 16 Cf. PETER SAGER (Ed.): *Die Besessenen. Begegnungen mit Kunstsammlern zwischen Aachen und Tokio*. Cologne 1992, p.74
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 HILL and COOPER. 1979 (cf. note 7). pp. 206, 207.
- 19 WOLFGANG WEBER (1902–1985) was one of the first German photo journalist of the golden 1920s. His photo reportages were printed in the *Münchner Illustrierten Zeitung* (MIZ) and in the *Berliner Illustrierten Zeitung* (BIZ). Since 1949 WEBER was editor-in-chief at newspaper *Neue Illustrierte* in Cologne. He hold interviews with BEN GURION and JASSIR ARAFAT. He was only the one western journalist who could produce an ample reportage about the *Cultural Revolution* in China in 1966/67. Vom 4. Dezember 2004 bis 20. Februar 2005 zeigte das *Folkwang Museum* in Essen in einer Sonderausstellung sein Lebenswerk. Sein Archiv wird dort verwaltet.
- 20 HELENE BERTHA AMALIE »LENI« RIEFENSTAHL (1902–2003) was a German film director, photographer, actress and dancer widely known for directing the Nazi Party propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*) 1935. RIEFENSTAHL's prominence in the *Third Reich*, along with her personal association with ADOLF HITLER, destroyed her film career following Germany's defeat in *World War II*, after which she was arrested but released without any charges.<sup>21</sup>
- 21 PAUL JOSEPH GOEBBELS (1897–1945) was a german politician and *Reichsminister of Propaganda* in *Nazi Germany* from 1933 to 1945. As one of ADOLF HITLER's closest associates and most devoted followers, he was known for his fanatic orations and deep and virulent antisemitism, which led him strongly to support the extermination of the Jews when the Nazi leadership developed their *Final Solution* (*Endlösung*).
- 22 ADOLF ZIEGLER (1892–1959) was a German painter and politician. He was tasked by the Nazi Party to oversee the purging of *Degenerate Art* (*Entartete Kunst*) and was responsible for this exhibition of the *House of German Art* (*Haus der deutschen Kunst*), May 1937. The exhibition presented the mostly the German modern artists. ZIEGLER was the favoured painter of HITLER.
- 23 ANNELIES »ANNE« MARIE FRANK (1929 – 1945) is one of the most discussed Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Her wartime diary *The Diary of a Young Girl* documents her experiences hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands (1940) in *World War II*. As persecutions of the Jewish population increased in July 1942, the family went into hiding in some concealed rooms in the building where ANNE's father worked. After two years, the group was betrayed and transported to concentration camps. ANNE FRANK and her sister, MARGOT FRANK, were eventually transferred to the *Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp*, where they died of typhus in March 1945. FRANK's records gained international fame posthumously after her diary was published. It has been the basis for several plays and films.
- 24 *Mein Kampf* (*»My Struggle«*) is an autobiographical manifesto by Nazi leader ADOLF HITLER, in which he outlines his political ideology and future plans for Germany. *Volume 1* of *Mein Kampf* was published in 1925 and *Volume 2* in 1926. The book laid out HITLER's plan for transforming German society into one based on race. The ideology of *Nazism* brought together elements of *antisemitism*, *racial hygiene*, and *eugenics*, and combined them with *pan-Germanism* and *territorial expansionism* with the goal of obtaining more living space (*Lebensraum*) for the Germanic people<sup>25</sup>
- 25 Estate of GERNSHEIM, *Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen, Forum Internationale Photographie* (FIP). At the moment there is only the front-side of the poem available but the back-side couldn't found.
- 26 German edition was published by the editor *Bertelsmann*, Gütersloh 1988, the English edition was published by the editor *Koenemann Verlagsgesellschaft*, Cologne for UK 1998.

- 27 »...[ich] bin begeistert von der Unmenge an Information und seltenen Bildmaterial, das Du über die Jahre zusammengetragen hast. Es ist zweifellos Dein Meisterwerk und ein Standardwerk.«, letter from GERNSHEIM to TIM GIDAL, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1988 written from Via Tamporiva 28, 6976 Castagnola/ Switzerland. Estate of GERNSHEIM, *Reis-Engelhorn-Museen / Forum Internationale Photographie (FIP)*, Mannheim. (translated by CLAUDE W. SUI).
- 28 Ibid. »Dass Du meine Ahnen mit Bild aufgenommen hast, finde ich bei seinem Status als letzter deutscher Judenbischof nur recht und billig - und so ist die Hervorhebung jüdischer Verdienste auf allen Kunst- und Wissensgebieten.« Correspondence between HELMUT GERNSHEIM to TIM GIDAL, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1988.
- 29 »Ich hab doch nur Juden oder Leute jüdischer Abstammung im Buch!«. Correspondence between GIDAL to GERNSHEIM, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1989. Estate of GERNSHEIM, *Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen / Forum Internationale Photographie (FIP)*, Mannheim.
- 30 Ibid. »...warum so viele Juden in der *Diaspora* Avantgardisten, führend in sozialen Bewegungen etzetera waren. Und bis zu welcher völlig assimilierten Generation das weiterströmte.« Correspondence between GIDAL to GERNSHEIM, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1989.

**STILL HERE (2012)**

LYDIA GOLDBLATT

My work explores transitional human states and is tied to concepts of identity and belonging. It seeks to engage with the threshold between internal and external experience, and to develop a visual language that gives expression to this liminal space. I am drawn to subjects that explore human relationships, and that trace the fleeting shadow of personal experience onto more enduring human narratives. It is the turning point between the two that informs my work.

Transition, impermanence, time are the basic tenets of our existence. It is within this context that I am interested in photography, a medium which in its very essence, bears witness to change. Photographing, for me, has always been a way of training attention on the world I inhabit, an enquiry into aspects of our individual and social existence. This series of work, *Still Here*, takes that enquiry to perhaps the most intimate space, that of the parent as origin, and the transition towards death. While the work is about both my parents, it focuses particularly on my elderly father, and the ever-present fact of his mortality. The work is a meditation on mortality, love, loss and transience.

Embedded in this series of images is a questioning of the relationship of the body to the notion of selfhood. Being confronted with the deterioration and fragility of the physical self raises questions about the nature of identity, and its emotional, psychological and spiritual dimensions that extend beyond the physical. The work with my father, particularly, concentrates in large part on a close examination of his bodily surfaces and edges, a means of searching for the space between the physical and metaphysical. In the triptych shown here, which depicts an eye, mouth, and the boundary line of his scalp, I am photographing in acute detail the parts of his body through which he most fully communicates and understands and through which we, in turn, understand and communicate with him. In that intensity of looking there is a struggle to understand some essence of consciousness, and the physical and psychological thresholds that mark out individual existence.

What are we when our physical self inevitably fails? The bodily landscapes of my parents' forms, beautiful in their time-stroked detail, allow me to wonder, and the images I make of them project a corresponding sense of the interstitial into the work. Recurring throughout the series are a number of images that depict light, the passing of seasons, and the flow of time within the natural world. These images explore the inexorable transience of existence and celebrate its fleeting beauty. Through the act of photographing, however, the impression of momentary time is slowed, stilled. In this hushed photographic space, I am able to consider the relationship between an individual human span and the deeper tidal flow to which we are connected. Yet I am also fascinated by the collapsing and suspension of time that occurs in the realisation of our short span within it; in such images as these, I am exploring the way in which time can speed up, rush towards conclusions, yet equally stop, languid and glittering with stillness. There are many motifs of passing time in the work, but they hold a kind of weightlessness that refuses a defined trajectory, almost like a dream.

Nonetheless, a charting of cyclical time underpins the work and is, in part, what facilitates its beauty. Photography provides a space of extended time and meditation to grapple with issues of transience and loss, and the imprint of time in flesh, light, water, form and shadow, re-printed through the photographic



act, make it easier to acknowledge and accept the evolutionary drive behind the transition from life to death. The tissue images, only two of which are shown here, address this idea explicitly. These images utilize the debris and detritus of illness, and are made by staining the fabric of the tissues with medicines and bodily fluids, and then photographing them under the penetrating light of the sun. They become metaphorical landscapes that represent the primal cycle and preservation of life, and explore the transformative possibilities inherent in letting go. The red heads of my father are dark companions to these. They are an example of using time to return to an image, repeating it over the course of weeks or months. In the repeated forms, subtle shifts in mood or expression emerge through the surface of photographic paper, which speak to the mutability of experience and identity, and a questioning of surface and depth.

In these image-details, the point of closest contact to the parental body, there is also a painful reminder that we can never cross the threshold between one body and another, that in spite of our connection, the closest perhaps being between parent and child, we exist as separate entities. The images suggest the spectre of absence. It is an absence echoed throughout the work, via the photographic trace, and an intensity of looking in which profound familiarity is made strange with silence. This grief, this loss, which is everybody's loss, marks the work as a narrative belonging not just to me, but also to human experience.

To show *Still Here* in the context of the symposium, and of FELIX NUSSBAUM and DANIEL LIBESKIND's work, was and is a rare honour. It presents a remarkable opportunity to enter into dialogue with these powerful creative forces, whose work addresses themes of mortality on both a historic and individual scale. FELIX NUSSBAUM's paintings, many of which confronted the horrors of *Nazi Germany*, are an evocation of trauma and loss, and an exploration of mortality and the fundamental fragility of man's existence. Yet he was also a recorder of his era, placing great importance on family and the creative expression of daily life, both its internal and external dimensions. Within the shared engagement with themes of family, loss, mortality and the experience of humanity, I am inevitably marked by

the inheritance of NUSSBAUM's generation, and am interested to explore what parallels might emerge across works produced in these two very different eras.

DANIEL LIBESKIND has responded to NUSSBAUM's life and art by creating a building that becomes a tribute to a universal sense of loss, characterised by spaces that are expressive of absence and informed by lives which leave traces. Like both NUSSBAUM and LIBESKIND, my work responds to the fragile, constantly shifting nature of life, of time, and the desire of the artist to render in visual form the taste and touch of experience.

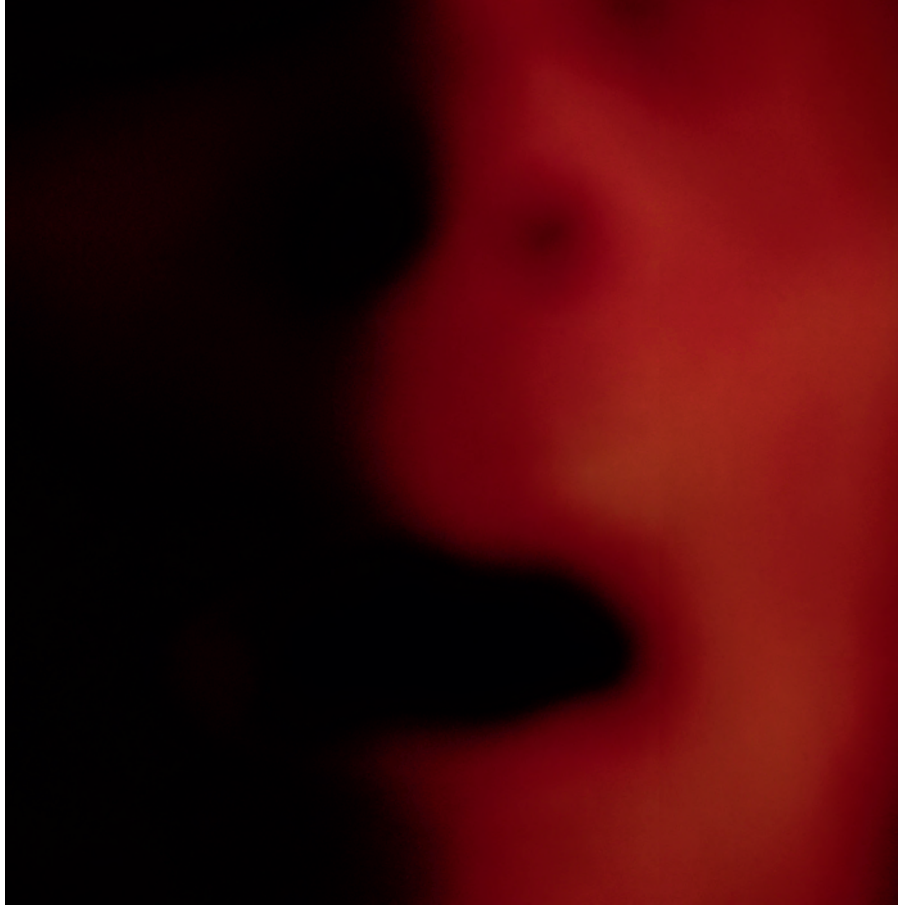
The *Jewish* context of the symposium, and its geographic location in Germany, raises questions with regard to genetic, racial and national identity. On the one hand, it raises the question of whether these issues are relevant to individual artistic practice – and on the other, whether the geographic specificity of cultural production and consumption inflects its interpretation and understanding.

As an artist, there is a link to the historical cultural heritage of Judaism in my on-going interest in belonging, identity and roots - the imperative to explore, through my work, our existence in relation to our origins. However, while I have explored a culturally specific notion of belonging in previous work, I am more interested by the potential to create work that speaks to the shared facts of existence. To exhibit work in this company is to be part of something more complex than simply one person, or one genetic group's, expression; it speaks to the enduring desire to understand something of our cultural identity, history, and shared humanity.











**FATHER**

**MOTHER**

**RAIN #2**

**BREATH**

**BATH**

all of the above printed on  
C-TYPE PRINT, 20"X 20"





JEWISH PHOTOGRAPHERS' IDENTITIES: FROM THE SOCIAL TO THE POETIC  
MILLY HEYD

The topic of Jewish photography, the fear of ghettoizing and the avoidance of photographing direct Jewish themes by replacing them with other minorities, and to suggest a few possibilities of dealing with these issues through concepts such as 'The Non-Jewish Jew', the Jewish Experience, or Jewish identity. The analysis will draw some analogies to my published work dealing with Jewish identity in the *visual arts* where the universal and the particular levels co-exist. I will explore photographs of urban street photographers, such as ROBERT FRANK, HELEN LEVITT, and JEROME LIEBLING. The *avant-garde* Hungarian-born ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ, who found refuge but remained a loner in New York, will also be discussed as well as the hidden meaning of Aaron Siskind, who turned to good use the language of *Neo-Expressionism*. Gender and Jewish identity issues will be raised in the work of CLAUDE CAHUN and the Israeli photographer LEORA LAOR.

There is no ANSEL ADAMS among Jewish photographers, or to use the American photographer WILLIAM KLEIN's witty, provocative and hip slang-like statement, tongue in cheek, about American photography: »there are two kinds of photography — Jewish photography and goyish [non-Jewish] photography. If you look at modern photography you find, on the one hand, the WEEGEEES, the DIANE ARBUSES, the ROBERT FRANKS — funky photographers. And then you have people who go out in the woods. ANSEL ADAMS, WESTON.«<sup>1</sup>

In this somewhat humorous division, all the action takes place within the first group while going into the woods sounds flat devoid of drama, insinuating finality, dead wood rather than nature's grandeur and changing seasons. As a generalization it can be said that *Jewish* photographers did not find themselves engaged in taking photographs of the sublime in nature. Most of them, from about the 1920s to the last part of the twentieth century, both in Europe and in America, did not feel rooted in the land and did not photograph nature as part of their identities. They either felt as outsiders in places where they grew up, or as refugees in exile, and in their new place of refuge, New York, as immigrants or sons and daughters of immigrants. They emerged from poor families, having no houses in the country. They were urban, attuned to city life. ALFRED STIEGLITZ, born in Germany and known as an American seer, the son of German-Jewish immigrants who introduced modern art to America, is an exception with his landscapes. See for instance the drama in *Mountain and Sky - Lake George of 1924*, or the culmination in abstraction in *Equivalent of 1930*.

Jews did not invent photography but there is an impressive Jewish presence in the history of photography after its inception. In America many belonged to the socialist photograph League, and twenty-six out of twenty-eight were part of the New York School.<sup>2</sup> Some worked on their own. The question which emerges is why were Jews drawn to photography? As part of my answer an analogy can be drawn between the Jewish presence in photography, the Jewish presence in the avant-garde, and the Jews as patrons of modern art and modernity. See for instance the place of Jews in promoting fin-de-siècle Viennese art of KLIMT, SCHIELE and KOKOSCHKA, or HEPWORTH WALDEN (born LEVIN) in promoting the art of the German Expressionism. Hence, photography being originally a modern or rather a modernist media attracted Jews because they did not have to compete with the long tradition of art history from which they were excluded. Photography, the emerging

art form, enabled Jews to find a new venue to their artistic talents in a new field which was being established. It served as a means for integration, assimilation and acculturation in the modern urban world for the secular Jews whose parents, as in WEEGEE's case, were often Orthodox. As a new artistic language, photography was a means of playing with various identities. Also, all a photographer needs is a camera and many a times leads a nomadic life. As the twentieth century has shown, Jews were forced to be constantly on the move from one country to another. As for Jewish orthodoxy, the attitude to photography is complex. On the one hand, the photograph could be interpreted as a graven image. When it comes to the female and the strict demands of modesty, it is even more problematic. So very often when faced with a photographer, orthodox people cover their faces, or turn their backs, a position the photographer takes. On the other hand, photographs of important Rabbis were widespread.<sup>3</sup>

The wish of secular Jews to integrate in the modern world can explain the well-known reality that the majority of the Jewish photographers (with some exceptions such as ROBERT CAPA) from the second decade to the end of the twentieth, when it began changing, did not photograph Jewish themes. Fear of being ghettoized was the most obvious reason. But they also saw themselves as Universalists rather than Jewish Particularists. The concept of *»the non-Jewish Jew«*, can be applicable here. According to ISAAC DEUTSCHER,<sup>4</sup> SPINOZA, HEINE, MARX, ROSA LUXEMBURG, FREUD and others who represented the *»the non-Jewish Jew«* were conceived among those Jews who were Universalists wishing to transcend *Judaism*. Looking for universal ideas, they all became major intellectual thinkers who have influenced universal Western thought. Their mode of thinking was fertilized by living on the borderlines of epochs, in the margins of societies, being *»in society and yet not in it, of it and yet not of it«*. It can thus be said that the Jewish photographers, who avoided photographing Jews but were looking for the universal component in their photographs, can be seen as *»Non-Jewish Jews.«* Furthermore, the wish to belong to the major culture, *antisemitism*, *fascism* and *Nazism* in Europe, contributed to the suppression of the Jewish factor.<sup>5</sup>

In the secular world in Europe and the American melting pot, Jews had a problem in finding a photographic image of a secular-modern Jew with whom to identify. Thus not seeing their own identities with whom they could identify, in terms of orthodoxy on the one hand while not succumbing to the visual stereotyping of Jewish fea-

tures on the other hand as well as not identifying with the image of the ›New Jew‹, blond and tall and working on the land that became the visual ideal of Zionism, they did not find iconic photographic images for the modern Jew. In postmodern terms it can be said that they did not wish to be defined through the essentialistic lens. The characterization of a Jew through his nose was a stereotype that even ROLAND BARTHES allowed himself to use quoting PROUST's analysis of one of his heroes: »He had a straight nose ... but ... old age had turned his skin to parchment revealing the Jew underneath.«<sup>6</sup> SIMON SCHAMA's witty questions of FRÉDÉRIC BRENNER's contemporary non-essentialist photographs of Jews are useful in dealing with Jewish visual characteristics: »So who does look Jewish, FRÉDÉRIC BRENNER wants to know?« BRENNER's entire life having been spent on resisting visual stereotypes denying the possibility of self-evidently Jewish appearance and manner. BRENNER who avoids »the stereotyping of the ›Good Jew‹, a prophet shuffling through the streets of the Rhineland Gomorrah« on the one hand and »the *Ewige Jude* (archetypal Jew) with his hooked nose...«<sup>7</sup> on the other wished to explore the fluid non-essentialist postmodern Jew to use the sociologist ZYGMUNT BAUMANN's terminology.

Photography served also as a means of overcoming linguistic barriers. ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ said: »My English is bad. My French is bad. Photography is my only language.«<sup>8</sup> CORNELL CAPA said about his brother, ROBERT CAPA: »photography has no accent.«<sup>9</sup> CORNELL points out CAPA's strong Hungarian accent, his up-rootedness, and the fact that he lived all his life in hotels. Photography has no accent, universality is inherent to it. ROBERT CAPA himself said that he became a photographer »because it was the nearest thing to journalism for anyone without a language.«<sup>10</sup> »Art is a more universal mode of language than ... speech« wrote JOHN DEWEY<sup>11</sup>. And if art is universal, then black and white photography, by its very nature is even more so. Black and white do not exist in nature: in their abstractness these colors are an artistic invention.

It was quite common for many of the major Jewish photographers to have changed their Jewish names. I wrote on MAN RAY/IMMANUEL RADNITSKY, and can add ROBERT CAPA (born ENDRE ERNŐ FRIEDMANN; October 22, 1913-May 25, 1954 in Budapest), LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY (who was born LÁSZLÓ WEISZ July 20, 1895-November 24, 1946), and the third photographer born in Hungary, ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ (2 July 1894-28 September 1985). KERTÉSZ ANDOR, changed his given name only but kept his

Hungarian family name, which his parents have changed from the Jewish name »KOHN«. In America, you could remain FRANK (ROBERT FRANK), LEVITT (HELEN LEVITT) a slight change from LEVI, or become PAUL STRAND (October 16, 1890 – March 31, 1976) when you were born PAUL STRANZKY. But the most dramatic of all was ARTHUR FELLIG (June 12, 1899 – December 26, 1968), born in the Ukraine: he became a photojournalist of crime scenes in New York calling himself WEEGEE. FELLIG reinvented himself through the onomatopoeic name WEEGEE, a word that does not exist, associated with crime street noise and sirens where he had found his home.

But even here there is an exception to the rule. The photographer CLAUDE CAHUN, who was born LUCIE SCHWOB to a catholic mother and a Jewish father, chose a more Jewish name, CAHUN, a variation of COHEN instead of SCHWOB. As early as 1925, she photographed herself wearing the Star of David when she showed her feminine identity, and emphasized her so called »Jewish nose« in her various profiles, showing her masculine identity – hence aligning herself with her Jewish father.

Many Jewish-American photographers in the Art League and the New York School, who did not photograph Jews, were engaged in photographing other minorities, especially African-Americans. In *Mutual Reflections: Jews and Blacks in American Art* (1999)<sup>12</sup> I argued that left-wing Jewish-American artists from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> saw in the blacks a mirror image of themselves, that is as persecuted minorities who shared the biblical Exodus story, a common belief to Jews and blacks of overcoming slavery. Jewish-American fought next to African-Americans in the *Civil Rights* movement. Moreover, in the twentieth century Jewish-American artists frequently depicted Black subjects and themes in a way that expressed their search for their own identity. As if they couldn't face themselves directly and needed the other through which to look at themselves, blacks became mirror reflections of their own selves. The following examples of various Jewish-American photographers will show that we can apply these conclusions to Jewish-American photographers as well.

See for instance, ROBERT FRANK, who emigrated from Switzerland to the U.p.A. and was engaged in photographing America. In his *Charleston, South Carolina, 1955* we can see that in the heyday of segregation in the south, FRANK took a tender photograph of the torso of a black nanny in profile holding a white baby seen from the front, echoing the theme of mother and child.

ROBERT FRANK:  
Charleston, South Carolina, 1955



There is a play here between white as an artistic choice of color (of the nanny's shirt), white as race (of the exaggerated color of the baby) and white as harsh light creating the diagonal perspective. JOHN BERGER argues that there is «a stark contrast of the

infant's chalk-white skin and the woman's dark complexion read as a metaphor of the insurmountable legal gulf between them, despite their physical intimacy.»<sup>13</sup> This is true, but I think that by fusing the artistic and racial, FRANK wished to neutralize the racial connotation as if to imply: this is just color, black and white, the tools of the photographer at the time.

The composition is divided into two, with a white column as a separating device. The proportions  $2/3$  to  $1/3$  create an anti-classical composition forming imbalance between the left and right parts. The heavy side with two figures in the near front edge of the first plane vis-à-vis the light abstract perspective. Intensive white endows the image with an eerie effect. Nanny and child contrast with the background emptiness suggesting the imbalance of the situation. Later the Jewish-American left-wing painter RAPHAEL SOYER had a more ambitious goal. He believed in racial fusion and depicted a white woman who gave a birth to a black child as an ideal (1965-66).

In FRANK's *Trolley—New Orleans* (1955) on the first glance everything seems all right; we are looking at people, who are looking at us. But then we realize that it is a segregated trolley. It »allegorizes the social space of the *Jim Crow South*.«<sup>14</sup> In the first three rows are white people; two windows show adult white people. In the third are white children and only in the last two windows are black people, first a male and then a female, who is at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Ironically, the palms of the white boy and black man are separated by the windows' white frames. FRANK creates a modernist flat space in which the trolley's three dimensionality is lost. We can look at each person individually, or as a group. Seemingly objective almost detached, FRANK comments on the injustice of the south. Later it was GEORGE SEGAL, a Jewish-American artist who sculpted the same theme in his *Bus Riders* of 1962. HELEN LEVITT who has gained her reputation through her photographs of children playing in the streets of New York shows exactly the opposite of the framed south. It is the freedom children find in the street, their lack of bounda-

ries, their ability to be creative, that caught her Leica. Look at the two slim boy and girl, black and white, dancing in the street, attuned to one another as if the two of them are the only ones existing in the world suggesting equality. The little girl's sense of grandeur and self-centeredness contrasts with her comic shadow. LEVITT also tries to see the world through the eyes of children, photographing them from a low level of a child's vantage point, tiny in the wide world.

In a review of the exhibition *Jerome Liebling: Capturing the Human Spirit*, at the *Currier Museum of Art*, questions are raised in regards to LIEBLING's most prominent image, *The Butterfly Boy* (1949): »Who is the Butterfly Boy? Where is he going in his tweed coat and cap?«<sup>15</sup> The handsome African-American boy intrigues the spectator by means of his intent mature gaze and Sunday best. LIEBLING, the Jewish-American photographer, who also studied at the Photo League, manages to create »[a] photographs' punctum,« to use BARTHES' definition of the more meaningful photograph, namely, one »which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to

me).«<sup>16</sup> The power of the image consists of the disparity between the boy's serene adult expression, his best clothes and his comic butterfly posture as he wishes to loosen his coat, to become free of the confinement of the formal clothes to return to a care free state. The portraiture is a combination of the eternal (the face) with the momentary (the movement of the coat's wings).

WEEGEE, nicknamed »murder photographer«, who was known for his slogan »murder is my business«, photographed in Harlem, a topic DANIEL MORRIS explored in his book *After Weegee*. In his book MORRIS acknowledges my assumptions about the role African-Americans played in the formation of Jewish identity. MORRIS discusses the image of Mrs. BERENICE LYTHCOTT and her one-year old son look out [of] a window through which hoodlums threw stones (1943). He sees the strength of the mother holding a child, behind shattered glass in defiance of »poorly paid white people« who displace their rage ... on the even less fortunate.<sup>17</sup> A comparison between a performance at the Old Metropolitan Opera, New York (1937) with a segregated movie theatre in Washington D.C. (1941) shows WEEGEE's social and racial awareness. Whereas in the first image, the circular enveloping architecture, glaring lights and full house in which

ROBERT FRANK:  
Trolley, New Orleans, 1955





AARON SISKIND:  
Harlem, 1935

patrons are abstracted, in the second image there are four distinct black people in a huge hall partitioned in the middle. WEEGEE, who was known for his rejection of the graded tonality of the gray color, »had an aesthetic predilection for artificial light. He liked the way in which an object is high lightened and flattened by the freeze action of flash, and slowly dissolves into a saturated black background.«<sup>18</sup> The perspective of the Metropolitan scene is frontal, inviting the spectator to be part of the festivities; the Was-

hington one is diagonal, sharp, uninviting. And indeed empty chairs glow in cold light emphasizing the ironic situation. The partition is superfluous even for those who invented the inhuman idea. For no white theatre-goer is in sight, and very few black people exhibiting the great irony of the Separate but Equal policy!

AARON SISKIND was engaged in photographing Harlem between 1932 and 1949. He took photographs of Harlem in a number of ways, at times just the façade, creating an aesthetic distance, at times emphasizing the irony of a situation. The African American author GORDON PARKS wrote on SISKIND: »AARON SISKIND's Harlem document, a mirror of my own past,[...]is an ongoing memory of Black people living in crowded kitchenettes; suffering the loneliness of rented bedrooms; [...] grasping a patch of happiness whenever [...] they could find it [...] Those same tenements that once imprisoned me are still there, refusing to crumble.«<sup>19</sup> Let us not forget that the families of Jewish-American photographers also lived in tenement housing.

In *Lafayette Theatre Soldier* (1938) a wide eyed African-American actor in profile is wearing a soldier's formal costume, his elongated body touching the upper door's frame, hence suggesting that he is pressurized by it. An ironic disparity exists between the formality of his impeccable attire and pose and the drab surrounding, alluding to the difference between crude reality and artistic fantasy. It has been noticed that the actor is »shot from the side in a narrow hallway, his eyes looking up and away«, ignoring an eye contact with the spectator/photographer. However, a hanging jacket with a personified look seems to be staring back at the actor.

SISKIND, like MAN RAY and ROBERT CAPA, was a tailor's son and his sensitivity to clothing can be traced in his images. See the African-American girl standing in a cluttered room next to a woman's dummy, insinuating her position in society. I have elaborated elsewhere on MAN RAY's Jewish sweatshop experience and therefore will not do it here. For him it was a complex. But what CAPA, MAN RAY and SISKIND being tailors' sons had in common was an early childhood background which beside the hardships involved, fueled their creativity and photographic sensitivities to textures, designs, shapes and compositions. MAN RAY was an avant-garde artist; CAPA was a photo-journalist; SISKIND at this stage was engaged with the social conditions of African Americans as part of the Harlem project.

In the second part of the present essay, the discussion will turn from the socially-oriented *Jewish Photographers* to the more poetic ones: ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ and AARON SISKIND in his second phase as a photographer affiliated to *Abstract Expressionism*. The hidden dimensions that could be related to their Jewish backgrounds will be explored.

KERTÉSZ was born in Budapest in 1894 to a father who owned a bookshop and died when KERTÉSZ was fourteen and a mother who owned a Kosher tea shop (1920). He served and was wounded in the WWI Hungarian army where he started shooting photographs. Still, KERTÉSZ wrote in his diary about his employer: «I sense that it is my Jewish side that disturbs him»<sup>20</sup> He left for Paris in 1925, where he became a well known photographer. However, his «Jewish side» was suppressed by KERTÉSZ himself, as throughout his life, in Paris and then as an exile in New York, he did not refer to his Jewish origins. On April 17, 1921, KERTÉSZ wrote in his diary: «my being a Jew was a problem.» And KATI MARTON adds: »For the rest of KERTÉSZ life, the »Jewish Question« remained the single most sensitive, least discussed topic»<sup>21</sup> And indeed in his interviews throughout his life he avoided mentioning his Jewish background.

When shooting portraits of his brother in Hungary, as well as himself in Paris and Martinique, there are significant photographs that are shadow images. I would like to claim that the shadow is not just a stylistic photographic device but symbolizes the suppressed side of KERTÉSZ. In 2010, discussion of the use of shadows in his photographs states: »a shadow can reveal what is concealed from sight, it denotes an object, and represents its absence«, and also »The shadow points to uncertainty about one's identity.«<sup>22</sup> However the discussion does not elaborate on the meaning of the absence.

My claim is that the uncertainty in KERTÉSZ's shadow images is the outcome of his Jewish side which he did not wish to come out into the light.

A mysterious, eerie night-image creating a sense of other-worldliness appears in *Boskay Tér* (1914), one of the neighborhoods in Budapest. A flat gray façade of a house with two lighted windows serves as a background to a silhouette of a man wearing dark clothes and a hat. The sight is uncanny, to use FREUD's terminology »*Un-Heimlich*«, because the first impression is of two identical men walking parallel to the two windows, but what we actually see is a man and his shadow. He is looking downwards, and his slightly enlarged shadow is cast on the wall. It was in the same year that GIORGIO DE CHIRICO painted his *Mystery and Melancholy of the Street* (1914), a *Pittura Metafisica* image with various shadows such as the girl with a hoop representing his dead sister, as well as the elongated shadows

replacing his dead father. In Kertész's case, the double image is that of his brother. KERTÉSZ and DE CHIRICO use shadows not just to evoke a sense of mystery but also to insinuate that there is a shadowy aspect to their lives, a hidden dimension. Here we see that the shadow takes over, wins. This dual image suggests the theme of the double, the *Doppelgänger*, usually a figure with a shadow, but here both the man and his double look like shadows, their features are wiped out. In another night scene KERTÉSZ's brother's shadow is reduced. As for self-portraits, see the artist's profile done in Paris and the melancholic one taken

in Martinique in 1971. Here the photograph gives the impression of a picture within a picture – a profiled blurry dark silhouette of KERTÉSZ on a hazy grey background is bending on a balcony rail, mysteriously looking at a cloudy sky. By turning his brother as well as himself into shadows lacking particular features the two become negatives. The shadow (negative) without the positive can imply that KERTÉSZ is aware that neither he nor his brother is whole. It may also suggest that behind their image lurks the shadow of his dead Jewish father.

In 1949, KERTÉSZ made an ironic use of the shadow as he shot himself shooting a lion. (double meaning intended). Not only is he a shadow, but the lion, the king of the jungle, is wooden.



ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ:  
Arm and Ventilator, New York, 1957

It is an ironic depiction, as both photographer and lion are not real, one is a shadow the other is wood. Suppression, as well as exile can account for KERTÉSZ's melancholy that is prevalent in his art. Earlier he photographed chairs in Paris; they are vacant, unoccupied, empty. The spectator is facing their modernistic, skeleton-like structure. Like the shadows, it is absence that evokes meaning rather than being. In New York, where he never felt at home, a drifting cloud next to a skyscraper poetically suggests the loneliness of the emigrant, the anxiety that it is a momentary existence that might evaporate and his wandering from Budapest to Paris which he loved and where he became known and then to New York, a place of refuge and yet where he never felt at home. According to KERTÉSZ, »What I felt when I was making this photo was a feeling of solitude. The architecture is completely isolated from nature, from the sky. They don't communicate at all, and the cloud does not know where to go, they have lost it, or made it lose its way.«<sup>23</sup> Obviously, the vanishing cloud is a metonym for KERTÉSZ himself.

Beside his poetic images, KERTÉSZ also used harsh fragmentation to symbolically denote his state, or the human situation in a mechanical society, whose values he did not share. *Arm and Ventilator, New York* was described by the Paul Getty online entry, as taken: »at a drugstore on Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street in Greenwich Village, New York, ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ encountered a workman's arm replacing a part on a ventilator. The disembodied arm, is dangerously caught in a circular guillotine, wedged between two of the menacing steel blades. The five ventilator petals dominate the frame like a strange metal flower.« The somewhat surrealistic fragmented image stands for the artist's sense of his own dislocation in exile. The aggression towards the hand stands for his feeling that his own hand was fragmented, not in the right place, by his fate of being an exile where technology reigns. His own feelings at the beginning of *World War II* (1939) were projected in *Melancholy* through the drooping tulip.

KERTÉSZ did not photograph Jewish refugees when they arrived in New York, but he identified with those who were considered as others in society, especially with artists - early in Hungary with the blind musician, and later in New York with another blind musician who while a midget who worked as a clown in a circus gave him a coin, attracted the photographer's attention. Thus, a unity of three artists, of outsiders—a clown, a musician and a photographer—is formed.

But I would like to conclude my presentation of KERTÉSZ

with a humorous touch. For fifty years he took pictures of people reading, perhaps in memory of his father's bookstore and associated with the Jewish people of the book rather than the visual image. A book *On Reading* was published in 1971. In one example which for once does include a Jew, Kertész who photographed from above, juxtaposes a picture of a Jewish Orthodox young man reading a holy book with a fragmented lower part of a couple, the woman with a mini-skirt, legs erotically exposed. In this picture within a picture, the focus on his head, implying thought, contrasts with her legs, which according to Orthodox norms shouldn't be looked at. Beyond humor, the gap implies the tension between orthodoxy and modernity, mind and body.

AARON SISKIND was born in New York City in 1903, the fifth of six children. His parents were poor Russian Jewish immigrants who settled in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. SISKIND's parents spoke Yiddish at home, while he became an

English teacher, and was well read in English and American literature and poetry and left-wing socialist politics. He later studied photography at the Art League, a socially engaged institution where SISKIND became a director in 1936. From then onward he developed into one of the leading American photographers - first as a photo-journalist and then as an Abstract Expressionist.<sup>24</sup> AARON SISKIND, turned from the figurative to the abstract while wandering from place to place, photographing, and de-contextualizing images.

SISKIND moved from the Jewish world to assimilation and acculturation. And yet,

as DANIEL ROBINS claims, SISKIND was «searching for a metaphorical visual language to express *World War II's* trauma.»<sup>25</sup> We should consider the fact that he was using words from the Hebrew Scripture. In a film interview SISKIND mentioned that the writings on the wall reminded him of the biblical saying «Mene, mene, tekel upharsim,» alluding to the book of Daniel.<sup>26</sup> The cryptic Hebrew text appearing in the middle of Belshazzar's feast prophesying the fall of Babylon and deciphered by Daniel became a Hebrew phrase implying bad omen. *Gloucester 16A*, (1944) demonstrates that his walls are not just aesthetic visions. SISKIND explained it as »A blank eye, the hard profile, in a time of violence.« The image can be understood as evil in general. However,



AARON SISKIND:  
*Gloucester 16A*, 1944

since SISKIND explicitly says »in a time of violence« and the year is 1944, his personification of evil refers to the events in Europe at the time. In *Gloucester IH* (1944) a Surrealist-like fragmented hybrid of glove and hand, a combination of animate and inanimate object is an apparition. Taken in 1944, the uncanny hybrid can be viewed as a gesture of confrontation, an act of defiance. SISKIND referred to the image symbolically: »This glove was lying on a wharf, people were stepping on it. It was just a miserable outcast creature«, echoing the symbolic language used by KERTÉSZ regarding the cloud vis-à-vis a skyscraper. SISKIND's major theme, the wall, was deemed as scribbled, scratched, cracked, peeled and crumbling. Indeed, SISKIND is a master of decaying texture. SISKIND turned to texture per se, without the figurative element. The romantic notion of passing time associated with the wall falling apart can also be related to the concept of the palimpsest, in its Freudian sense. The wall is like an ancient archeological slab from which texts have been scraped off. According to FREUD the unconscious has the character of a palimpsest (Greek = rubbed again), a parchment on which many series of inscriptions can still be detected below the most recent text written upon it. What is offered in this analogy is the idea that the wall is multi-layered, that there are various historical stages ingrained in it.

The wall symbolizes the various realms of one's existence and thus the acknowledgement that identity is multi-leveled, a theme which is a common denominator to all photographers discussed in the present article. Beyond universalism could the wall also imply a personal dialogue with an additional layer to Jewish history in association with the *Western Wall* — the relic of Jewish history in Jerusalem? It remains an open question.

- 1 All figures in the article can be found in *Google Images*. WILLIAM KLEIN, »Photoquotations.com, internet site.«
- 2 Cf. JANE LIVINGSTON: *The New York School: Photographs 1936–63*, New York, 1992. p. 273.
- 3 ROMAN VISHNIAC's immense project photographing the various ghettos in Europe before the Holocaust is unique and deserves further studies.
- 4 I wrote about the concept of the "Non-Jewish Jew" in MILLY HEYD: *Tristan Tzara/Shmuel Rosenstock: The Hidden /Overt Jewish Agenda* in: *Jewish Dimensions in Modern Visual Culture*, eds. MATTHEW BAIGELL, MILLY HEYD, ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG, Brandeis University Press, 2010. pp. 193-220.
- 5 I have elaborated on these issues regarding MAN RAY in MILLY HEYD: *Man Ray/Emmanuel Radnitsky: Who is Behind The Enigma of Isidor Ducasse* in: *Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*, eds. MATTHEW BAIGELL & MILLY HEYD, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2001, pp.115-142.
- 6 Also discussed and quoted in SANDER GILMAN: *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul: Race and Psychology in the Shaping of Aesthetic Surgery*. Duke University Press, 1998, p.75.
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- 9 The source is from a PBS film.
- 10 ALEX KERSHAW: *Blood and Champagne: The Life and Times of Robert Capa*, London, 2002, p. 16.
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- 19 GORDON PARKS: *Harlem Photographs 1932-1949*, National Museum of American Art, Washington, 1991, n.p.
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- 22 M.F. HIGH: *Shadows and Doubles* in: MICHEL FRIZOT & ANNIE-LAURE WANAUVERBECQ: *André Kertész*, p. 128.
- 23 BELA UGRIN: *André Kertész: Poet with a Camera*, Video Collection On Art & Artists, 1985.
- 24 KLAUS HERDING: *Kitaj: Weltkultur aus der Diaspora*, in: *Kunstforum International*. Vol. 3, Ruppichteroth 1991 pp. 140-145.
- 25 *Siskind, Aaron Siskind 100*, Power House Books, New York, 2003, n.p. Robert Mann Gallery, New York.
- 26 DANIEL ROBBINS: *Championing*, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Collection, Rhode Island School of Design, 2008. p. 250.
- 27 JAMES RHGM: *Aaron Siskind*, Phaidon, London, 2003, p.68.







**YVA: SUCCESSFUL BETWEEN SURREALISM AND NEUE SACHLICHKEIT**

ANNA ZIKA

Under the pseudonym YVA, ELSE NEULAENDER, born in 1900, counted among the studio photographers in great demand in the Berlin of the 1920s and 30s. Her well-equipped studio saw the creation of contemporary and avant-garde works and work series, which she produced for popular magazines like *Uhu* [Ullstein Publishers] or leading fashion houses. Especially sought after and much appreciated by professional critics, were her multiple exposures. YVA saw herself not so much as an artist but rather considered professional photography her real vocation. In 1938 she had to bow to the professional exclusion imposed by the *Nazis* and after 1942 all traces of her are lost in the *Majdanek* concentration camp.

YVA:  
Untitled (Lady Reading the Rennsport-Zeitung)  
ca. 1932



In November 2012 the Berliner auction house *Grisebach* organized a photography auction. *Grisebach* promoted this event in the July/August 2012 issue of *Photonews* using a picture of a vintage print by YVA that was successfully auctioned in May 2012. The photograph was taken circa 1932 and depicts a young woman with blonde wavy-hair, reading an issue of *Rennsport-Zeitung*. The prominent presentation of this magazine leads to the assumption that the photograph was specifically shot to advertise it. Then again, the iridescent light reflecting upon the graciously crossed legs of the reader create the impression, that the silky smooth, glittering stockings are the true focus of attention. Or, maybe it is neither an advertisement for stockings or newspaper but a typological representation of an independent Berliness of the 1930s whose interests lie not only in fashion, but also sports?

Wherever the reasons for the motif might lie, it is in any regard an exemplary piece by the photographer who with her contributions for illustrated papers, publicity shots, portraiture, and fashion photography proved successful in the Berlin of the late 1920s and early 30s.

As ambiguous as the photograph that is shown seems, likewise diffuse and speculative are the personal details surrounding the author. Except for an unpublished state-exam by IRA BURAN, there exists only *one* monograph, all thanks to and by the merits of MARION BECKERS and ELISABETH MOORTGAT. We come to learn that YVA was born as ELSE ERNESTINE NEULAENDER on January 26, 1900, as the 9<sup>th</sup> child of a Jewish businessman and a milliner in Berlin. If and even where she began an apprenticeship as a photographer still remains speculation at best, at the very least, the *Letzte-Verein* that since the beginning of the 20th century offered a renowned photography education, comes into close consideration here. A short profile written by the *Deutsche Fotothek* mentions a »six-month internship in a film studio [not further specified, AN].«<sup>1</sup> In 1925, ELSE NEULAENDER under her pseudonym YVA founded an independent photography studio at *Friedrich-Wilhelm-Straße* 17; in 1930, she moved into a bigger space on the *Bleibtreustraße* and in 1934, after her marriage to the wealthy ALFRED SIMON, finally moved to *Schlüterstraße*. This studio had a few dozen rooms that were exquisitely and exceptio-

nally outfitted. This not only confirms her economic success but also her diverse efforts—oftentimes Yva employed over a dozen staff members. In an atelier of this proportion it was customary to have a secretary, a studio lead, an accountant, lab assistants, retouchers and cleaning personnel.<sup>2</sup> Her professionally led studio was delighted by many Stars such as ASTA NIELSEN, LIL DAGOVER or even TATJANA BARBAKOFF, all coming to have their portraits taken by Yva. What might seem like the next logical step or career highlight for any successful photographer, is strikingly different in Yva's case. For almost a year, the *National Socialists* movement had systematically and relentlessly, impeded the occupational activities of Jews. Not only was the cultural sector not spared, but targeted to a far greater extent, in a bid by the new authorities to displace all Jewish creatives from editorial, publishing, theatrical and filmic productions; artistic works from Jews were not allowed to be publicized. Many of Yva's colleagues left Germany within the very first months of the takeover—she stayed, for whatever reason. It might be possible that she perceived herself less as a Jewish woman, and therefor didn't foresee any danger; maybe she was of the opinion that the quality of her output was enough of an argument to spare her all misery and injustice.

#### EARLY WORKS AND SURREALISTIC BEGINNINGS

In 1927, most likely the only time, Yva displayed photographic works in an art gallery. *Neumann-Nierendorf*, only recently relocated from Cologne to Berlin, displayed over 100 exhibits from November until December of that year and in addition printed a 12-page catalog. While there, Yva took the opportunity to remark on her approach: »What matters in my images, that is, to free the essence of photography from any foreign attachments and simultaneously to fully exhaust all artistic possibilities within pure photography. Photographic techniques have their own independent existence like any other artistic practice. [...] one needs to try and approach the essence of photography [...] from an understanding of the laws that govern each unique material: That it is in its own right the perspective of the lens, the gradation of light values on the plate, the compositional ability of the image. [...] the photographer [...] has to see with the camera, to feel in advance the influence of light upon the material [...] The portrait gains reality and allure through light and shadow, through interior design and line rhythm, and even here the camera conveys different impressions than the eye.«<sup>3</sup> These media-reflexive musings by the young photographer

YVA UND HEINZ HAJEK-HALKE:  
Selbstbildnis der Photographin Yva,  
1926



correlate astoundingly with the theses of HANNO LOEWY: therefore a photograph can be considered »a captured picture, not a creation, but the reflexion of light.«<sup>4</sup> Yva similarly describes the finished image as the »influence of light upon the material«, and the viewing process is »resigned« to the camera lens. The photographer »feels« in advance, but the camera creates the image. Around the same time even LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY explored in theory and practice, cameraless processes with his reasoning being: »The

photographer is a *lichtbildner* (artist of light and shade); photography is the formation of light [...] the primary tool in the photographic process is not the camera, but the photosensitive layer.«<sup>5</sup> However abstract the results of the *Bauhaus* teacher might seem, Yva's photographic oeuvre, despite expressing similar thoughts, is anything but superfluous. In July 1926 of the preceding year, Yva was able to publish a self-portrait in the *Welt-Spiegel*, a weekly supplement of the Berliner daily newspaper, which was published in the ›Jewish‹ *Mosse-Verlag*. It was presented as an example for »New avenues of photography.« Yva created it by double exposing a plate of a photographic self-portrayal and a reproduction

of a painting by HEINZ HAJEK-HALKE. She was befriended to the painter HAJEK-HALKE until a copyright dispute ensued because of this exact image, which Yva subsequently won but it divided the two. BECKERS and MOORTGAT consider Yva as a pioneer in appropriating this method in an artistic-creative capacity, which was previously used mainly for photographic jests.<sup>6</sup> *Photofreund*, one of the countless trade journals that were published at the time, praised the »remarkable shape of a new genre« that was on display »next to captivating portraits« which one could go see in the gallery *Neumann-Nierendorff* around the pre-Christmas season: »Yva is the name of the peculiar atelier, in which the expressionistic forces of photography reach new and surprising forms and deliver with conclusive proof the demands of photography, in gaining complete validity in artistic purity.«<sup>7</sup> In the contemporary field of experimental technological photography, there were ever increasing reviews that favorably praised Yva's work: »For some time now in photography, movements have been prevailing, whose aims are in overturning this art from its rather well-worn traditional paths and point it towards new contemporary

approaches [...] especially the remarkably well known American art photographer FRANCIS BRUGIÈRE and furthermore MAN RAY have been eagerly striving towards this for quite some time, however even in Germany, there is a young photographer who is »tired of the dull tones« and has taken it upon herself to go out on her own and rather extraordinary way. [...] it begs the question, what is more important in Yva's work, the artistic or the technical?«<sup>8</sup> This question the photographer answers to the effect that she did not engage with the artistic recognition she received: »Yva, on her chosen path, foresees huge opportunities for industrial advertising and posters as well as for editorial purposes« as summarized by the photo-critic HANS BÖHM, although he puts her »*futurographical*« works as »an aside to her professional activities« and saw it as a »purely artistic direction.«<sup>9</sup> Many of the

articles that mention Yva's works at the time, engaged in the — somewhat cumbersome — descriptions of manufacturing details, which require diligence instead of genius. In other words »the finished image has to completely exist in the mind's eye of the photographer, and a meticulous plan, with painstakingly exact calculations of the particulars of the tasks must underlie the output.«<sup>10</sup> Yet it becomes obvious that reviewers felt uncertain in trying to find categorical definitions for what they saw in Yva's exposures: »In recent times, photography has become more attentive to the technical and artistic opportunities developed in film, and through it generated something that I, at the moment, cannot

find a better expression for than »combined photography«,«<sup>11</sup> confesses WILLY WARSTAT in the *Photographische Korrespondenz*. Even he names, clumsily enough, the »Berliner photographer EVA HAJEK-HALKE« in the same line-up as FRANCIS BRUGIÈRE and MAN RAY. With the »combined portrait« photography tries to »transcend its previous boundaries by projecting the same personality in various forms of expression and in various spatial awarenesses and in various modes of lighting, onto one image layer, so that multiple factors of their spiritual and physical structure are shown side by side as it were, while it is left to the viewer to thoroughly examine the details, and to come to a realization of, and impression



YVA:  
Sisters G

of the personality, so in a way this being the product created. [...] HAJEK HALKE [to YVA] combines in the image of three dancer girls [*Sisters G.*, AN] not only the three heads, but also in the upper right hand corner an [...] entire photograph of the three dancing sisters and has three legs rise from the lower left hand corner.<sup>12</sup> BECKERS and MOORTGAT see photographic works such as the *Sisters G.* as traces of artistic stratagems, like LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY's concept of »*photosculptures*« [*Fotoplastik*], that are to be »assembled from several photographs, stuck, retouched, compacted together onto one surface«, thereby showing »concentrated situations, whose connotations can be iterated upon tremendously quick.«<sup>13</sup> In contrast to these ideas, YVA required neither scissor nor glue, because her multiple exposures happened on one plate. Herein her work resembled that of MAN RAY, with which she was repeatedly mentioned in the same breath. In the realm of entertainment photography, for example *Ullmagazine*, came i.a. the Viennese, and later Berliner *Atelier Manassé* to the fore. Behind the *Old Testament* name was the Hungarian descended spouses ADORJÁN and OLGA WCLASSICS; themselves not Jewish, like YVA they temporarily distributed their work through *Agentur Schostal*. In the late 20s and early 30s multiple exposures were almost exclusively used in an inflationary manner; to create frivolous pictorial humor, but also to visualize drug-induced hallucinations, nightmares, even social and erotic wishful thoughts; usually the light was used in a spotlight-like manner to highlight the drama, while culpable or objectionable material was left breeding in the shadows.<sup>14</sup> Such imagery was probably stimulated by similar aesthetic dissolves found in contemporary film productions: »this is the way apparitions, split-screening of actors, and other special effects are achieved in film today«<sup>15</sup> explains HANS BÖHM, naming a master of these manipulations, the cameraman GUIDO SEEGER.

YVA was a craftsman of this spectacularly sensational imagery and likewise the charmingly humorous. The former she utilized — in contrast to her colleagues' often blunt offensiveness — especially when finely tuned towards the relationship between the sexes. In the combination photograph *Geliebt von Fünfen* (Loved by five) the punchline lies not only the fact that the male protagonist, when faced with a sheer overabundance of dream girls, exhaustedly collapses; but upon closer inspection, the »fives« emerge as always being the same person — a dig at *dissociative identity disorder*, which was being debated in contemporary psychoanalysis? Or, that women in everyday fashion, through adjusting clothing and

makeup became almost indistinguishable from one another? Or, that in revue and open-plan offices the ›Girl‹ always was presented in an ornamental mass, surrounded by countless clones? While Yva disguised her image-trickery subtlety, she in this exceptional and self-deprecating manner, clearly shows the manipulation at hand.

#### PHOTO SEQUENCES

Next to *multiple exposure* or combination photography, there are notable uses of serial and sequential forms of presentations in Yva's work for magazines. Even this stylistic device is based on film (due to the sequential imagery). *Photo-essays* and *foto-novelas* emerged parallel to the cinema boom a few years earlier and after 1930, they first peaked in demand on a massive scale from editorials, »The more self-confident and current the young medium of cinema asserted itself in the cultural landscape, all the more livelier and braver the magazines became.«<sup>16</sup> FRANZ HESSEL reveals: »We Berliners are passionate cinema goers. The newsreel doesn't replace our experienced world history. The most beautiful women of both continents belong to us daily, with their smiles and tears in the moving imagery. We have our huge film palaces [...] and next to it thousands of smaller cinemas, [...] even a row of morning cinemas, true *Wärmehallen* [lit: warming halls; akin to homeless shelters. TN] for body and mind.«<sup>17</sup> Even Yva reflected upon cinema as mass entertainment and the silver screen dream—with sarcastically biting humour: with the actress Elisa Rodien she staged the photo story of *Kätzchen Lampe*—*das Mädchen aus Braunschweig oder Eine Diva wird gemacht* [Catty Lamp—the girl from Braunschweig or how a Diva is created]. Highlighting the irony is a *Synchronopse* of ›different‹ (actually not even remotely different) characters, that embodies the new star KARIN LAMPÉ in her short career. Purchasing this photographic commentary was the magazine *UHU*, from the publishing house of *Ullstein*.

They also published the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (*BIZ*). In continuing rivalry for instance with the magazine *Die Woche* from the *Scherl-Verlag*, the paper served pictorial essays and narratives—oftentimes as serialized novels—in such a way that the text portion noticeably shrunk. The 1933 emigrated editor-in-chief of the *BIZ*, KURT KORFF, commented upon this visual giant of 1927, »In a time, where life ›through the eye‹ started to play a far greater role, the want for viewing visuals became so overwhelming that you could transition into using the image itself as a message.



That meant a completely new attitude towards the picture. It is no coincidence that the developments in cinema and the developments of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* ran considerably parallel. To the extent that life became more restless, to the extent that the individual was less willing to quietly and mindfully page through a magazine, to the extent that it was necessary to find sharper, more concise forms of visual representations.<sup>18</sup> These »concise forms« reflected the increasing influence of technology on the lifestyles and labours of people living in large cities.<sup>19</sup> Entering photo history as *Neues Sehen* [New Vision. TN], the photographs were characterized by their new perspectives, such as *Low-Angle-Shots* or *Dutch angles*, extreme crops or dynamic diagonals. In the late 20s and early 30s, no German-speaking city maintained such a vast selection of journals and magazines as Berlin did; the *Spree*-metropolis for the time being became an *Eldorado* for photographers of any denomination or stylistic direction. To organize the ever-growing demand, (image) agencies were founded who brokered between editorials and the image-copyright holders.

The *National Socialists* bore account to the success of this media concept with the *Schriftleitergesetz* [Editors Law. TN] of October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1933, insofar as placing writing editors and photojournalists coequal. If Yva had not been Jewish, she too would have profited greatly from the elevation of her profession. Instead, it complicated her publishing in magazines. For a couple of years she managed to get by via watermarking her image contributions with *Pressephoto Yva* and distributing it through the non-Jewish agency *Charlotte Weidler*.

#### ADVERTISING PHOTOGRAPHY

A further source of revenue for the industrious photographer who distinguished herself not only with talent and ingenuity but also with untiring zeal and business acumen, was with imagery that found use in advertising. As the sheer mass of magazines on offer boomed, so did the advertising market. Next to purely graphically designed adverts, advertising started to appear that integrated photography or even completely relied on the photograph itself as the sole visual medium. Yva operated in this terrain with different motifs: cups arranged as a mass ornament marks the change in the photographic visual language, from the surrealistic accented to that of *Neues Sehen* towards the clear style of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. The art historian GUSTAF FRIEDRICH HARTLAUB coined this term — in

particular for painting but also for photographic portraits and still lifes. HARTLAUB expressed his vision of advertising that was morally and aesthetically unobjectionable, which he by all means saw as a distinction of art: »The commercial artist of today essentially acts, in their desire for quality, on their own responsibility. [...] It would be beautiful, [...] if an aesthetically flawless poster could fittingly guaranty the audience, the true quality of the praised wares or services, [...] it must succeed, [...] to bring the commercial and the aesthetic in complete alignment. This ideal is achievable. Each rigorous and rational form of commitment through its sole purpose has in the applied arts—commercial arts, likewise architecture and the crafts—been beneficial, [...] a drive towards productive, practical design.«<sup>20</sup> Because after all advertising is, HARTLAUB continues, »veritably social, collective, true art for the masses. The only one, which still exists today. It fabricates the visual customs of the nameless collective public.«<sup>21</sup> This »nameless collective« corresponds to the *modern industrial society*, with its most distinguishing characteristic being »Objectivity«,<sup>22</sup> as Helmuth Lethen describes: Objectivity not only in the functional reductionism of *Neues Bauen*, but also objectivity as a representational aesthetic strategy in the imaging formats,—and last but not least: objectivity in interpersonal relationships. *Objectivity* as look and lifestyle, simultaneously in terms of *media-immanent*

purpose. In the preface of the *Film und Foto* exhibition catalogue GUSTAF STOTZ director of the *Württembergische Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Deutschen Werkbunds*, explains: »The exhibition has consciously and intentionally set itself apart, in sharp contrast from the still prevailing popular opinion, that an artistically photographic impression can only be achieved by softness, blurriness and especially by manually

editing the shots. On the contrary! The lens is the foundation for every proper photographic effort, that small lens, with which everything becomes clear, sharp and precisely captured. [...] The exhibition set out from the start with the intent to, as completely as possible, collect the works of those personalities who were the first to recognize the camera as our most contemporary compositional tool and worked with it accordingly«<sup>23</sup> In this exhibition, YVA was represented with four of her photographs: *Charleston, der Schmuck, Optik und Plakat*.

YVA:  
der Schmuck



The photo *Schmuck* shows two female arms jutting out from a caftan-esque garb, wearing on their wrists precious jewellery styled in the then in vogue *Art Deco*. The motif of sunlight reflecting on a watery surface serves as the background, with a continual loss of focus in the depth of field. This commercial piece is exemplary, showing the turning point away from the expressionistic-experimental phase in Yva's output, towards a visual language that is defined by great clarity, contrast and in the accuracy of the materials shown. MARGIT VON PLATOW praised her in the trade magazine *Gebrauchswerbekunst*, »She understands, that the rigidity of the photographic moment must be broken by scaling from light to dark with high-contrast. The vibrancy of her images, regardless if figure or material photo, has something attractive and alluring. Combined



YVA:  
Beine, ca. 1932

with good photographic technology, Yva's photos become outstanding advertising media.«<sup>24</sup> A characteristic of *neusachliche* commercial photography is its isolation of objects and details, which through this *segmentedness* arrests and focuses the attention of the beholder.<sup>25</sup> In the way that the workmanship of the promoted products and material qualities become clearly recognizable and simultaneously seem represented ›objectively‹, trust forms between the presentation and the presented.<sup>26</sup> In the 30s, sharp contours with clear light and identifiable surfaces remained defining characteristics for Yva's photographic style.

The way these accessories are lit bridges Yva's vocation as object and ad photographer and her work as a visualizer of fashion imagery. A photo from 1928 of two slanted, parallel placed woman's legs, which are slipped into patterned stockings, taken on in several respects key factors: the diagonal can be found in many works of the so-called *Neues Sehen*, the clear representation of surfaces and structures feels by effect *Neusachlich*, the object itself, silken or artificial, illustrates the transition from a long to a short hemlined skirt, and with it a fashion and social, a sexual and a revolutionary movement. »Let us now reiterate and clarify with alerted senses, that there has hardly been, since time immemorial and never within the Christian calendar, such a stormlike and radical reformation of all moral and sexual relationships in favor of woman than in our age,«<sup>27</sup> writes STEFAN ZWEIF in his 1929 essay *Zutrauen zur Zukunft* [Confidence in the Future. TN].

Zweig reports how, »from these laced in corset, [...] afflicted by dresses and slips, from these legless, artificially wasp waisted and in every motion and movement artificial beings, [...] in one single swift generation became the new woman of today, with their bright, bare flesh, whose curves, like a wave, clearly flow along the light dress, this woman that [...] displays herself in broad daylight to the wind and the air and the male glance, that heretofore were only seen in certain closed establishments of ladies, whose names one may never utter.«<sup>28</sup> The female leg, covered and hidden for centuries, advances within a short period of time, seemingly from one year to the next, to a rampant prevailing image motif—not only out of curiosity for this, until now, hidden from sight object, but because the hosiery production of shorter dresses led to the development of a gigantic industry with long-lasting promotional needs. In images like those by YVA and many other photographers, among them FRIEDRICH SEIDENSTÜCKER, advertisements of this new product melded with a *common eroticization of life*.<sup>29</sup> Apropos, not to everyone's delight! PAUL FRIEDRICH complained about the »art crisis of the present«: »earlier the chic footing on the elegant leg of a lady, an event in any day-to-day life, now one doesn't even see the forest from the legs. So the *cruel énigme* [a terrible puzzle, meaning the woman] became a triviality with some measure of substance, raw foodism, *Bemberg silk* and *clochehat*, knowing all the practical skills, knowing all the tips at fever pitch, inwardly completely foreign to culture.«<sup>30</sup> This practically skilled, self-earning »Neue Frau«, was a label dominating the perception and pictorial world for a brief while. In a few short years after the *First World War*, it appeared that the self-perception and appearance of woman had completely changed. Everybody was talking about this phenomenon and it quickly received its name: *Neue Frau* [New Woman. TN]. Magazines and Journals reported on these types, and coverage was in demand, especially from woman, downright resulting in a loop. Then most articles were oftentimes illustrated with photographs and according to this imagery, young girls shaped their appearances and lifestyles. Even YVA, with her portraits, commercial shoots (particularly for cosmetics), and her photo-stories, participated in constituting the *Neue Frau* and their illusions. The art historian LOTHAR BRIEGER sought to discern sustained transformations in the faces of woman: »In front of a normal photo-box, one can sense today that the men are really way prettier, but that the women are more personal. That is the most strange, but fundamental change in the responsibilities of both genders.«<sup>31</sup>

[...] The face of a young girl is by far not boyish, because it is not anymore a daydreaming face, but an active face, [...] which has opened itself to reality, a face with clearly defined chin and teeth, which want to snap, with ears, which only listens to reality and not just expressions of love, [...] with eyes, which see the real world. The face of the young girl of today shares something of the hand, which wants to grab [...] here is a human being, who is already pre-determined to actively engage in life, and is very aware of this fact.«<sup>32</sup>

However, what sounds like a journey into a new era was soon modified again. Only a small percentage of women were granted an academic degree, social respect and good pay, especially men could not cope with the changing situation. During the *war* they forgot—the men that is, »in matters of humanity which have seemingly, and utterly been shipwrecked.«<sup>33</sup> as noted by HANNS HENNY JAHNN. Many, especially older people, stood dumbfounded and anxious in regard of the fact that woman cut their hair short and fashioned their leisure time as they saw fit: *Ich geh aus, und du bleibst da* [I'm going out, and your staying put] was the almost programmatic title of the 1930 novel by WILHELM SPEYER. Their free and casual partner choice, without any intent of binding engagements, irritated most men to no end since what they saw reflected in women, mirrored their own behavior.

As a sought-after photographer with complete financial and familial independence, ELSE NEULAENDER embodies this type of new woman in life and occupation. That YVA's photographic fashion works fell predominantly in the 30s was a result of her preferred female models and the presence of a new defining *habitus*. Then after a few years of pert male hairstyles, masculine cut coats and boyish flatt-chestedness, reverting from *Garçonne* and *Girl*, back to the *Lady*. With a renewed *Haute Couture* that again required longer flowing, more flattering cuts made of exquisite materials and more effeminate trimmings, with which the ideals of beauty changed: the *Eton crop* grew into curled and wavy updos, the doll like rigidity of cosmetics from the 20s gave way to more subtle and natural looking make-up.

This ideal was taken up by KARIN STILKE who came from a plain and traditional family, having nothing in common with the despicable flightiness of the *Flapper girls*. FRANZ HESSEL mentions this change which was also apparent in the photographs of YVA: »Yet again there is a new type of woman who has emerged victorious [...], the young *Avant-Garde*, the post-war



Berliner, [...] girls [...] with light athletic shoulders. Strolling so beautifully and weightlessly in their dresses, their skin so glorious, seemingly illuminated by their make-up, refreshing smiles with healthy teeth and the self-confidence with which they hustle in pairs through the evening bustle on the streets of *Tauentzienstraße* and *Kurfürstendamm*.<sup>34</sup> The amount of young woman on offer, who were all too happy to have photos taken of them, was overwhelming. Many hoped a detour with a modelling career, could lead to one in film. Yva poked fun at it with a self-deprecating gallery for the *Ullsteinverlag*: *Lieschen Neumann will Karriere machen oder das Scheindasein vor der Kamera — melden Sie sich bei einer Fotografin namens Yva!* [Jane Doe wants to make a career or the phantom existence in front of the camera — Get in touch with a photographer called Yva!]

Nevertheless, Yva was still very selective, saying that »even facial expressiveness needs to be learned, and models picked up from the street are not suited, even if they are pretty, as a viable solution for the task, of scenically representing something.«<sup>35</sup>

It might be a strange jest of irony, even cynicism on behalf of destiny with which Yva implicitly understood the depiction of the type of woman that the *National Socialists* had in mind: *Aryan* and sporty, attractive, but not provocative, feminine and ready for conception. While the *Nazis* believed in the need to sanction Yva's Jewish, intellectually superior editorial colleagues whose »cheeky« wit and irony, acumen and punchlines were labelled as culturally foreign, her portraits evidentially had so little to scrutinize that even the woman's magazine *Hella*, which was avowedly and closely on the right side of the spectrum, could publish her work until 1935. Having said this, true and good Germans found appeal in what had proved itself on the international stage: gentleman in the rest of Europe and the United States preferred blondes, which ANITA LOOS humorously turned her observations into a comic novel titled: *Gentleman Prefer Blondes* — with a likewise thin, not too thin physique, an active, but not athletic appearance. The regressive transformation of the physically competent companion who engaged her recreational partner on an even playing field, into a supple, passively temporizing bud that lets herself be taken, can also be found in Yva's diverse genre output: from illustrated snapshots to fully styled fashion imagery: the woman

of the early 30s seems to have become needy again. Probably YVA's most touching photographic work shows a couple dancing, allegedly taken by chance: *Augenblick des Glücks*, the moment of happiness, so the title of the image used by the *BIZ* as the cover of their November 6, 1932 issue, portrays complete surrender to the partner. As the man glances into the distance, maybe grasping upcoming tasks in his mind's eye, the woman, lost in thought and smiling, nestles to her dancer, a strand of hair has parted itself from her otherwise carefully arranged hair. Two years later the author of the image herself went into marriage.

#### FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

YVA had good ideas, she understood how to utilize light, she was industrious... and she lived in a city that gave her optimal conditions for her occupation: Berlin was not just a city of press, but also of fashion — and a city of the fashion press.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Jewish tailors moved from Poznań to Berlin, where, because of the *Hardenbergsche Edikt* of 1812 even if purely formal, they were legally equal. Amongst those who went into business for themselves, with *ready-to-wear* clothing factories, where the brothers DAVID, MORITZ AND VALENTIN MANHEIMER. The nature of *ready-to-wear* — in relation to bespoke tailoring — lies in the fact that the clothes are produced on stock and are kept in different sizes. The *Gebr. Manheimer* was, until their separation, specialized in the production of male dressing gowns till, like many of their colleagues, they expanded their product lines to include women's apparel. Very soon, exclusive and fashionable formal dresses became part of the coveted and in-demand offerings. Especially the store of HERMANN GERSON and his successors were considered some of the first fashion houses in the region: it permitted Jews to work on for example the *Coronation Robe* of the Protestant King of Prussia, WILHELM I., who wore it to the 1861 ceremony in the *Königsberger Cathedral*.<sup>36</sup>

The most beautiful and expensive designs, as well as choice accessories, apart from GERSON, also stemmed from the salons of VALENTIN MANHEIMER, MORITZ HAMMER, JOHANNA MARBACH and REGINA FRIEDLÄNDER. These temples of fashion were not just imitating French garments but also had personal design departments that conceived creations regularly, which were worn in aristocratic circles around the world. EDWARD STEICHEN photographed an evening coat from the salon *Kuhnen*, which was famous

for its glamorous coats imbued with fur treatments, in May 1929 for the German edition of *Vogue*. YVA also scenically composed this ensemble, namely on the actress VIOLA GARDEN. Incidentally, the photographer was tied familiarly to the fashion house: through her older brother ERNST NEULAENDER who entered the company as a joint shareholder.<sup>37</sup>

This unique gathering of fashion creatives in Berlin led to the foundation of an *association for the German fashion industry* [Verband der deutschen Modeindustrie] that was presided over by the managers of *Gerson* and *Hermann Freudenberg*. The initiative originated from PETER JESSEN, the head of the *Berliner Art Library*. To elevate fashion as an important cultural asset, Berlin provided more fertile grounds than any other German-speaking city. Powerfully eloquent chroniclers and observers of the scene were (Jewish) fashion journalist ELSA HERZOG and the

culture historian MAX VON BOEHN, who together with the (Jewish) art historian OSKAR FISCHER authored the multi-volume standard reference *Menschen und Mode im 19. Jahrhundert*. [People and Fashion in the 19th century. TN] PETER JESSEN saw the synthesis of art and fashion as a *Weltkulturaufgabe* [global cultural duty]<sup>38</sup> in theory and practice. His aspirations in this regard led to the publishing of the taste-defining and very exclusive magazine *Styl*.<sup>39</sup> Released under incomprehensible financial struggles between 1922 and 1924, it completely forewent photographic imagery. Insofar that *Styl* only wanted to show the best of the best from the houses of *Gerson* and Co., photographing these clothes on normally-built,

female bodies who were not yet trained in the modelling profession would have led to an aesthetic deficit. Indeed the artistic genre of fashion photography was still young and hardly developed; the French magazine *La Mode Pratique* had made first forays at the turn of the century, but it took until the 1910s that shots of women in beautiful new clothes were regularly shown next to the illustrated representations which were often small pieces of art in the premium priced journals. In the 20s, fashion photography came almost entirely in the ADOLPHE DE MEYER variety, in the form of his staging strategy: romantic lights, almost as being overwhelmed by aureoles (brightly lit halos) the models, mostly women of society or actresses, who are shown in non-defined spaces and elegant



**BLOCK UND SIMON:**  
Abendkleid aus schwarzer Seide  
mit raffiniertem Rückendekolleté,  
Modell Block & Simon, getragen  
von Lilo Witte, 1933



inertia. The direction of light still hails from the artistic perception within Pictorialism, which strived to create photographs imitating impressionist paintings that were almost two decades old at this point. Trailing after *expressionism* and *surrealism*, commercial fashion photography was limping behind a few years.<sup>40</sup> It was not until the early *thirties* that genre specific photographic visual languages were established. YVA belongs to the first generation that occupies the back row behind world greats such as CECIL BEATON who practiced artistic yet likewise substantive and lucrative fashion photography. Because *black and white* photography was still the standard until well into the 30s, YVA often utilized, like for example EDWARD STEICHEN, strong light and dark contrasts, she would take a bright outfit and arrange it in front of a dark background or take a darkly dressed model and position her in front of abstract light surfaces. Exciting light and shadow plays had already dominated the aesthetics of *expressionistic* and *surrealistic* compositions. In the second half of the 30s, one finds in YVA's work, *Neoclassical* set pieces, in particular pillars, used similarly as HORST or GEORGE HOYNINGEN-HUENE did around the same time. These types of props came into use as backdrops notably for softly falling evening gowns—the pillars *fluting* corresponding to the fall of the folds in the dresses. Even the poses that sport clothing was shot in seem inspired by classicism or antiquity: props such as spears, bows, discs and the like evoked traditional *Hellenic athleticism* regardless if female or male model—an effect that LENI RIEFENSTAHL used over and over for her *Olympic* film of 1936.

With a tight *low-angle-shot*, which emerged from the much stronger worm's-eye view of *Neues Sehen*, the legs of the models appeared especially long.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to today where fashion photography is created as complex arrangements of a theme or a small ›narrative‹, representations of fashion in the 30s were mostly ›conceived as singular images and because of this perceived pictorially.‹<sup>42</sup> They derived from the genre of the portrait, which at this point in time still dominates. YVA worked with a multitude of light compositions to achieve the desired effect that she felt was most appropriate for presenting the fashion. Her photographic fashion works have only very few noticeable and isolated instances of models engulfed in an auratic lights, which ADOLPHE DE MEYER was famous for.

She transformed and adjusted them with the brilliant and attention focalising studio lights of *Neue Sachlichkeit*—resulting

in increased clarity of the clothes shown and the women that were enveloped by them. The women and clothes remained radiantly charismatic still. YVA's artisanal mastery of light placement benefited her especially when photographing fur, a material which according to F.C. GUNDLACH is particularly difficult to represent, because if fur becomes too shiny it appears cheap.

Overall, YVA managed to get by using very few design elements in her room compositions: geometric shapes and forms, sometimes even plant leaves, amplifying through their shadows the impression of three dimensionality of the *spatial situations*—even if the model was situated in front of a flat wall. Especially the shadow and light reflexions linked the photographed individual to her environment—these *form analogies* between the details, the clothing and the background or pose were eminently popular in the 30s.

The fundamental frugality in the stagings with few room-formulating elements may however not have been owed to stylistic preference, but to the reality that the remuneration for fashion photography in Germany was modest at best. Consequently, the personal investments for the images was to be kept at a minimum.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the photos should to some extent be universally applicable, that is, for the publication in related magazines and their publications. Therefore a claim of uniformity cannot be disputed: » and so for instance the photographers YVA, KARL LUDWIG HAENCHEN and LILI NIEBUHR can hardly be stylistically distinguished from one another by their own clientele.«<sup>44</sup> This changed only after the inception of »editorial fashion photography« towards the end of the 30s and the emergence of what today we call »galleries«. The importance of *Layouts*, the positioning of photographic images and text segments, gained more traction in the coming years.

#### CONTINUATION TILL 1938

Berlin at the time was home to almost 300 registered and working photographers besides YVA and amongst them some thirty specialized in *fashion photography*. The majority of them living in the backstreets and crossroads of the *Kurfürstendamm* and not too far removed from the most relevant *prêt-à-porter* salons in the region around the *Hausvogtei*platz. Located relatively nearby were the editorial offices of over 90 *women-* and *fashion magazines*, above all *Die Dame* from the publishing House Ullstein, *die neue linie* and *Elegante Welt* on Mark-

*grafenstraße*, *Die Mode* on *Schützenstraße* and *Silberspiegel* on *Zimmerstraße*.<sup>45</sup> YVA competed against, amongst others, ERNST SANDAU's photo studio *Atelier Binder* led by SUSE BYK; also ELLI MARCUS, EWALD HOINKIS, IMRE VON SANTHO, the *Atelier Willinger* or even *Zander & Labisch*. Even the young KARL LUDWIG HAENCHEN was a competitor: he had YVA's assistant LENI CARLÉ bring him exposures, and stated »I'm better than this,«<sup>46</sup> sending her clients some of his work—allegedly the choice always fell in his favour. But, in the *Avant-garde*-esque, *Bauhaus* inspired magazine *die neue linie*, YVA was represented in 19 of the 71 published issues with her fashion photography—and positioned herself ahead of HAENCHEN and the popular studio of HUBS and ILSE FLÖTER.<sup>47</sup>

In the years following the Nazi *Machtübernahme* [accession to power. TN], it appeared as though the working conditions for fashion photographers, as long as they were not *Jews*, would improve even further. *The National Socialists* since the start of their reign attributed fashion with a strong identity-defining significance and expected great economic success on the global market for genuine German *fashion design* that was to be free of any foreign influence. Wanting to expunge the British *Dandy-ism* and Parisian *smuttiness* and especially the »bland [...], disgusting [...], limitlessly un-German [...] Jewish [...] spirit«<sup>48</sup>, that weaved itself through the fashion magazines and establishments in which »Jewish *ready-to-wear* retailers in cooperation with the *spinning* and *weaving* industry supported by the *domain of harlots* [...] makes "great" fashion. Shame and disgrace, humiliation and debasement of German taste.«<sup>49</sup> *The National Socialists* drove away Jewish editors such as KURT KORFF, ELSA HERZOG and GUSTI HECHT and countless *salon* owners and talented photographers. In doing so they lost their most capable forces within the world of fashion. Any Nazi effort in fashion would be an exercise in futility, no *Modeamt* [Department of Fashion, TN] nor oath of allegiance for the *Aryanized* editorship and not even the launch of a new fashion magazine *Die Mode*, which was to propagate the unique aesthetic and ideological position of the German fashion endeavour in the first years of the war. *Auerbach & Steinitz*, HANSEN BANG, MAX FRIEDLÄNDER, MORITZ HAMMER, and MAX BECKER all closed by the mid 1930s. The venerable *House Gerson* was taken over by the company *Horn*.<sup>50</sup> The *fashion photographers* MARTIN MUNKÁCSI, ERWIN BLUMENFELD and WILLY MAYWALD<sup>51</sup> had left Germany, the *Vierteljude*

NORBERT LEONARD could until his denunciation in 1941 work at the primary voice of *Nazi-chic*, the fashion magazine *Die Mode*.<sup>52</sup>

The last remaining, until now undisturbed Jewish ateliers had to cease their activities in 1938, among them SANDAU, BINDER and YVA. One of the most well known photographers in Berlin was forced to be a radiological assistant in a Jewish hospital, her spouse ALFRED SIMON, the former wealthy businessman, was degraded to a street sweeper. Supposedly, even in their last small apartment in the Düsseldorf StraÙe, YVA tried to pursue photography.<sup>53</sup> Only at the end of 1941, when a general prohibition on emigration was enacted, did the SIMONS pack their bags. Mindful of past successes they were apparently eagerly awaited and thoroughly anticipated on the other continent: »Madame Yva is coming to work here«<sup>54</sup> reported the *New York Evening Post*. But this never came to be: the SIMONS were detained and deported to *Majdanek*, where YVA probably perished in the course of 1942. Considering her tireless output including the countless publications and reviews in her time, the photographer for the most part fell into oblivion. In 1999, one year before YVA's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the editors of the catalogue *Aufbrüche. Frauengeschichten aus Tiergarten* [Awakenings. Stories of Women from Tiergarten. TN] had to admit that YVA's photographs were until then »barely known.«<sup>55</sup>

Far more prominent was one of YVA's apprentices. His name is probably a known quantity: HELMUT NEWTON.

- 1 [www.deutschefotothek.de/kue70146052.html](http://www.deutschefotothek.de/kue70146052.html)
- 2 Cf. JOHANNES MODEREGGER, *Modelfotografie in Deutschland 1929-1955*, Books on Demand 2000, p. 40.
- 3 Text by the photographer printed in the catalogue for Yva's solo exhibition of photographs in the gallery *Neumann-Nierendorf*, 19.11. – 10.12.1927. cit. from MARION BECKERS/ELISABETH MOORTGAT: *Yva. Fotografien 1925–1938*, Tübingen 2001, p. 11.
- 4 HANNO LOEWY: Fotografie, in: DAN DINER (Ed.), *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, Stuttgart/Weimar, pp. 361–366, here p. 365.
- 5 CLAUDIA GABRIELE PHILIPP (Ed.): *Photographische Perspektiven aus den Zwanziger Jahren*. Hamburg 1994, p. 28.
- 6 Cf. BECKERS/MOORTGAT 2001, p. 21.
- 7 C. FRIES: *Photographischer Expressionismus* in: *Photofreund, Halbmonatsschrift für Freunde der Photographie* Nr. 1. VIII. Jg. Berlin 1928, p. 15.
- 8 HANS BÖHM: *Der Expressionismus in der Fotografie*, in: *Photofreund*, Nr. 23, Jg. V. Berlin 1926, pp. 429–431, here p. 429.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 431.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 430.
- 11 WILLY WARSTAT: *Neuere Stilwandlungen in der bildmäßigen Photographie*, in: *Photographische Korrespondenz* Nr. 7 (1927). pp. 204–211, here p. 208.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- 13 LÁSZLÓ MAHOLY-NAGY: *Fotografie ist lichtgestaltung*, in: *Bauhaus, Heft 1*, 2. Jg., 1928. p. 2ff. here cit. from BECKERS/MOORTGAT 2001, p. 46.
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- 23 GUSTAF STOTZ: *Die Ausstellung*, in: DERS. (Ed.), *Film und Foto, Katalog zur Internationalen Ausstellung des deutschen Werkbunds*. Stuttgart 1929 (repr. 1979), p. 11f., here p. 12 (emphasis added by the author).
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- 27 STEFAN ZWEIG: *Zutragen zur Zukunft*, in: FRIEDRICH MARKUS HUEBNER (Ed.): *»Die Frau von morgen, wie wir sie wünschen« (1930)*, reissued and introduced by SILVIA BOVENSCHEN. Frankfurt am M. 1990, pp. 25–32, here p. 25.
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- 29 ENNO KAUFHOLD: *Fixierte Eleganz*, in: GUNDLACH/ULI RICHTER (Eds): *Berlin en vogue. Berliner Mode in der Photographie*. Berlin 1993, pp. 13–46, here p. 27.
- 30 PAUL FRIEDRICH: *Das Problem der Kunstkrise der Gegenwart*. in: *Der Kunstwanderer, Bd. 11, 1930, 1./2. Juli-Heft*. p. 398.
- 31 LOTHAR BRIEGER: *Das Frauengesicht der Gegenwart*. Stuttgart, 1930, p. 32.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 33 HANNS HENNY JAHNN: *Gesund und angenehm*, in: HUEBNER, 1930. pp. 117–125, here p. 123.

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- 39 Cf. ADELHEID RASCHE/ANNA ZIKA (Eds.): *Styl. Das Berliner Modemagazin der 1920er Jahre*. Stuttgart, 2009.
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- 45 Cf. Ibid., p.39.
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- 47 Cf. Ibid., p.98.
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- 49 KURT ENGELBRECHT: *Deutsche Kunst im totalen Staat*. Lahr in Baden, 1933. p.129ff.
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- 52 Cf. MODEREGGER, 2000. p.123.
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## WHERE ARE YOU FROM? (2011-2013)

MICHAL BAROR

*And the LORD said to him, »This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ›I will give it to your offspring.‹ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.<sup>1</sup>*

*But let's get back to issue,« said ALLEN. »why do you want to study archaeology?« »Yes,« said NORA, »it is complicated to explain.« The beautiful words she once said in the past scared her, by repeating them now she made her secret secular. »I promised: I will not stay in Europe. And there [in Palestine] I hope to see things of width and depth. I always imagined that there, if we will dig deep enough, we will find the layer of ground on which the footsteps of God can still be seen.«<sup>2</sup>*

In my artistic practice I rethink the mechanisms employed to construct histories and identities in relation to scientific knowledge and the presentation of information. My work is an attempt to raise questions about the limits of vision that are forced upon a subject by scientific, historical, and geographical settings.

I look at different ways in which knowledge is organized and presented in archives and museums in order to trace the roots of our (of mine) understanding of the world. My work hones in on these arrangements themselves: what is kept where, what is being left outside, what kind of connections are being made

in different historical times. There are no conclusions to be had from these, only materials for examination, new ways of looking at what we accept as knowledge.

Israel, my homeland, has been a constant subject. Having spent the past two years away in London made it almost painfully clear that simply by defining Israel as my homeland, I already make use of a large number of presumptions I was born and raised into, the same presumptions that continue to construct my modes of thinking and sense of identity. In my work I try to scratch at and peel back the transparent layers of knowledge and belief that shape my mind or the mind of my interlocutor. My practice is based on the photographic image. I focus on a threefold relationship between the photograph, the object, and the physical body. Looking at how fragile the borders between those three are, I am fascinated by the relationship between the photographic image and the historical narrative; the manner in which the image is loaded with values based on the story written beside it.

I find the relationship between the process of image making and the process of history writing to be intriguing. My work reconsiders such processes while also revising them. The result is photographic installations that combine texts and images and transform two-dimensional images into physical objects. The images themselves combine different layers of knowledge and at times different materials and printing techniques. The goal of the installations is to confront the viewer with received ideas, while compelling him or her to reassess their own position with regard to the way information is presented to them.

I spent the last two years in London, where the focus of my artistic and scholarly research was an attempt to rethink my own home country — Israel/Palestine — from a different perspective by looking at the tradition of European archaeology in the Middle East. The main project I was working on there was Works from the *Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)* Archive for which I used materials found in the archive of the *PEF* — the first organization for the study of Palestine, founded in 1865.



I was using the archive's collections in order to re-examine my homeland via a foreign timeframe and ideology. The archive allowed me to look at the first attempts to transform the notion of the land by creating evidential links between the physical landscape and the Bible. Archaeology was one of the main tools for this transformation, as it created material evidence to support the transformation of the biblical stories into historical facts. This transformation affects the reality and the politics of the region to this day. The work exposes my dual relationship with the place as both a daughter of *Zionist* colonialists and as a native. Here I have collected few works from this project, I will elaborate on three of them.

The work *The Bird* is an open call for texts based on an archival image that was taken during the excavation in the mound of Gezer between 1902-1905 by ROBERT MACALISTER.<sup>3</sup> There was something about this photograph that struck me: it was almost as if the archaeologist-photographer was already unconsciously aware of the aggressive act of writing history. The clay vassal bird from the second *Bronze Age* was probably just being pulled out of the soil after 3000 year. I can only imagine the excitement of finding such a beautiful object. However, the ancient object was not enough in the photographer's eye and as a result feathers were added to this object for the shoot. I see this action of adding feathers as a symbolic act of looking at a different culture from a distance. In response to my excitement, I published an open call for texts:

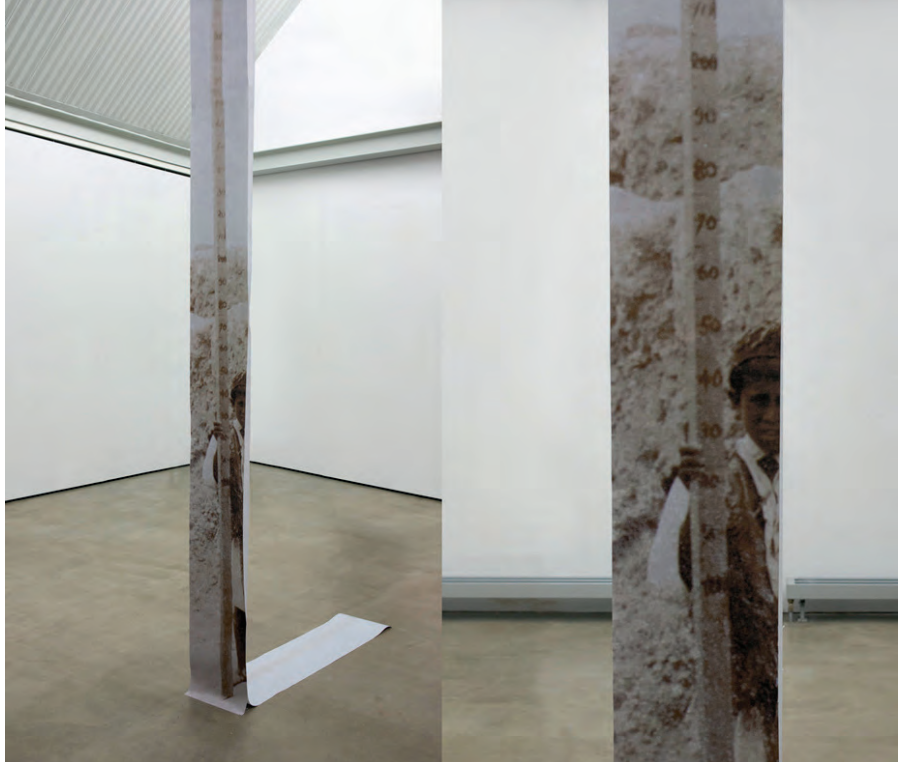
»Dear friends, I'm contacting you in order to ask for your contribution. If you'd like to participate, please write something about this photograph, or, to be more accurate, contribute a text for which this photograph will be a starting point. The text can be about anything that you feel excited about, for good or bad reasons. It could be any kind of text and in any length.«

The responses varied and came from Palestinian, Israelis and international writers. Some were original academic texts, such as SHIR ALON text *Native Birds, Native Speakers* about the Y. H. BRENNER novella *Nerves* from 1910. Some were original short stories such as ERAN HAKIM text and some were simply quotes from other writers such as MAHMOUD DARWISH.

The final work was shown both as an installation. Viewers were invited to introduce any text they wanted, as well as to write their own piece and as a website — [www.michalbaror.com/thebird](http://www.michalbaror.com/thebird). This strategy allowed parallel readings, academic as well as poetic, to expand our reading of a single historical document. The historic arte-fact was presented out of context. It was open to subjective readings. In this way the authority and status of the narrative of the archive, and our relationship to history, to meaning, is questioned. The works *The Ruler* and *The Cave* function as sculptures; where the photographic print is attempting to re-enact the characteristics of the subject being photographed. As a result they continually fail, their authority undone.

The work *The Ruler* based on a found photograph, postcard size, describe a Palestinian child holding a ruler for the British archeologist to measure the depth of the excavation is. I choose to enlarge the photographic print to real size according to the rule of the ruler so the kid is now standing in front of the viewer. The viewer is being measured by the work, as well as the architectural space. In the work the ruler reaches towards the ceiling and folds back upon itself, reversing the flow of measurement. Questions are raised upon the double etymology of the word 'ruler'. In *The Cave* the viewer is invited to enter the cave just to find out the obvious – that light at the end of the cave is nothing more than two-dimensional paper.











**THE BIRD.**

OPEN CALL, MIXED MEDIA INSTALLATION AND WEBSITE

**THE RULER.**

30X510X20 CM, ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINT ON RICE PAPER

**THE CAVE.**

LOOKING FROM INSIDE OUT, 150X250X40 CM, ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINT

**LIGHTWEIGHT HISTORY.**

40X60 CM, ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINT

**THEY NEVER FOUND THE BODY.**

30X30 CM, ARCHIVAL INKJET PRINT

1 *Book of Deuteronomy* 34:4

2 LEA GOLDBERG: *VeHou HaOr (And He Is The Light)*. translated by MICHAL BAROR, Siphriat Hapoalim, Merhaviva, 1946, p.81. GOLDBERG (1911–70) is one of Israel's most canonical female poets, this book is her first novel, written ten years after she moved from Europe to Palestine.

3 MACALISTER, ROBERT ALEXANDER STEWART: *The excavation of Gezer, 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*. Published for the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund by J. MURRAY, 1912, London.





## SPARKS IN THE LENS: BENJAMIN AND PHOTOGRAPHY

ERIC LEVI JACOBSON

The photographic technique pioneered by the *surrealist* MAN RAY presents the reverse silhouette of objects exposed to light. The technique demonstrated the means by which photography is also an instrument of perception, writes WALTER BENJAMIN, and can be compared to some of the parallel scriptural methodologies of modernity, such as *psychoanalysis*, *phenomenology*, and the *Kabbalah*. BENJAMIN's *Short History of Photography* touches upon many of the central themes in his system: from the early *Kantianism*, to a *Judaic Messianism* and *Marxism* informed by the mass reproducibility of the work of art and its relationship to an inner aura. The silhouette is an image of the past which is no longer determined by the past. The point between a photographic image and its original suggests a third moment entirely, no longer governed by what is conventionally marked by light, lens and paper. It reveals an entirely new ›Beschriftung‹ of *time-space*, beyond the strict limits of materiality in which the object resides.

»die Traurigkeit der Natur macht sie verstummen. Es ist in aller Trauer der tiefste Hang zur Sprachlosigkeit, und das unendlich viel mehr als Unfähigkeit oder Unlust zur Mitteilung.«<sup>1</sup>

The capacity of images to render conceptual truths apparent, our continuous fall from grace through the rapacity of capitalism but also the power of the photograph to point to restoration of the world through the ingathering of tiny fragments of messianic redemption—these are some of the philosophical and *Judaic* motifs in the thought of WALTER BENJAMIN as he developed his now celebrated *Short History of Photography* (1931).<sup>2</sup> The essay can be seen as an amalgam of ideas developed over many decades. It originates from his earliest interests in *Judaism*, theology and *Neokantianism*, but perhaps can only develop here into fruition as an aesthetic theory and also critique of capitalism and purpose of the work of art. Photography appears here as a bridge between the *Judaic* concepts of decline and redemption, the mercantile exploitation of the image, but also the capacity of the new technologies to render the world accessible in a new and

FRANZ KAFKA posing in a tableau setting of palm fronds and a fake tropical landscape.



invigorating way. Nowhere is the confluence of these philosophical and messianic themes more present to BENJAMIN than in the image of a central European Jewish boy standing in a *Wintergarten* of palm trees, flowers, possibly an easel. In one hand, he holds the wide-brimmed hat of a Spaniard, in the other, what appears to be a marching baton featuring a nub at the top leading to telescopic pointer at the bottom. The boy is dressed in short pants and a woven jacket with the nautical motif of an oversized lapel and rows of buttons on either side. He turns his gaze away from the lens with a distinctly sullen appearance of a child whose »*unermesslich trauigen Augen*« remain unappeased by the idyllic landscape behind him. The photograph is of the young FRANZ KAFKA from 1888/1889.<sup>3</sup> For BENJAMIN, however, it is more than an image of KAFKA. It is a form of lamentation that captures the decline of photography as a medium of philosophical-messianic transformation. We witness this in the eyes of one sad and tired boy: »*Dies Bild in seiner uferlosen Trauer*« writes BENJAMIN »... ist ein

*Pendant der Frühen Photographie, auf welcher die Menschen noch nicht abgesprengt und gottverloren in die Welt sahen wie hier der Knabe.*<sup>4</sup> (This image in its overflowing sadness is a pendant of Early Photography where humanity did not yet look into the world as abandoned and forlorn as this boy does here.) KAFKA's melancholic appearance presents for BENJAMIN a loss of a gift that was detectable in the earliest forms of photography, an immediacy replaced by the gaze of a godforsaken world. It is the very same decline that BENJAMIN first identifies in the concept of language. This concept permeates every aspect of his mature historical, linguistic and late aesthetic theory. It also forms the cornerstone of his early intellectual partnership with GERSHOM SCHOLEM, who later sought to apply the content of his linguistic theory to his *history of Jewish esoteric and speculative literature in the Kabbalah*.<sup>5</sup>

As I will develop in this essay, BENJAMIN's early *Judaic* concept of language anticipates the primary themes with which he constructs his later theory of photography. The argument relies on the premise that photography shares with ideas of language the potential to capture and express the *geistige Wesen*, the intellectual or spiritual substance of objects.<sup>6</sup> He here applies the notion of an originating or creating language to the medium of photography. Hued from his brief but nevertheless formative encounter with classical *Hebrew* literature, BENJAMIN is enraptured with the notion of a creating language that knows no distinction between an object and its substance of linguistic expression. Recalling the *Genesis* narrative of ADAM naming the beings and objects of creation based on the inner unity of the thing with its name, BENJAMIN contemplates the possibility of an originating language that would bear no distinction between the name and the act of naming, and in this sense, the subject observing and the object being observed. Just as in his notion of language originating in a state prior to the distinction of subject and object, he discovers in the history of the evolution of the photographic image a similar wish. Photography began with a promise of ontological neutrality. The photographic image suggests the capacity to see between subject and object and therefore to transcend the philosophic fall from paradise in which numerous names exist for the same object and no name can be sure to capture the *geistige Wesen* of an object or being, its intellectual and spiritual substance.

But here is the trajectory of KAFKA's downtrodden eyes. Together with BENJAMIN's original language, the neutrality of the lens falls into a commodified world of falsehood and illusions.

Language descends from the grace of coherence and identity into a world of multiple meanings, while photography falls from the capacity to aid reason into a world dictated by market forces. Just like language, photography is governed by a » *verletzten Unmittelbarkeit* « (damaged immediacy).<sup>7</sup> Language underwent a tragic decline from which one result would be the emergence of multiple names for the same objects, and by extension, multiple languages for the same modes of expression. This marked a decline of the most primary and basic principle of reason, the law of identity, by which an object is coequal with its name (that  $x = x$  and not  $y$ ). Reading a damaged immediacy of language into the history of photography with the same Judaic literary motif and trajectory, BENJAMIN applies his epistemologies of knowing to the modern mediums of perception: the image, the art of creating images, and their means of reproduction. There is no measurable difference in his work between speaking as an act of communication and the creation of images. His historical narrative of photography, in which the photograph originates with the charlatans and fruit sellers of the open markets of the nineteenth century with an innocence toward the intensive mass manipulation that became manifest in the *twentieth century*, enables him for first time to develop a critique of capitalism and the problem of reification. These themes are informed by his earlier *Judaic* and *Kantian* ideas and are presented in a narrative form.

#### ON THE SHORT HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Published in three separate issues of *Die Literarische Welt* from September to October 1931, BENJAMIN's *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie* may be considered a critical or discursive prolegomenon to the *Passagenwerk*, as he wrote to GERSHOM SCHOLEM at the time.<sup>8</sup> The project attempts to construct an intellectual history of European capitalism as manifest in the material objects and culture of Paris in the nineteenth century. It provided the basis for BENJAMIN's ideas on the fetish character of the commodity, the optical illusions of capitalism and its visual imagination, or what he refers to as the phantasmagoria captured in the illustrations of GRANDVILLE, the poetry and prose of CHARLES BAUDELAIRE and, most keenly, the new photographic methods of montage. In the late work he delves into the concept of the innate innocence of material culture, its philosophical neutrality, which undergoes a complete transformation on the shop-floor of the Parisian arcades.

*The Short History of Photography* presents in many respects the *Kernzelle* of the *Passagenwerk*. It is also the locus point in which BENJAMIN develops the prime operative thesis of the *Kunstwerk* essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility* (1935). The *Work of Art* essay, a central component of the *Passagenwerk*, turns to the question of whether artwork has an inner substance that is preserved or destroyed by the new methods of reproduction. These two arguments—the first concerning a declining medium of expression and the second, the liquidation of an inner substance of the intellect nullified or transformed by the new media of communication and expression—lie at the heart of BENJAMIN's early work and thus bind his philosophy of language to his late aesthetic theory.<sup>9</sup> It is possible to characterize his early ideas on history, language and justice as a preliminary *Philosophy of Judaism* and although the promise of a Jewish philosophy remains largely unfulfilled in BENJAMIN's lifetime, the foundations for such a system enter into the crevices of his mature work on aesthetics, material culture, and his theses on history.<sup>10</sup> In this respect, the *Short History of Photography* is no exception. The motifs which originate in his *Judaic* philosophy are not essential in itself (that is, they have no essentialist value) but are nevertheless indispensable for an understanding of the foundations and contours of BENJAMIN's ideas and work as a whole. The *Short History of Photography*, if it shares a common basis with the early language essay, can be read just in this specific sense as a product of the constellation of the philosophical ideas of the early period which included his *Judaic* ideas.

#### THE DECLINE OF LANGUAGE

To demonstrate the necessary relationship between the early philosophy of language and the concept of photography, a more detailed explanation of the narrative of a descent from the original language is required. Turning to his early essay *On Language As Such and the Language of Man* (1915), we find BENJAMIN employing the story of creation to construct a philosophy of language based on a concept of innate meaning. In his analysis, the content of a thing is not expressed through language but in language. This implies that language and the thing language expresses are inseparable from each other. In this way the narrative of creation, and that creation was sounded into being, is key to BENJAMIN's approach. This suggests to BENJAMIN that the essence of a being or an idea is its language. But this, in turn, raises questions regarding

the medium. If a thing or idea is its language, what is the meaning of a metaphor? And, when referring to the divine, what else are we to find in language other than a metaphor? In questioning the idea of representation, BENJAMIN seeks to enquire into an existence beyond the possibility of expression, here meaning the expression of the existence of the divine within language. In the story of creation, *God* expressed His inner substance to create man » in His image « but He Himself remains incommunicable, inaudible and untranslatable. The act of creation is performed linguistically and therefore presents to BENJAMIN the existence of a divine language distinct from our own. Yet how ADAM could have known the names of the created beings remains mysterious unless they somehow communicated themselves to him. The name thus becomes the focal point of speculation as to the linguistic expression of an object, the expression of its substance of the intellect, its *Geisteswesen*. With the idea that the animals somehow expressed themselves to Adam in such a way that he was able to recognize and therefore give them their names, BENJAMIN considers the magic defined in the relationship between an object and its name in the context of revelation, a transmission of this » substance « from the divine to the profane. A transition from the inexpressible to finite expression must take place here as well, whereas the relationship between the expression of the named and the namer is brought fully into theological focus with the problem for ADAM of knowledge in *God* succeeding the act of naming.

With the speculative narrative in *Genesis* rendered discursive, BENJAMIN seeks to address the finite nature of the human word in relation to the infinite nature of God. This linguistic transition from *God* to ADAM, from a creating word to a naming one, and, ultimately, after the expulsion, from divine language to the profane, is explained in the concept of translation. In all forms of expression, there is a continuous transporting of one language into another, from the written to the acoustic, from animate to inanimate, from profane to divine. In the expulsion from paradise, the expression of this translation was lost. What emerges in its place is a language of *damaged immediacy*. In the breakdown of an immediate relationship between a name and the thing that is named, a multiplicity of words abounds for the same object, just as a multiplicity of languages exists for the same expression. Profane language emerges from paradise damaged, and yet, human language is not without any recourse to its predecessor, claims BENJAMIN, seeing within humanity a residue of the creating word

of *God*. This creating word is preserved in profane expression in the language of judgment — the dimension of justice in the profane.

Photography, for its part, provided a venue and the lens, a medium through which the promise of the perception of object neutrality and the problem of *damaged immediacy* could be revisited. The pure unmediated expression of an inner auric point that is compromised and exposed to a state of multiple words and languages raises the question as to whether the aura is still present and audible through the new mediums of expression, the sparks in the lens. The expression of an inner substance embedded in the name, here understood as the aura of the work of art, can be considered in variation with photography, which offers as a subject of investigation the promise of greater transparency due to its recent origins, in comparison to the written form for example. But it is also a viable subject due to its rapid technological transformation in a relatively short period of time. Although the lens and the transformation of the image has been afforded little philosophical attention because of this, its suitability is evident in its operative subject-object division in the image and the lens. Here it may be worthwhile taking a slight detour into BENJAMIN's coming philosophy to explain the wish or longing for a philosophical neutrality toward experience, this too evidenced by the category of religion.<sup>11</sup>

#### PHOTOGRAPHIC NEUTRALITY

The neutrality of experience that BENJAMIN gives voice to in his *The Program of a Coming Philosophy* is precisely the wish for a future philosophy with no distinction between what is conceivable in general and what is conceivable by *God* alone. At first glance, this would seem like a strange ideation. Surely what is known by *God* per definition cannot be known by man. However, since the mind of *God* would know no distinction between subject and object (relevant to the study of knowledge) and no distinction between morality formed by experience or prior to experience (ethics), it is an abstract but nevertheless conceivable position to being the question of neutrality. With regard to the study of knowledge, one would expect a distinction between the divine attribute of knowing and the theology of knowledge that must always be circumscribed by experience. It follows that only *God* can contemplate entirely outside the realm of time. We find the same immediacy within language, stemming from the language of creation, in which language is the medium by which the substance of the intellect is expressed. »*Die Sprache eines Wesens ist das*



*Medium, in dem sich sein geistiges Wesen mitteilt.*»<sup>12</sup> An object is equal to its full, complete and unmediated expression. Precisely here the image appears to address the problem created by a subject that experiences and the object being experienced. The camera, as it were, might capture the image in its full and complete state without being condition by a preexisting subject-object albatross. The camera promises philosophy only wish and desire: to finally be behind the curtain of cognition and exist prior to the subject-object distinction. It is a position that BENJAMIN prophesied will be dislodged by a philosophy to come.<sup>13</sup> The position is clearly radical with regard to BENJAMIN's attribution of freedom to reason. Autonomy is a primary *Kantian* demand. Philosophy requires the complete autonomy of thinking for the purposes of reason. However, for BENJAMIN autonomy means something more. It is contingent on the "neutrality" of experience, experience freed from a subjectivizing ipseity of perception, and although BENJAMIN claims concerning phenomenology here is illegitimate, his calls for a freedom from the empiricism of the study of perception is understandable if we contemplate the radical expansive definition of his concept of necessary autonomy. Neutrality as a category nevertheless remains curious, for what could be more partial than experience? The autonomy of reason is contingent on neutrality, says BENJAMIN, but in making such a claim, he must be aware of the troublesome logic of being co-equal to mind of *God*. *God*, in this case, would be merely the sum of his Creation, since being logically greater than the things He creates is already presupposed in the causal definition or a first cause. So it is precisely that fact that BENJAMIN contemplates from the position of equality that we may identify the immanent *messianic* qualities of his *Kantianism*. The aim is a liberation from the worldly binary of subject-object. It is also the promise of the photograph.

The pursuit of the inherent or imminent neutrality of the photographic medium is therefore an onto-philosophical investigation that the existing literature of photography does not address, he writes. The problem is »...*die Versuche, der Sache theoretisch Herr zu werden*...« that is: to allow the object to be the determining feature. This might foster a spiritual drive to materialism that need not sacrifice the subject.<sup>14</sup> Photography is marked by the object's theoretical centrality at the same time as its absence. This means, presumably at first glance, the absolute materiality of the lens, and its primacy over the frame of reference or points of mutual reference. Yet unlike the concern of phenomenology, where the causation

due to the intersubjectivity of object and subject becomes chief concern, photography appears to present an immediate reconciliation as part of its characteristic features. In the first instance, the lens is the beacon of scientific equanimity, the operative principle being that what is not captured by the lens cannot be created by it. But what ultimately has primacy? Does opportunity make the photographic image or is it the object of view? Must we credit the photographer, or still further, the technological means? If the adage is true that »*Gelegenheit macht Diebe*«—literally that »opportunity makes thieves«—then the work of art is a purloining of images in abject neutrality as to its motives and causation, thus making crime the mother of all aesthetics. Opportunity, however, is the source of crime as much as light is the source of an image: one cannot live without opportunity but it is very difficult to see it as a cause of action. So causation, or lack thereof, cannot be the determining factor of this radical neutrality, but rather the self-expression of its substance, its *geistige Wesen*.

It is no wonder that the new technologies were deemed a »*französischen Teufelskunst*« (French devil's art) as the *Leipziger Anzeiger* once decried, evoking the classic *Franco-Prussian* divide but also the confessional lines around the so-called prohibition of images, photography in its *Geistwesen* a potential grounds of sacrilege, eine *Gotteslästerung*. So BENJAMIN quotes rather freely from the *Leipziger Anzeiger* in his *Short History of Photography* to push the motif of criminal sacrilege of the photographic method: »*Der Mensch ist nach dem Ebenbilde GOTTES geschaffen und GOTTES Bild kann durch keine menschliche Maschine festgehalten werden*« (Man is created in the image of *God* and *God's* image cannot be captured by human machine.)<sup>15</sup> To the reader who knows BENJAMIN as a paragon of modernity, the quote appears as a counter-position to be easily defeated or simply written off. Yet when taken in conjunction with the arguments concerning language and the coming philosophy, we see a carefully considered response to the problem of causation: the auric gives rise to the image, the image cannot give rise to the aura.

#### THE TINY SPARKS AND KAFKA'S DOWNTRODDEN EYES

The aura as the locus is already evident in the first image of young KAFKA but the observation does not rest on the author's work but on the presence communicated within the image. BENJAMIN also discusses a series of images taken by the Scottish painter and pioneer of photography DAVID OCTAVIUS HILL with

DAVID OCTAVIUS HILL AND ROBERT ADAMSON  
Newhaven Fishwives. ca. 1845

ROBERT ADAMSON, known as the *Newhaven Fishwives* from 1845.<sup>16</sup> Here, on the themes which were later to form the cornerstone of the *Kunstwerk* essay between reproduction and an original aura, the technical precision of the *Newhaven Fishwives* brings out something unexpected, bringing to light a different view than merely a portrait of the subjects. The image expresses a »magical quality«<sup>17</sup> which he here terms a »winzige Fünkchen« the tiniest spark which not by intention, but by mere »chance« a »Hier und Jetzt« creates a here and now, a presence in the image, an authenticity expressed in mediation by reproduction, and thus an enchantment frozen in time, which we may call a kind of magic as it cannot be predicted.<sup>18</sup> This presence is an »unscheinbare Stelle« a un-illuminated point in itself that is able to present the future as an eternal extension of the present moment.<sup>19</sup> It is, as if into a space entirely moved by consciousness, the unintentional has entered. BENJAMIN calls this the *optical-unconscious* of the work and we mark thereby the entrance of psychoanalysis into his thought.<sup>20</sup> The *optical-unconscious* is exposed by the light of the lens, a spark which in the tiniest of seconds releases its unfurling or the synthetic extension of reason in *Kantian* terms, its »*Ausschreitens*« says BENJAMIN. This occurs through the key technique of photography, which is the magnification of time. The optical unconscious functions much the same way as psychoanalysis describes the drives: they are unannounced and unexpected. Like the function of the psyche, it transcends abstraction and takes on physiognomic aspects by a system of temporal magnification in the same way that biology relies on the microscope to reveal worlds underneath worlds that are presumed not to exist. The discovery rests neither with the objects alone nor their expression, for the natural images captured in photographs could never attain their influence without being reproduced technically. The magic, as it were, also did not require the subjects to be conscious of posterity. It demanded just the opposite: to be very much present within the moment. BENJAMIN'S engagement with materialism becomes evident in two forms. The expression of the *Geistwesen* of a thing is localized within its object-status, thus neutrality within the originating standpoint. However, the loss of power of photography to express the substance of the intellect

of things coincides with BENJAMIN's growing awareness of the power of capital, the imaginaries of consumption, and ultimately how the social technologies will be rendered to the use of the market. This is not to the detriment of his observations concerning *Geisteswesen* (obviously in an entirely non-Hegelian sense) but as a form of historical materialism. It is in this sense a short history of the use of a technological medium from an entirely different standpoint of what is its history. Where does the image begin and where does the photograph end? Indeed, before the introduction of its market potential, writes BENJAMIN, photography was possessed by »*biblischen Segen*« a *Genesis* benediction reminiscent of the idea of the medium of language resting blissfully in the garden of *Eden*. The medium was first protected from the ravages of the market. The development of capitalism out of the nineteenth century however proved a force too powerful to resist simply on the basis of its truth-content. Photography became the consort of capital and through the photographic image. Aspiration turned manifest as never before in the lifelike quality of consumables. Unattainable objects were suddenly rendered accessible through the photographic image. The »*Teufelskunst*« was not in the lens but the market that dictated its usage.<sup>21</sup> The images created by photography became the phantoms of the market in their »*uferlosen Trauer*«<sup>22</sup> Photography, once the medium of the absolute innocence of reason succumbs to image-making for the falsehood of the consumption.

There is messianic respite from this tale of desperation. The lens may be enslaved today but never the aura. In principle, the aura's exposure is matched only by its technical capability, and thereby also a contraction ensues, for the aura can only be known by that which would technically negate its originality. The aura in this sense must exist in a form of *artistic completion* (»*Künstlerische Vollendung*«), which creates and captures, though never finishes, the beginnings and ends of that one moment.<sup>23</sup> This *Künstlerische Vollendung*, possibly similar to FRANZ ROSENZWEIG's aesthetic category of *das Fertigwerden*, is an auric moment neither manifested by the lens nor suppressed by it, but only materially possible through it.<sup>24</sup> Before the Parisian images of EUGENE ATGET, whom BENJAMIN refers to as the precursor to surrealism, the aura suffocated under the conventional techniques of portrait photography and art of *Retusche* (the touch-up). These he sees as a product of the capitalist turn to essentially bury every access to the subterranean grottos of momentary authenticity. »*Er reinigt diese Atmosphäre, ja bereinigt sie: er leitet die Befreiung des Objekts von der Aura*

*ein*« – Atget images purged from Paris the makeup used to hide the aura and thus introduced the liberation of the object from the aura.<sup>25</sup> This should not be understood as the liberation of materialism from the aura, nor should we think of this as a blind defense of *secularism*. He does not seek the liquidation of the aura, or a rarefied original, by mass reproduction. It can be read in reverse: the liberation of the object is also the freeing of the aura from its strictly chronological occurrence. In this sense, the *Newhaven Fishwives* is rendered tactile and experiential even 150 years after its occurrence. Its *geistiges Wesen* is communicable and expressive. ATGET's images, he continues, »*saugen die Aura aus der Wirklichkeit wie Wasser aus einem sinkenden Schiff*« (They suck the aura from reality like water from a sinking ship.) The medium rescues this substance, an intellectual, discursive *geistige* core content, from a drowning humanity. Yet the question turns to what remains of the sinking ship, and therefore what is the substance called aura after all? »*Ein sonderbares Gespinst von Raum und Zeit: einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag.*«<sup>26</sup> A unique flash of space and time? A single appearance of something distant that is made so near as to enable it being experienced again. This typifies the aim of photography for BENJAMIN: the liberation of the object from the aura for the ultimate purpose of the liberation of the aura from object. Obviously the two elements, like form and content, are paired phenomenological necessities of the photograph. There could never be the one without the other. BENJAMIN praises the remarkable aspect of ATGET's *lumpen* portraits in pulling the aura out of its *Wirklichkeit*, the reality that surrounds it, like water from a sinking ship. Yet, to be sure, one saves the passengers from a sinking ship, not the water. But where would a ship be without it? The aura is everywhere but it is only accessible to us through the medium of revelation. It is a point of reference, a measure between space and time but also the form of singularity at a distance which is made present before us. And thus this liberation only speaks to a form of freedom from the binary of subject and object, not the separation of the essences. This is sometimes misunderstood, as if BENJAMIN calls for the liquidation of the aura through the new technologies of mass reproduction. Rather he seeks the liberation of the aura from the reification and abstraction of the actual persons, places, even ourselves in whom the image originates. This feature of photography is the keyhole through which the unity of materiality and perception begins. The key is to bring the viewer closer to its originality that is not

rarefied, and not simply an »*Überwindung des Einmaligen*«<sup>27</sup> an overcoming of singularity through reproduction, but a return to the unique, authentic and extraordinary quality in its presence in our time. In other words: »*das Hier und Jetzt des Kunstwerks*« (the Here and Now of the work of art.)<sup>28</sup>

The subject-object distinction is most importantly eviscerated by the medium of photography in one key respect: there is no meaningful distinction between original and reproduction in the photographic image. The work of art is so wedded to its reproduction in this form that it wins its singularity through the de-hulling of the object through the lens. Photography returns to the pure form, the divine language, to become »*schöpferisch*« creative but truly *Genesis*: it will return to the narrative of creation if it is able to emancipate itself from the physiognomic, political and scientific interests of an age that has turned it into a »*Fetisch*« Freed from these interests, the photograph is to become, as it were, itself again.<sup>29</sup>

Photography is a measure. It is always presenting or actualizing the distance between the world and its redemption, and in this specific sense, photography is always *photogrammetry* between two poles. FRANZ ROSENZWEIG understood these moments in a grand historical sweep that was punctuated by momentary sparks of creation, revelation and ultimately redemption. For BENJAMIN, as he became ever more cognizant of his historical moment and thus engaged with the promise of *Marxism* as a method, the mediums of language, image and thus photography to render the momentary accessible, to precipitate a return to origins and thereby to link beginnings and ends in such a way that they might release the wellsprings of redemption, proved to be his primary cause. »*Das Schöpferische am Photographieren*« he concludes, »*ist dessen Überantwortung an die Mode. ›Die Welt ist schön‹ – genau das ist ihre Devise.*«<sup>30</sup> The divine element in photography, the moment of creation, is its response to the permeability of the world with nothing more brief than fashion. Invoking *Genesis*, BENJAMIN concludes: »The world is beautiful« — exactly this is its device. «

- 1 W. BENJAMIN: *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen, Gesammelte Schriften, Band I*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991, s. 155. Henceforth: GS II: 155. »Silence is the sorrow of nature. To be mute without language is its strongest inclination and is much more than the inability or unwillingness to communicate.« WALTER BENJAMIN's writings on photography have recently been contextualized and illuminated in the comprehensive biography by HOWARD EILAND and MICHAEL W. JENNINGS, *WALTER BENJAMIN: A Critical Life* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 275-77, 363-8, 572-3; see also *On Photography: Walter Benjamin*, edited and translated by ESTHER LESLIE, London: Reaktion, 2015 and DAVID P. FERRIS, ed., *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- 2 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*, GS II. This is an expanded version of *Photogrammetry in Benjamin's Language* which appeared in the *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2014.
- 3 For a very different literary approach to the significance of this photograph see CAROLIN DUTTLINGER: *Kafka and photography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- 4 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*. GS II: 375-376.
- 5 See G. SCHOLEM: *Der Name Gottes und die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala in Judaica. Band III*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984-1997.
- 6 A similar comparison is also made to painting in *Über die Malerei oder Zeichen und Mal*, GS II: 607, but the discussion of the concept of a substance of the intellect, the *geistige Wesen* of objects, can be found in: *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen*. GS II: 143.
- 7 W. BENJAMIN: *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen*. GS II: 153.
- 8 Letter of W. BENJAMIN to G. SCHOLEM in: *Adorno, Scholem, ed. Briefe*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1978. p. 541. The *Passagenwerk* being a large and somewhat obscure research project on the culture and capitalism of the nineteenth century that consumed the greater portion of BENJAMIN's final years.
- 9 »Wenn ich einmal meine Philosophie haben werde« sagte er zu mir »so wird es irgendwie eine Philosophie des Judentums sein.« GERSHOM SCHOLEM: *Tagebücher, nebst Aufsätzen und Entwürfen bis 1923*. Vol. 1/1, 1913-1917, ed. KARLFRIED GRÜNDER and FRIEDRICH NIEWÖHNER. Frankfurt, Jüdischer Verlag, 1995. p. 391.
- 10 See E. JACOBSON: *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2003.
- 11 W. BENJAMIN: *Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie*. GS II: 163.
- 12 W. BENJAMIN: *Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie*. GS II: 157.
- 13 W. BENJAMIN: *Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie*. GS II: 164.
- 14 W. Benjamin: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*. GS II: 369
- 15 Op. cit. The *Leipziger Anzeiger* (*Leipziger Tagesblatt und Anzeiger: Amtsblatt des Königlich-lichen Amts- und Landgerichtes Leipzig und des Rathes und Polizeiamtes der Stadt Leipzig*) was published from 1833-1905. The quotation can be traced to KARL ALBERT DAUTHENDEY (1819-1896) as told to his son MAX (1967-1918) published in: MAX DAUTHENDEY: *Der Geist meines Vaters. Aufzeichnungen aus einem Begrabenen Jahrhundert*. München: Langen, 1921. Cited elsewhere in: M. DAUTHENDEY, 1912, in *Ges. Werke I*, 49f. MAX DAUTHENDEY: *Der Geist meines Vaters*. München, Albert Langen, 1912, p. 61. According to FRITZ MOLDEN: *Helmut Gernsheim: Die Fotografie*. Wien, 1971. s. 23; the citation is fictional, but I find the authenticity of the opinion entirely plausible.

- 16 *Newhaven Fishwives*, ca. 1845  
DAVID OCTAVIUS HILL (Scottish, 1802–1870);  
ROBERT ADAMSON (Scottish, 1821–1848). Salted  
paper print from paper negative 11 5/8 x 8 9/16 in.  
(29.5 x 21.7 cm) Newhaven is a fishing village which,  
at the time, was a mile and a half down the hill from  
Edinburgh. From the website of the possessor, the  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York: »Since  
most of the men's work was at sea and therefore  
not only beyond the reach of the camera but also  
impossible to capture with the long exposure times  
of the calotype process (thirty seconds or more in  
full sunlight), HILL and ADAMSON paid particular  
attention to the labor of the women and to the sense  
of community that bound them together.« [www.  
metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1997.382.19](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1997.382.19)
- 17 Magic may suggest an unanticipated momentary  
revelation. For a more extensive discussion, see  
E. JACOBSON: *Metaphysics of the Profane*.  
pp. 93–99.
- 18 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*.  
GS II: 371
- 19 op cit.
- 20 op cit.
- 21 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*.  
GS II: 369
- 22 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*.  
GS II: 376
- 23 op. cit.
- 24 FRANZ ROSENZWEIG: *Stern der Erlösung*, §238.  
Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1993, p. 270. ROSENZWEIG  
terms this a »gehaltvoller beseelter Zusammenhang«  
that is capable of arriving at »ein im ästhetischen  
Sinn, Fertiges, Abschließendes zustande.«
- 25 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*.  
GS II: 378.
- 26 op cit.
- 27 W. BENJAMIN. *Kleine Geschichte der Photographie*.  
GS II: 378.
- 28 W. BENJAMIN: *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner  
technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. GS I: 437.
- 29 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photogra-  
phie*. GS II: 384.
- 30 W. BENJAMIN: *Kleine Geschichte der Photogra-  
phie*. GS II: 383.





# IMAGE MIGRATIONS: LEE FRIEDLANDER AND R.B. KITAJ

MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER

LEE FRIEDLANDER is considered a master of US American photography. His groups of works correspond to all traditional pictorial genres that combine in serial form book and image. Light and changing shadows unfold in his photographs, in which ›an infinitely complex space of resonances‹ is condensed, to constitute a system of refractions and overlappings of photographic effects. R.B. KITAJ, on the other hand, is held to be the founder of a kind of diasporic painting, and succeeded in transferring the complexity of *Rabbinic* textual *exegesis* in both word and image to the aesthetic structures of *modernism* and *post-modernism*. LEE FRIEDLÄNDER, in his photographs, has followed the life and work of R.B. KITAJ and documented them in a book. The question to be asked is whether a dialogic combination is possible of the plurality of encodings of photographer and painter, not least as a transformation of the *Jewish* identity into an image.

LEE FRIEDLANDER:  
Lee Friedlander and R.B. Kitaj  
Los Angeles, 2001



In 2002, LEE FRIEDLANDER (1934–) published a photo book dedicated exclusively to the American painter and artist R.B. KITAJ (1932–2007).<sup>1</sup> FRIEDLANDER had published regularly in photo books such as: *The Little Screens* (1963), *The New Cars* (1964), *Self-Portrait* (1970), *The American Monument* (1976), *Nudes* (1991), *American Musicians* (1998), *The Desert Seen* (1996), *Stems* (2003), *At Work* (2003), *Sticks and Stones* (2004), *America by Car* (2010) and *Mannequin* (2011). So in this respect, the photo book on KITAJ is no exception. On the other hand, it is the only book by FRIEDLANDER to be concerned with an artist other than himself – over a period of 32 years.<sup>2</sup> Two years prior to this (in 2000), FRIEDLANDER had made himself the subject of a photography book

including work from 1993 to 1999.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, in 2004, he produced *Family*, which likewise resembles a journey through time and is focused on FRIEDLANDER's wife, MARIA.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, we are confronted with a similar book – in terms of concentrating on one particular subject over an extended period — about KITAJ, with a personal, indeed intimate display of photographic affection.

FRIEDLANDER's book on KITAJ chronicles critical stages of his friend's life, starting with their first encounter in 1970 when they were both visiting professors in the same department at *UCLA*. The last photo in the chronology appears on the back cover of the book. Dating back to 2001, it shows a self-timed shot of the two friends in an affectionate yet isolated, even helpless situation. FRIEDLANDER's self-portrait with KITAJ is thus a continuation of the photo book about himself, clearly showing how the paths of the two friends, who are almost the same age, intersect in their understanding of one another.

For his part, R.B. KITAJ followed FRIEDLANDER's photographic development, writing the foreword to his book *Portraits* in 1985.<sup>5</sup> Analysing each photograph in detail, he provides a comprehensive interpretation of LEE FRIEDLANDER's photography. As a whole, FRIEDLANDER's photo book on KITAJ documents the artist in various stages of his life — from a handsome young man, to an artist wavering between intellectuality and sensuality, to a broken old man who has aged prematurely. The self-portraits spanning a period of seven years are quite different. While the locations vary, the photographer's features remain virtually the same. However, the

face is transformed by the clever use of shadows, trees, grasslands and fences. The self-portraits change according to the settings. By contrast, the transformation process is concentrated entirely on his friend. In order to understand this transformation in the form of a photographic chronology, it is essential to probe the artistic development and personal fate of the artist, who with his photos and writings, and especially his two *Diasporist* art manifestos in 1988 and 2007, created a decidedly Jewish approach to contemporary art, i.e. for *modernism* and *postmodernism*.<sup>6</sup>

FRIEDLANDER himself was not able to recognize this as it was happening, but his photographs of a friend became a retrospective journey through time, a chronology of the fate and artistic disposition of KITAJ, a retrospective. It also became a book about the photography reflecting nature, in the sense of the changes of both the photographer and his sitter. Capturing the moment on

camera serves as a reminder of a time experienced. Furthermore, bringing together the photographs of one individual over an extended period makes these lost moments more apparent, endowing each photo with a sense of loss. »... LEE's camera exudes an elixir of death,«<sup>7</sup> says KITAJ, referring to the process itself in his afterword. It is as if such an absence is inscribed in the photo, simultaneously suggesting a presence, revealed by shadows of the body which cease to exist the moment the photo has been taken. ROLAND BARTHES declared

this trail of death a symptom of photography,<sup>8</sup> which may be seen as represented in the photos of KITAJ offering conflicting truths. LEE FRIEDLANDER in his portraits of KITAJ focuses on KITAJ's statement on the event that changed his life: the sudden passing of KITAJ's wife SANDRA FISCHER. FRIEDLANDER was in London at the time, where KITAJ lived and worked successfully from 1957 to 1997. KITAJ describes the photographs he requested be taken during this time as follows: »And then there's the photo of me with FRANK AUERBACH the day of SANDRA's funeral, at an Indian restaurant in South Kensington! Here, halfway through the book of me, I just lose her. And I grow much older on the spot, at that click, after twenty-five years with her.«<sup>9</sup>

This reaction, which comes from being personally affected, is what HANS BELTING describes as the dialectics of photography: »The new photo, which provided such emphatic proof of life, in

LEE FRIEDLANDER:  
Lee Friedlander with Frank Auerbach  
London, 1994



reality produced a shadow ... driving the life chronicled out of its body. Every movement of the body becomes almost an illocutionary act, which only remains in the static image like a memory.«<sup>10</sup> The intention and outcome of the photographic portrait of the friend as a whole is a commitment to discovering an existential trace of life. We must be content with a shadow and can only manage to produce a reluctant ›once upon a time‹. KITAJ describes SANDRA FISCHER referring to LEE FRIEDLANDER's black-and-white photography: having perished in London, he encounters her who so loved the Los Angeles sun once again in the book, noticing a »shadow in black, white and grey.«<sup>11</sup> Yet a photograph is supposed to be an interpretation of the original and a guide beyond the grave. »We read and reread them into a spectral life.«<sup>12</sup>

ROLAND BARTHES has called this effect of encountering a familiar subject (referent) the *Umbilical Cord of Photography*, which gives permanent meaning to a photo index and broadens perception. The beholder thus discovers in the referent not only the boundaries of the photographic core, »within which (the eye of the beholder) everything leads to the deceased specimen, but also what is said to be the »gateway to a world that reaches beyond what is shown.«<sup>13</sup>

If we take BARTHES' train of thought further, following KATHARINA SYKORA, the occurrence of the punctum — as BARTHES' encounter with the referent denotes — is thus a revival of the referent and beholder. This is meant to capture not only the sense of mutual ›ensoulment‹ throughout the photo, but also the sense of mobilizing and expanding one's view of the world beyond the photograph. Even an uncoded message will turn the punctum into a catalyst and agent, rendering a permanent meaning that goes beyond the photo itself.<sup>14</sup> This effect, generated from the negative power of photography, initially takes us through the visible, identifiable signs in the photographs to the work of KITAJ himself, to his approach to art, and effectively to traces of his Jewish identity. FRIEDLANDER subtly traces this divergence in the life and work of KITAJ. In his afterword to the book, KITAJ writes how FRIEDLANDER managed to capture his multifaceted *Me, Me, Me personality* by sneaking up on him with the camera — and his (changing) body in the course of his photography.<sup>15</sup> The book begins with an overview of the artist himself, appearing as a fleeting subject in various stages of his life. The photographs show him in Los Angeles, in London and back in Los Angeles. He is at his easel, drawing and reading. We gain insight into his studio, his kitchen, his family life, and can see the numerous remarks he has made in handwritten notes. The

painter is revealed as a conceptualist, combining drawings with color. Although these cannot be seen in the black-and-white photographs, the brush with which they are applied is visible. We see KITAJ in conversation with artist friends, as a book lover, searching for photos, in mourning, and also in his early years with ambivalent melancholic features. A number of photos show KITAJ embedded in a heterogeneous world of image reproductions spread across floors and tables or on walls, situations that threaten to overwhelm. His satisfaction with his own work is called into question. Besides melancholy, there is an overriding sense of doubt, which causes the life focused on in the photos to crumble under the burden of surrounding influences. The existential side of the photography, its documentary dimension, comprises a body of signs drawing on external references, and requires more interpretation.

Beyond such tangible subjects, a dimension manifests itself

in FRIEDLANDER's photographs, which KITAJ himself claimed for his art: that of the *Diaspora*, understood to be a temporary home, embedded in heterogeneous worlds of experience, culture and pictures. That which can be derived from past experience of the *Jewish Diaspora* is used by KITAJ as a structural quality of art and formulated in the aforementioned two manifestos.<sup>16</sup> The beginning of the first manifesto of 1988 proclaims: »*Diasporist painting*, which I just made up, is enacted under peculiar historical and personal freedoms, stresses, dislocation,

structure, and momentum. The *diasporist* lives and paints in two or more societies at once. The *Diasporism* I want to depict is as old as the hills, as old as the caves, but new enough to react to today's newspaper or last week's aesthetic musings or tomorrow's terror.«<sup>17</sup> *Diaspora* as a transition from one form of existence to another is expressed in the Jewish culture as early as the *Babylonian exile* and the destruction of the *Second Temple* in Jerusalem (around 70 CE). The result is the experience of dispersion and fleetingness, which is reflected throughout the Jewish culture up to the present in numerous complex manifestations of *Diasporism*.<sup>18</sup> KITAJ's theory is that the *Jewish Diaspora* has led to a multilayered and multidimensional process of creativity that is evidenced in con-

LEE FRIEDLANDER:  
R.B. Kitaj (Studio), 2000



LEE FRIEDLANDER:  
Self, New York City, 1968

temporary art. These structural qualities include, for instance, dialogue and global networking. Further themes emerge through the subsequent interaction of these factors with Israel. At the same time, the possibility of dialogues with other cultures is ever present. The dimension of dialogue with *The Other* was especially revealed by the fact that the *First Diasporist Manifesto* was initially released in German.<sup>19</sup> KITAJ's self-conscious turn at the end of the

1970s to topics involving Jewish history and culture, followed by his increasingly urgent confrontation with the Holocaust and his interest in German art and culture, help explain why the then London-based American artist deemed it important to publish what he saw as his most important artistic position, that of *diasporism*, in German first. The English-language *First Diasporist Manifesto*, published in 1989 by *Thames and Hudson* in London, became a much-discussed position. »KITAJ's *diasporism* is like GILLES DELEUZE and FÉLIX GUATTARI's *nomadism*, a sense of permanent, creative displacement,« writes SANDER L. GILMAN, underscoring how this serves as a model to many younger Jewish artists in America.<sup>20</sup> The life and work of LEE FRIEDLANDER are also linked to diasporist experiences. In the book *After Weegee: Essays on Contemporary Jewish American Photographers*, DANIEL MORRIS writes: »FRIEDLANDER's family history corresponds to themes of *Diasporism*, displacement, religion and ethnic mixing, and partial assimilation that are characteristic of many Jews of his generation. His story also illustrates how the work of a secular Jewish American photographer who eschews overtly Jewish themes can be interpreted as influenced by the ordeals Jews faced in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.« He, too, represents »the contingency of Jewishness and its intersection with a constellation of impure and multiple sites of identity.« However, his photographic work, like that of DIANE ARBUS, does not constitute proof of the acculturation of Jews in America. Rather it dismantles a cliché of America as a stable society. His photos showed a rhizomatic existence. »Employing mirrors or windows, FRIEDLANDER uncannily represents himself as mediated through complicated structures that evoke his presence as a disoriented shadow self.«<sup>21</sup>

KITAJ's concept of diasporist art challenged American and other artists who tended to perceive themselves as universal.

The process of cultural exchange introduced after the *Second World War*, which was aimed at combating *nationalism*, *racism* and sought to overcome and mask the nationalist era. This gave



MAX BECKMANN:  
Falling Man, 1950

rise to »abstraction as a universal language«, which—according to KLAUS HERDING failed to include a »trace of the *Other*«, instead concentrating on »broadening one's own experiences and increasing one's own awareness.« By contrast, in German artists' confrontations with the history and art of their own tradition, KITAJ not only witnessed a form of profiling that stood out and thus offered itself as a reference in the the art scene outside of Germany which was increasingly homogenized. He also attributed potential to painting, which sought to use a *tabula rasa* principle to overcome the world war and Holocaust experience. Adding cultural recollections and appropriations to the depleted field of art became an absolute necessity to KITAJ »for (the) concept of painting as a pro-

ductively empty, i.e. receptive form of self-reflection, aimed at reviving longitudinal cultural information.«<sup>22</sup> Astonishment caused this self-reflection to emanate from diaspora. At the same time, this retrospectively expressed a perspective on artistic developments, without totally absorbing KITAJ's concept of *diasporist painting*. The fundamental multiperspectivity and overlapping influences of contemporary art described in the manifesto are echoed, if somewhat weakly, in the reference made in the documents X, XI and XII to *rhizomisation*, *creolisation* and *migration*.<sup>23</sup> The inherent process of the diaspora, to transform homelessness and inner turmoil into a productive culture, has yet to be discovered in terms of its initial cultural stimulus. According to KITAJ: »Half of the painters now coming from major schools in Paris, New York and London were not born in the country in which they are now residing. When a dispersed population no longer has anything in common then perhaps my idea of diaspora only lives on in my mind and in my paintings...« And: »I'm sure you don't have to be a Jew to be a *diasporist*. But I'm not so sure when it comes to my paintings because Jewish and diasporic suffering leads to stylistic thickets. Combine these with a devotion to historic and artistic ambitions and hopefully new and unique forms will emerge. In diaspora, one is never sure of the conditions under which there is



R. B. KITAJ:  
Self-Portrait as a Woman, 1984

enough evidence of one's own self to instigate something. But this 'doubt' is the making of art — CÉZANNE, for example, torn by his internal exile, had neither the will nor ability to not shatter his art and fellow human beings, just like a Jew.<sup>24</sup>

KITAJ talks of multiple diasporic experiences, of other migratory movements and also of suffering in a sexual *Diaspora*. He declares PICASSO — who painted *Guernica* while in exile — amongst others, a *diasporist*, yet leaves no doubt that this diasporic impulse, the feeling of being alienated in a state of dialogue with another culture, is a state experienced eternally in *Judaism* since time immemorial. »In the struggle for a 'good' painting, *Abraham's journey from Ur* (on my easel) transforms into JOE SINGER's secret life, escape, death and resurrection.<sup>25</sup> KITAJ compares his own art to fusing reflections from theology and art, literature and paintings, to create an artistic concept based on an understanding of diaspora as a temporary place to dwell in foreign cultures, and thus highlights a constant interplay. This takes place in the same way as encounters with literature and lived experiences. The constant dialogue is apparent in every detail of KITAJ's work — in the combination of paintings and drawings, in the documentation and reproduction of photographs, in literature and images, in contemporary art and art history, in *mysticism* and philosophy, in quotes by various artists such as CÉZANNE and BECKMANN, VAN GOGH and MONDRIAN, DEGAS and CHAGALL, — and LEE FRIEDLANDER. The concept of the migrating Jew, which he already mentioned in his first catalog of 1963, finds its equivalent in his migration of forms.<sup>26</sup> The photographic style of LEE FRIEDLANDER is recalled in the book featuring his own self-portraits in *The American Monument*: »Throughout *Self-Portrait*, which was taken over a ten-year period, FRIEDLANDER is represented as a migrating Jew: nomadic, isolated and spectral. He is a figure unable to achieve a sense of wholeness.<sup>27</sup> If we look at individual photos of KITAJ taken by FRIEDLANDER, showing the painter and artist at work, and especially in his studio, we can see that not only are the artist friend and his working methods documented, but so is the typical work of FRIEDLANDER. While tracing the painter and artist, the photographer discovers

the structure of his own imagery in KITAJ's images. The photo of KITAJ standing before his heterogeneous walls of images reveals a highly subjective perspective. In his work, the photographer prismatically breaks up the way in which things are perceived, through reflections and shadows, in accordance with the overlapping structures of his friend. What appears to be a collage, but may as well be a quotation, is traversed by lines drawn from life. The resulting ambiguities appear in the form of hybrid constellations, created from a combination of conflicting techniques, and represent his interpretation of *diasporic* signs that bear testament to experiences such as forced migration and exile, with their attendant trials and tribulations. These also lead to the work of FRIEDLANDER, not as iconological references, but as structural equivalents of a heterotopic space suggesting both expanse and limitation in equal measure. A wall showing images of various stimuli is now standard for many artists. For KITAJ, this visual presence of what he regarded as important influences would have had a structuring effect. His works have been stimulated and shaped by images and texts, and he had made clear these stimuli by comments on his own work. This method is shown clearly in his initial collages—less so in his paintings—which are combined to create a dovetailed image. This resulted in multiple codes, which could only be interpreted using complicated procedures such as *iconology*, despite numerous references supplied by the author himself. As shown by the current major Retrospective in the *Jewish Museum* in Berlin, this method is greatly inspired by ABY WARBURG's picture atlas at a time when few in Germany took Warburg's library—never mind picture boards—seriously. Warburg's library itself is said to have been exiled, under Nazi threats, from Hamburg to London.

KITAJ studied in Oxford with EDGAR WIND, a former assistant of WARBURG, and thus learned WARBURG's methods relatively directly.<sup>28</sup> ABY WARBURG could have revolutionized art history with his picture atlas, based on the reproductive quality of photography and spurred by recollection, by embedding what appear to be pictures set on a screen in a mobile process of change. He developed a system not only to preserve, contextualize, and interpret but also to generate knowledge of art history. The initial stimulus for this was a shift in photographic references to works of art from various epochs he had archived, which was intensified by his successors, especially FRITZ SAXL, of the Warburg Institute in London. The potential for reference-based recollection may also be regarded as a mobile migration in pictures within the context

LEE FRIEDLANDER:  
Self-Portrait, Wilmington, Delaware, 1965



R. B. KITAJ:  
His Every Poor, Defeated, Loser's,  
Hopeless Move, Loser, Buried. 1966  
Siebdruckserie:  
Mahler Becomes Politics. Beisbol, 1964-1967



of research on art history. KITAJ has applied the resulting method in virtually all of his works, for example in his 1975/76 painting *If Not, Not*, which, besides numerous other references, is based on GIORGIONE's *Tempesta*. In this ambivalent landscape of changeable weather KITAJ has implanted the gates of hell of *Auschwitz*. A colored haze, together with blurry and clear areas of color, create a brightly toxic twilight atmosphere. In an early collage painting from 1962, *Reflections on Violence*, a patch of color and a cephalopod appear in the scattered images and texts, configurations that find reference in a photo of violence from the 1930s, which was published in the magazine *Fotoauge*. Together with other allusions, for example to a drawing of a (native American) Indian hunting buffalo, transformations are apparent, which for example, break up the cohesion of the drawing.<sup>29</sup>

A comparison with photographs taken by FRIEDLANDER shows how we also encounter multiple codes in almost all of his photographs from the perspective of a lens. His images are a combination of mirrored and shaded picture zones in which light refractions create numerous nuances, causing unrest in the chosen motif. An abundance of quotations, overlapping visual aspects such as color and line, spatial tensions and symbolic references, abstract and figurative configurations in KITAJ's work, is created by FRIEDLANDER using dramatic light reflections. »The elements in the picture,« writes ROBERT FELFE, referring to FRIEDLANDER's plant motifs and landscape views, »are drawn to the picture's surface.« A precise focus and subtle variations in contrast enable a wealth of details to be reproduced. »While the discernible shape of individual plants is often lost in the tangle of branches and twigs, the illuminated objects create decentralised structures that alternate between a specific landscape and an abstract image, without, however, losing sight of the physical attachment to the things outside.«<sup>30</sup> FRIEDLANDER is also able in other series, for example the

*self-portraits*, to seriously question the surface of the picture, in part by having the photographer appear in the picture and drawing attention to himself in front of and behind the lens. FRIEDLANDER's camera chases shadows, captures reflections in the shop and car windows and transforms his motifs of the city and country into an infinitely complex resonating space. It thus appears as if the effects of light multiply, break-up, and overlap uncontrollably before our very eyes. However, the lack of orientation in the picture suddenly changes direction, initiating an impulse to action. The photographer himself appears in the self-portraits as an active producer of pictures. The *Bildakt* revealed within, the placing of images as a performative action, is thus based on the prismatic effects of multiple codings, for which KITAJ, in his work, increasingly draws on traditional Jewish thinking. In his *Second Diasporist Manifesto*, which was released 2007 in the USA, these allusions and references have multiplied. »The *Talmud*«, writes KITAJ, »says that every passage in the *Torah* has 49 gates of purity and impurity,« adding, »each of my ›titles‹ has 49 steps of meaning.«<sup>31</sup> KITAJ aims to present an encoded and inspiring rendition of the *Talmud's* adopted 49 steps of meaning through diverging aspects. The results are extraordinary combinations that appear intellectually extravagant, which is precisely what sets KITAJ

apart. As a painter, he writes forewords to his pictures, manifestos and intentions. As a conceptualist, he paints pictures. As an exponent of the present, he goes against tradition. He draws through his paintings and his figurations appear in abstract structures of quoted fragments. All of these characteristics appear in the photographs used by FRIEDLANDER to portray KITAJ. KITAJ's ›turn to the figure‹, which came about during his stay in Paris in 1975 after analyzing the pastel drawings of EDGAR DEGAS, is regarded to be a major change in his cosmos of forms.<sup>32</sup> FRIEDLANDER has dedicated several photographs to this key event, whose scenes appear natural, despite signifying an important stage in KITAJ's artistic development. The drawing of the human form adds an element of experience,

of close encounter, to the composition of quotations. Such an element is also inherent in FRIEDLANDER's photography, as a sign of proximity, which begins to dissolve into a multifaceted play of



PIERRE BONNARD:  
Nude before a Mirror, 1930

LEE FRIEDLANDER:  
Los Angeles, California, 1965



light reflections. In KITAJ's works, the combination of experience and citatory view becomes a key characteristic of encounters and tensions within the picture, which can also be interpreted as questions and answers. The intercultural experience of the diaspora, made, chronicled, reflected and offered as dialogue in different countries and cultures has become an aesthetic concept with KITAJ. Viewed from this perspective, aesthetic traces of KITAJ overlap with those of FRIEDLANDER. In his foreword to the photo book *Portraits*, KITAJ also sees FRIEDLANDER's photos cross-linked

in a diverse network of artistic and other traces.<sup>33</sup> KITAJ compares FRIEDLANDER, among others, to artists such as DEGAS and BONNARD. DEGAS is well-known for drawing and painting from photographs, and especially for his pastel technique based on out-of-focus and light-reflecting qualities of photography, photographs that DEGAS himself took, of female dancers for example, which have become his trademark. As a photographer, FRIEDLANDER has also added this dimension to his photographs in the form of interplaying with what is known as the 'real'. KITAJ describes *realism* as a relative virtue, as it never occurred to him that FRIEDLANDER's ›people‹ were real: »They are just flat black-and-white tricks, like art.«<sup>34</sup> He would talk of ›similarity‹, of obstinacy and energy. FRIEDLANDER is distinguished by a cross between simplicity and complexity, comparable to that of PIERRE BONNARD: »They both manage, in their pictures and in themselves, to create a cross between penny-plain and complexly interesting.« FRIEDLANDER's 1962 *Boy in Window* photo, showing a collection of signs around a delicate portrait of a boy, immediately reminds him of BONNARD's painting: »These signs are both articulated and isolated and form larger tonal areas, just like in BONNARD.«<sup>35</sup> Agreeing with JOHN BERGER's that all photographs are ambiguous, KITAJ sees an interesting analogy to the intentions of the art. He even hails the photo used by FRIEDLANDER at the end of the book *Portraits*, a 1957 picture of *Pee Wee Marquette & Count Basie*, as superior to the other arts: »By ›question‹, here, I mean to imply that the photo is, amongst other things, about one's perception of blackness, of being black in America, not of being black, etc. Our modern painting art is largely mute on such grand subjects, which is a pity, I think, because these

are great concerns, at least as great as the question of flatness or one of the prevailing expressions that have been permissible. If black is beautiful then this FRIEDLANDER photograph proves it. I should like to find my way past the enigma of such an image, part happenstance, part BASIE, part PEE WEE, part FRIEDLANDER (91%), essentially photographic... it's the ultimate in still photography; its moment has come.»<sup>36</sup>

The naturalness of the photograph is partly due to the spectacular effects of light, and its comparison to the ›natural language‹ of T.P. ELIOT reveals an extremely artificial naturalness. It would be equally artificial to judge FRIEDLANDER's decision to use a purely black-and-white photograph, which fits in with KITAJ's artificiality of producing bright and colorful paintings of his works. KITAJ's extensive tribute to FRIEDLANDER's photography also implies a deep understanding of his friend's intentions, which reciprocates FRIEDLANDER's profound understanding of how to document KITAJ's life and work with his photographs. This mutual understanding of *diasporist* art, with its fissures and fragments, ambivalences and detracting referents, life in several worlds at the same time, has, by contrast, created comparable structures. The overlapping signs of one, borrowed from numerous sources, correspond with the reflections of light and shadow of the other, created from infinite resonating space. Both artists know how to create overlapping effects that encourage visual elements to be viewed by the beholder as a yet-to-be-completed offering.

The insights into traditional Jewish thought gained by KITAJ through self-study led him to realize that such a practical linking of signs is a key dimension of rabbinic teachings. The steps of meaning he cited from the *Talmud* aim to further combine and build on a still incomplete creation. In one of his later works, *Little Pictures* (2005), KITAJ refers to a concept of the Jewish *Kabbalah* – the *Tzimtzum*. In an explanatory text on the subject, he writes: ›The concept of *Tzimtzum* in *Kabbalah* says that God began the process of forming an empty space in which creation could begin by first ›contracting‹ His infinite light. In order for His creative power to be in that space, He contracted a ›thread‹ of His light. It was through this thread that all creation took place.‹<sup>37</sup> The negation of God, the retraction that makes space for creation, which as a ray of light becomes an energy field from which all creations are made, is a concept that inscribes the negation in that which is created.<sup>38</sup> Is it presumptuous to see a similarity to the creation of a photo, a creation of light into which the negative of a moment lived is inscribed? A photo

would therefore not be a reproduction but rather the conception of an external reflex, a picture act, an act of giving.<sup>39</sup>

In the works of both KITAJ and FRIEDLANDER we are faced with a new and fundamental question of art: How much essence is in a photo? To what extent is it reflected as a reproduction and how much power is accumulated in terms of reference, to generate new power? Jewish tradition is based on a constructive approach to life and thus may be seen to also possess a hidden, withdrawn subject. The image that falls into the soul and is able to evoke memories is a reminder of its credibility. But even this is rendered readable.





- 1 LEE FRIEDLANDER: *Kitaj*. Fraenkel Gallery. San Francisco 2002. Documented therein are 94 photographic shots, processed in Black and White.
- 2 In 2009, FRIEDLANDER profiled the sculptor RAOUL HAGUE, also his friend, for an edition of the magazine *Witness (No.6)* with 156 shots in the form of a monographic publication. To the position of KITAJ's profile in FRIEDLANDER's work DANIEL MORRIS writes: »An important exception to my observation that FRIEDLANDER does not focus on other Jews occurs in his photographs from 2002 of R.B. KITAJ, the Jewish painter whose work obliquely displays his psychic relation to the Holocaust.« DANIEL MORRIS: *After Weegee. Essays on Contemporary Jewish American Photographers*. Syracuse / New York 2011, p. 159.
- 3 LEE FRIEDLANDER, Fraenkel Gallery. San Francisco, 2000. In 2005 the Museum of Modern Art in New York republished *Lee Friedlander: Self-Portrait*, a book originally published in 1970.
- 4 LEE FRIEDLANDER: *Family*. Fraenkel Gallery. San Francisco, 2004.
- 5 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *Still in Praise of Still Photography*, in: LEE FRIEDLANDER: *Portraits*. Boston, 1985, pp. 10–19.
- 6 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *First Diasporist Manifesto. Thames and Hudson*, London, 1987.  
Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *Second Diasporist Manifesto*. Yale University Press, New Haven / London, 2007.
- 7 R.B. KITAJ: *Me, Me, Me*, in: LEE FRIEDLANDER: *Kitaj*. (cf. note 1); p. 115.
- 8 Cf. ROLAND BARTHES: *Die helle Kammer. Bemerkungen zur Photographie*. Frankfurt am Main, 1989. insbesondere, pp. 33–37.
- 9 R.B. KITAJ: *Me, Me, Me* (cf. note 7). p. 114.
- 10 Cf. HANS BELTING: *Bild-Anthropologie*. München, 2001. p. 186.
- 11 R.B. KITAJ: *Me, Me, Me* (cf. note 7). p. 114.
- 12 R.B. KITAJ: *Me, Me, Me* (cf. note 7). p. 114. With this reflexion KITAJ also confirms the notion shared by SUSAN SONTAG on the adjudged dialectic attributed to the individual photograph: »Eine der dauerhaften Errungenschaften der Fotografie war denn auch die Strategie, lebendige Wesen in tote zu verwandeln und leblose Dinge in lebendige Wesen.« SUSAN SONTAG: *Über Fotografie*. Frankfurt am Main, 2013. (21st ed. originally: SUSAN SONTAG: *On Photography*. New York, 1977. p. 96.
- 13 KATHARINA SYKORA / ANNA LEIBBRANDT (Eds.): *Roland Barthes Revisited. 30 Jahre Die Helle Kammer*. Köln, 2012. p. 72.
- 14 KATHARINA SYKORA / ANNA LEIBBRANDT (Eds.): *Roland Barthes Revisited*. Ibid., p. 72.
- 15 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *Me, Me, Me*. (cf. note 7) p. 112.
- 16 Cf. note 6.
- 17 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *First Diasporist Manifesto*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1987. p. 19.
- 18 Cf. MARK H. GELBER: *Diasporismus und Zionismus – Begriffe der jüdischen Zentren und Peripherien von der Antike bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, in: MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER (Ed.): *Die verborgene Spur. Jüdische Wege durch die Moderne*. exhibition catalogue, FELIX-NUSSBAUM-HAUS, OSNABRÜCK, Bramsche, 2008. pp. 32–47.
- 19 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *Erstes Manifest des Diasporismus*. Designed by MAX BARTHOLL / CHRISTOPH KRÄMER / ULRICH KREMPER (Eds.), Zurich, 1988.
- 20 SANDER L. GILMAN: *R.B. Kitaj's »Good Bad« Diasporism and the Body in American Jewish Postmodern Art*. p. 224 and pp. 223–237.
- 21 DANIEL MORRIS: *After Weegee* (cf. note 2). pp. 157, 158, 159, 160.
- 22 KLAUS HERDING: *Kitaj: Weltkultur aus der Diaspora, in: Kunstforum International. Vol. 3*, Ruppichteröth, 1991. pp. 140–145.
- 23 Cf. OKWUI ENWEZOR (Ed.): *Créolité and Creolization, Dokumenta 11\_Plattform 3*. Ostfildern, 2003.
- 24 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *First Diasporist Manifesto* (cf. note 6). pp. 25, 71–73.
- 25 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *First Diasporist Manifesto* (cf. note 6). pp. 37–38.
- 26 Cf. CILLY KUGELMANN / ECKHART GILLEN / HUBERTUS GASSNER (Eds.): *Obsessionen. R.B. Kitaj 1932–2007*. exhibition catalogue, Jüdisches Museum Berlin, Bielefeld, 2012.

- 27 DANIEL MORRIS: *After Weegee* (cf. note 2). p. 17.
- 28 Cf. EDWARD CHANEY: *Ein echter Warburgianer. R.B. Kitaj, Edgar Wind, Ernst Gombrich und das Warburg Institute*, in: CILLY KUGELMANN / ECKHART GILLEN / HUBERTUS GASSNER (Eds.): *Obsessionen* (cf. note 26). pp. 97–103.
- 29 Cf. MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER: *The Trace of the other in the Work of R.B. Kitaj. Folding/Crossing, self-elimination, difference and deconstruction in the context of image aesthetics and Talmud reading*, in: JAMES AULICH / JOHN LYNCH (Eds.): *Critical Kitaj. A Collection of Essays on the Work of R. B. Kitaj*. Manchester, 2000. pp. 181–196 / pp. 239–242.
- 30 ROBERT FELFE: »It's a generous medium, photography.« – *Fotografische Bildakte bei Francesca Woodman und Lee Friedlander*, in: MARTIN ROMAN DEPPNER (Ed.): *Fotografie im Diskurs performativer Kulturen*. Heidelberg, 2009. p. 33.
- 31 R.B. KITAJ: *Second Diasporist Manifesto (A new kind of long poem in 615 verses)*. New Haven / London, 2007. vs. 177.
- 32 R.B. KITAJ and DAVID HOCKNEY discuss »The Case for a Return to the Figurative.« in: *The New Review* 3–34–35 (January–February 1077): pp. 75–77.
- 33 Cf. R.B. KITAJ: *Still in Praise of Still Photography*, in: LEE FRIEDLANDER: *Portraits, New York Graphic Society, Little, Brown and Company*. Boston, 1985. pp. 11–20.
- 34 R.B. KITAJ: *Still in Praise of Still Photography*. Ibid., p. 12.
- 35 R.B. KITAJ: *Still in Praise of Still Photography*. Ibid., p. 14.
- 36 R.B. KITAJ: *Still in Praise of Still Photography*. Ibid., p. 19.
- 37 R.B. KITAJ: *Little Pictures*. exhibition catalogue, *Marlborough Fine Art*, London, 2006. commentary on picture No. 37.
- 38 Cf. GERSHOM SCHOLEM: *Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen*. Frankfurt am Main, 1980. pp. 285–290.
- 39 »If, in another register, we bring Kabbalah into the picture, with its mystical light symbolism, its garments

of light and emanations of splendor, the convergence becomes even further complicated. Is the Jewish presence in photography something hidden, like the mysteries of Kabbalah? Are Jewish photographers, those who embrace the name, really Kabbalists, seeking answers in numbers and patterns and mirrors and cryptic words? Is Jewish photography a covert quest for Shekhinah, the spirit shining forth in the radiance of things, the female form of the Divine Presence? (...) Or is it the enchantress Lilith who entices Jewish photographers, Shekhinah's demonic counterpart, the lustful seducer of men, associated with "the evil eye"? The claim of a "Jewish eye" opens doors of delicious as well as chilling speculation. Let's speculate that, Jew-haters aside, there is such a thing as a "Jewish eye" in photography. How would we recognize it? It may take alchemy itself to distill that eye from actual photographs. Is Jewishness a palpable photographic quality? Does it take an initiate to unlock the secrets of Jewishness as they radiate in such Sephirot as camera point of view, focal length of lenses, contrast of light and dark? Is there a code that can decipher Jewish perceptions, Jewish desires to picture certain subjects in certain ways?« Alan Trachtenberg, *The Claim of a Jewish Eye, Pakt Treger*. Magazine of the Yiddish Book Center, Amherst, Spring 2003, No. 41, p. 23.



**ORTHODOX EROS (2009)**

LEA GOLDA HOLTERMAN

This series of photographs examines the relation between ethics and aesthetics through the image of orthodox Jewish boys, and thus aims to redefine the known image. The construction of these images was based on Roland Barthes' theory of replacing the symbol and the symbolized in order to create an image as myth. Slipping the replacement into a familiar mold of visual and philosophical cultural elements deeply ingrained in the collective cultural consciousness of the West makes it possible to burrow beneath the old mythos and re-create one that is relevant and contemporary. The photographs were composed using documentary principles, while at the same time utilizing the aesthetic values of staged photography. This approach relates to the body as a visual text and the studio as a stage that mediates and appropriates routine perceptions in order to distill them and transfer the viewer's mind into a new associative, cultural and emotional space. Their seductiveness draws on visual sources taken from the history of art and the fashion world, providing a refreshing encounter between subject and viewer.















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THANKS

We thank the *Research focus group of Photography and Media* at the *University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld* for their realization of the sessions and for making it the topic of the 32. *Symposium* by including it in their program.

We also thank the management of the *Felix-Nussbaum-Haus*, Ms. INGE JÄHNER (+2016) for generously providing the spaces that housed the sessions and the organization of the exhibition by LYDIA GOLDBLATT, *Still Here*.

The president of the *University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld*, Ms. PROF. DR. BEATE RENNEN-ALLHOFF deserves our thanks for her support of the research focus group and especially in regards to this symposium. For the moderation of the sessions we thank Ms. PROF. DR. KIRSTEN WAGNER as well as Mr. THOMAS ABEL (M.A.).

For the design of the Web-presence, poster and brochure we direct our thanks to KATARINA BENDER, PAUL FIEBIG, OLGA MARTENS, JOANA NITSCHKE, HENNIG POHLMAYER.

Special thanks to Prof. Axel Grünewald for curating and publishing the photograph exhibition with student works *Und nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem* at the *Faculty of Art and Design, Bielefeld*

We would like to thank the *Fördergesellschaft of the University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld* for its financial support of the project.

For the inclusion in the publication series *Oldenburgische Beiträge zu Jüdischen Studien*, we thank Mr. PROF. DR. MICHAEL DAXNER.

THE EDITORS

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The powerful Jewish engagement with photography has been felt in numerous photographic positions and theoretical reflections. This fact has so far however remained largely neglected in the research on the effect of photography.

It is not only due to historical interest that this publication places its focus on those impulses stemming from Jewish tradition which — so the thesis — have also turned out to be especially productive for the visual discourse of the present; even more important is the aim to gain insights for the direction of contemporary photography. The question in the focus of the publication will therefore be how the Jewish culture which is oriented towards writing can be connected to photographic image production.

*The Research Centre Photography and the Media at the University of Applied Sciences in Bielefeld and the department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies of University College, London have jointly organized a publication with international writers to create a forum of discussion from various perspectives for the Jewish engagement with photography.*

The aim of interpretative approaches within studies of visual culture, theology, psychology and philosophy is to on the one hand expand the reflective space for this medium which is used as an artistic, as well as an everyday practical medium, and on the other hand to give new impulses for its creative direction.