

## Book Reviews

with this style (many, like Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Adolph Gottlieb, were Jewish) reacted against totalitarian calls to heroize and embody the new world order, rejecting political and/or humanitarian dictates in favor of American (bourgeois?) freedom and individualism. Although this subject has been thoroughly mined by art historians, including Baigell, he provides an inflection here that fits with his arguments' trajectory.

By the early 1940s, Baigell explains, Jewish artists needed to figure out how to reconcile their sense of moral obligation (*tikkun olam*) with politically inspired universalism. Subsequently, as Greenberg's writings indicate, in light of the failure of socialism to prevent war and the Holocaust, many creative Jews in this country began experiencing an estrangement and alienation diametrically opposed to turn-of-the-century immigrants' embrace of American ideals. Rather than socially useful, Jewish artists such as Gottlieb often felt socially irrelevant. Baigell cites exceptions, like Ben Shahn, who continued to express a more optimistic spiritual presence, but maintains that it would not be until the generation born in the 1930s and coming to maturity in the 1970s (a period of minimal antisemitism and great pride in Israel's war successes) that Jewish American artists would begin to reexplore their heritage for significant subjects. This, he explains, is the subject for another book.

Matthew Baigell's *Social Concern and Leftist Politics in Jewish American Art 1880–1940* compactly summarizes the political and artistic currents of this critical period, and, despite their limitations, the atypical visual examples he unearthed help to expand our understanding of how, particularly for so many East Coast Jewish artists, cultural and political imperatives in this era became inextricably intertwined. History buffs, students, and Jewish studies scholars will likely find it a useful reference and guide.

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Michael Berkowitz. *Jews and Photography in Britain*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. 358 pp.  
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The cover of Michael Berkowitz's book features a photograph of two men strolling down shallow steps in a garden. With a walking cane in his right hand, one man is instantly recognizable. Smoking his trademark cigar, Winston Churchill wears a double-breasted overcoat and homburg. The other man—younger, hatless and coatless, nattily attired in a three-piece suit—appears to be chatting with Churchill. Who is he and how does he come to be on such intimate terms with the extraordinarily influential British prime minister?

Those are the questions—among others—that Berkowitz seeks to answer in *Jews and Photography in Britain*. In fact, the cover photo aptly illustrates one

of Berkowitz's prime arguments: the pervasive presence of Jews in the business of photography in Britain. The dark-haired young man is Stefan Lorant, brilliant editor of the popular magazine, *Picture Post*, while the man behind the camera was Kurt Hutton, a photojournalist who worked with Lorant. Both of them arrived in Britain in the wake of Hitler's rise to power, having previously learned photography on the Continent; both Anglicized their names; both were Jewish photographers. Yet as Berkowitz emphasizes, their Jewish identity derived from their social position, family background, and vocation, not from religious affiliation or communal participation. But this particular photograph, taken outside Churchill's country home in February 1939, never saw publication in *Picture Post*. Instead, Lorant retouched the image and removed himself, publishing a solitary Churchill out for a walk after a morning spent writing, and waiting for the nation to call him back to leadership. Thus Berkowitz's cover photo aims to restore what has until now been hidden. Placing Lorant and Churchill together on the cover demonstrates vividly an unknown and (sometimes) suppressed history of deep and extensive Jewish involvement in photography in Britain.

Berkowitz explores several types of photography. He begins with portrait studios and commercial photography, which became popular in the nineteenth century. He then turns to the rise of photojournalism in the early twentieth century. These two chapters cover various pathways into photography followed by Jews. Berkowitz also examines some of the practices that made these Jews successful as photographers. He suggests that an air of foreignness or exoticism proved attractive to potential subjects who came to sit for their portrait. He also notes photographic and commercial innovations pioneered by Jews, such as improved X-ray technologies and the development of multiple images, often marketed through department store studios. In his discussion of photojournalism Berkowitz rightly emphasizes experiences acquired in Berlin in the 1920s by such figures as Lorant. If Britain did not exactly initiate photojournalism, for a time during the 1930s it did serve as an increasingly robust venue where Jewish and non-Jewish photojournalists saw their work reach hundreds of thousands of viewers each week.

There follows a transitional chapter on the relocation of the Warburg Institute from Germany to London in 1933. Perceived as a "Jewish" institution by Hitler, it acquired a similar reputation in Britain. With a mostly German Jewish staff, the institute did what it could to help refugee scholars. Berkowitz emphasizes the role of photography in efforts by the Warburg to win a place for itself in British culture. The Warburg accorded photography higher standing as an art form than most other cultural institutions. The institute used it to democratize Britain's cultural heritage, specifically through a major project to photograph Britain's architecture. The Warburg then disseminated these and other images through exhibits; it also developed a means to store and catalog photographs. Berkowitz's analysis of four Warburg exhibits argues persuasively that they presented a consistently antiracist and broad-based interpretation of British culture.

The second half of the book examines the careers of Walter and Helmut Gernsheim. The Gernsheim brothers arrived in Britain as refugees from Nazi

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Germany. Both married and suffered internment, but Walter and his wife managed to find work with the Warburg Institute as photographers. Helmut and his wife were shipped to Australia as enemy aliens. Released in 1944, Helmut and his wife, too, turned to photography. Gradually he managed to claim a legitimate identity. Berkowitz devotes several chapters to Helmut Gernsheim's research and collecting efforts. These eventually proved critical to the history of photography, as did his scholarship on that history. Near the end of his life, he pondered one of the themes of this book, namely, the outsize role of Jews in the history of photography. In some ways, Berkowitz picks up where Gernsheim left off, following the twists and turns of his career and the key roles played by Jews in securing Gernsheim's mammoth collection of photographs, now located at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas.

Almost all of the men and women who figure in this book stood outside of organized Jewish life, religious or cultural. Many of them maintained only marginal identification as Jews, some were raised Christian, but all of them worked within Jewish networks in the photographic field. Berkowitz contends that Jewish origins "helped to determine the content, limits, and possibilities of their social and socioeconomic opportunities" (9). Thus Jewishness significantly shaped their careers in photography. As a field nestled precariously between craft, art, and commerce, photography offered opportunities, not restrictions. Portable, flexible, easily mastered, with few barriers for entrance, it allowed for self-reinvention. For much of its history, the field welcomed Jews (though Berkowitz does discuss antisemitic exclusions).

Berkowitz's book is prodigiously researched. It is studded with footnotes, many offering insights that could spark future projects. Occasionally the wealth of detail overwhelms the text. Berkowitz largely shies away from analyzing specific images or styles of photographs. This is not a theory-driven book, nor a form of cultural studies, but rather a historical account of the production of photography in Britain, grounded in the richness of the archives. A sense of discovery animates its pages. Indeed, Berkowitz begins his book with a telling anecdote describing a forty-five minute audience with the Duke of Edinburgh in his library in Buckingham Palace. Who opened the doors of Buckingham Palace to Michael Berkowitz? A Jewish photographer named Baron.

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Hillel Cohen. *1929: Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015. 312 pp.  
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Readers who have fixed opinions about the Arab-Israeli conflict might find Hillel Cohen's book hard to digest. The main reason for that is not what