

Wünschmann's careful research and eye for detail offers a wealth of original contributions to existing fields of research, including suicide, homosexuality, prisoner functionaries, constructions of criminality, and the function of concentration camps in Nazi Germany. The book will be a welcome addition to the reading list for those teaching modern Jewish or Holocaust history.

Anna Hájková  
University of Warwick



Carol Zemel. *Looking Jewish: Visual Culture and Modern Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 198 pp.  
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A handful of scholars in the field of modern Jewish visual culture found their way to Jewish studies after a start as “mainstream” art historians. Some were motivated by personal experience or epiphany to move between the mainstream and the field of Jewish art and visual culture, taking a diasporic road less traveled. I think of Margaret Olin’s powerful *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001) and her declaration at the beginning of the preface: “It began against my will, in the margins of the notes for my dissertation on the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl....” (xvii). Her scholarship took shape as she encountered deeply rooted antisemitism in the discipline of art history, enmeshed with nineteenth-century nationalism. She and others, including Carol Zemel, have set a high bar for scholarship in modern Jewish art.

Zemel is known for *Van Gogh’s Progress: Utopia, Modernity, and Late-Nineteenth-Century Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). But once that project was completed, her interests shifted, triggered in an Amsterdam bookstore—“a site of recovered Jewish memory”—by an encounter with the photographs of Roman Vishniac and of the less well-known Moshe Vorobeichic. This motivating experience was reinforced by her “long-held interest in my family’s history,” she has written (ix). Their roots were in Romania and the former Russian Pale of Settlement, but Zemel grew up in an acculturated middle-class Jewish family in Montreal. Since then, she has worked with ideas related to the challenges of Diaspora and its relationship to the “uncertain place” of Jewish visual culture “in the histories of modern art.”

In her introduction, Zemel invokes R. B. Kitaj’s *First Diasporist Manifesto* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989). She considers Jewish artists and their largely Jewish subjects not as fixed in relation to a majority culture, but interactively, with a character that is “unfixed and fluid” (2). Her introduction traces “Diaspora” from its Greek origin to its cultural evocation of home and nation and, in particular, Diaspora’s encounter with modernity via Haskalah. She looks at the myth of wholeness in opposition to the fragmentation and loss in Diaspora,

until Diaspora “becomes a way of life. ... diaspora society is ‘at home’ in its dispersal, and there it teeters between assimilation and difference with varying degrees of comfort or unease” (7). Zemel explores Simon Dubnow’s promotion of cultural autonomy and “diaspora nationalism,” offering that her case studies suggest responses to the “diasporic challenge” of what Jewish culture would look like beyond Dubnow’s “fallen ghetto walls” (13).

In the first of five chapters, “Beyond the Ghetto Walls: Shtetl to Nation in Photography by Alter Kacyzne and Moshe Vorobeichic,” Zemel examines Kacyzne’s documentary work published in Abraham Cahan’s *Forverts* in New York between 1923 and 1929. With their New World audience and dismal Old World subject matter, Kacyzne’s photographs reveal the tensions arising from the transformations that had been taking place in the shtetls for half a century. Cahan hoped to encourage the belief in a better life in America, but as Zemel suggests, Kacyzne’s work undermines that narrative by also offering some images—“gymnasium teachers, striking factory workers, and members of the socialist Jewish Bund”—that promoted a future in the Old World (37). Vorobeichic’s modernist photomontages in *The Ghetto Lane in Vilna* (1931) fuse “traditional content and radical style.” Fragmented images of piety, poverty, labor, and scholarship construct “fetishized emblems of Jewish tradition, seized by the camera from the social clutter of the past to function as modernist icons of identity” (52).

In “Modern Artist, Modern Jew,” her chapter on Bruno Schulz, who was born and died in bourgeois Drohobycz and murdered by a Nazi officer in 1942, Zemel’s powers of description inform an analysis of the uneasy encounter between tradition and modernity negotiated through the act of looking. She contrasts Schulz’s erotic work, fraught with desire and abjection, with the promise and idealism of Chagall, and reads *The Booke [sic] of Idolatry* (1920–22), featuring the artist’s abased self-image, via Freud’s work on masochism, to argue: “Beyond the immediacy—or strangeness—of a shared erotic fantasy, the pictures also suggest a cultural or diasporic experience, using eros and idolatry to evoke the tensions of Jewish difference and accommodation ...” (67).

In chapter 3, “Z’chor! Roman Vishniac’s Photo-Eulogy of Eastern European Jews,” Zemel agrees that few can look at *A Vanished World* without imagining the fate of its subjects, but warns that when it is seen as a “memorial book,” the result is to “render the image of a community as timeless essence and icon” (89). Ironically, the anxiety that the Shoah framework displaces, she argues in summary, “is the unabated ambivalence which the images, as *ostjüdisch* ethnography, invoke” (102–3); “the mythic memory of premodern Jewish life carries a haunting melancholy”—this is Vishniac’s achievement, its psychic depth, “the challenge for the viewer is not to narrow the shape of Jewish memory or too firmly fix the loss” (103).

“Difference in Diaspora: The *Yiddishe Mama*, the Jewish Mother, the Jewish Princess, and Their Men” investigates stereotypes that invigorate and push the boundaries of gender possibilities in Diaspora. It all began with the American creation of the eastern European *Yiddishe Mama*—a nostalgic balm to alienation and anxiety in the 1920s. From there, Eleanor Antin’s feminist art of the early 1970s

and Rhonda Lieberman's critiques of Jewish women and consumerism show how the Jewish mother, woman, wife, and daughter evolved as emblems of insecurity about assimilation into the gentile culture. Zemel concludes by looking at Jewish masculinity in the work of Ken Aptekar in the mid-1990s, and a generation later, the queering of Jewish gender representation by Amichai Lau-Lavie in his performances as *Rebbetzin Hadassah Gross*.

Citing Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi on Philip Roth (*Booking Passage* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000]), a "new Jewish aesthetic" is observed in the work of Kitaj, Ben Katchor, and Vera Frenkel, states Zemel in the final chapter, "Diasporic Values in Contemporary Art" (138). Ohio-born Kitaj made his career in London and returned to the United States after the death of his wife, Sandra Fisher, settling in Los Angeles in 1997. His work *Rain*, 1990–2004, shows a fleeing figure carrying another multiheaded male figure on his back. Whether moving into the future or just on the run, for Zemel the painting and others reaffirm Kitaj's militant diasporist stance (147). Out of his many graphic novels, Katchor's diasporist world comes particularly to the fore in *The Jew of New York* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), a fictionalized account of Mordecai Manuel Noah's attempt to establish a Jewish homeland on Grand Island in in Upstate New York—a tableau with a cast of characters always on the move, restless, and shifting in geography as well as identities (153). Czech-born Frenkel's ... *from the Transit Bar* (1992) consists of a railway bar, café tables, racks with newspapers, and TV monitors playing interviews in which travelers talk about their journeys, displacements, and homes. Kitaj's, Frenkel's, and Katchor's works are bound to "diaspora's labile character, its play with several viewpoints, its meandering and mutable borders ..." (160). This lack of fixity, Zemel argues, calls "attention to the exhilarating, uncertain, and always negotiated status of community and home" (160).

As Jewish studies scholars today, we come to such conclusions in a relatively safe space. Yet, I cannot help but take away another, perhaps subliminal, message. The dust jacket of the book is animated by the first part of the title, *Looking Jewish*, printed in vivid peacock blue overlaying a black-and-white photograph of a modern Jewish-looking woman, at once confident and exotic, a dark-haired beauty, with large eyes, thick curly hair, and a prominent nose. She looks straight at me. I am left to ponder the meaning of her image, which is partly elucidated by a descriptive caption inside the book on the copyright page: "Photograph of Pearl Rabinowicz, 1900–41. Daughter of Rabbi Yerachmiel Tzvi Rabinowicz, Byaler Rebbe. Died with her husband, Shalom Alter Perlow, 1941." How odd that Alter Kacyzne, the photographer, is not credited here. His stunning image, so alive, ambivalently proves and belies the transience of life in Diaspora. I think Zemel would agree.

Susan Chevlowe  
Dorfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection  
The Jewish Theological Seminary