

Working Paper

Ruth Schloss

Drawing lines between German heritage and Israeli cultural sphere

A case study by Natalya Zolotar

1. migration from Germany to Palestine-Israel in the 1930s

Migration from Germany in the 1930s brought with it a new cultural nuance to Palestine-Israel. There were cultural differences of the German immigrants from the Jews and the artists who lived in Palestine-Israel such as: a) many of the German immigrants belonged to the socio-economic-cultural middle and upper classes, b) a significant proportion of the immigrants came from big cities, c) many were academics and freelancers associated with German technological and industrial systems and cultural institutions, d) they remained in touch with their previous cultural heritage (Getter, 1979).

The “Yekkes” or “Jeckes” (The German immigrants’ nickname) retained aspects of their German identity and culture and many features of their former life. The German immigrants stood out with their dress, language, and manners, their love for books, music as well as in qualities such as punctuality, strictness, and perfectionism. They carried “Germany” and their German heritage along with them to Palestine (Zimmerman and Hotam, 2006). In the context of our project concerning the encounter between German heritage and Palestine-Israel, I would like to explore the influences of German heritage on Ruth Schloss the German-born artist.

2. Ruth Schloss

The artist Ruth Schloss was born in Nuremberg, Germany to a bourgeois assimilationist Jewish family who was well-integrated into German culture. She immigrated to Israel in 1937 at the age of 15, along with her parents and sisters. Her family settled in Kfar Shmaryahu (A German -Jewish immigrants’ settlement) where the family lived among other German immigrants and with an almost isolation from the Israeli society. The Schloss household in Germany and in Israel was characterized by open, cultural, and liberal spirit, and with progressive views and socialistic values. Her family environment and her cultural German heritage deeply influenced Ruth's development; “this combination had a profound effect on the mental development of Ruth, as she learned to

blend and tie culture and art with a sensitivity to the neglected, the poor, the weaker, the oppressed and deprived" (Tamir, 2006). At the age of 16, she began to study at the Bezalel Academy of Art. The German artists and teachers in Bezalel were not organically attached to Israel. They were in their own German diaspora sphere and its heritage. Her main teacher was Mordechai Ardon. He himself was a student at the Bauhaus School, Weimar, Germany with Itten, Klee, Kandinsky, Feininger, and was a teacher at Ittan school in Berlin. From a cultural perspective Ardon was a "bridge" between leading German art movements and Palestine.

3. Research questions

My main research questions are:

- What were the affinities, the relations, and the influences of Cultural German Heritage on Schloss's art?
- How much "Germany and Stuttgart" are in "Israel and Tel-Aviv", and Can we find their traces in Schloss's art?
- What can we learn about wandering of the cultural German ideas and art and about their translation into Israeli cultural sphere?

4. Methodology

- **Documents and Visual analysis:** To understand the influence of the German heritage on Ruth Schloss's art and her creative dialogue with both "here" and "there" cultural heritage, a careful analysis of art works is required. Through the lens of the concept shared heritage I will examine the artist's art including techniques, motifs, atmospheres, and style comparison. I will also analyze past interviews with the artist.
1. **Interviews:** In order to understand the migrant's wandering between two heritages depth interview will be conducted with Dr. Nurit Cohen Evron, the daughter of Ruth Schloss.

5. Theoretical framework and Key concepts:

- **German-Jewish emigration to Palestine**

Schlör, J. (2008). German-Jewish emigration to Palestine; The land "here", the land "there":

Reflections on Returning

<https://irgun-jeckes.org/german-jewish-emigration-to-palestine/>

- **The Fifth Aliya (1931-1939) and the Jeckes (Yekkes)**

(Getter 1979; Hansen-Glucklich, 2017; Yosef, 2014; Zimmerman and Hotam 2006)

- **German-Jewish Artists in Israel**

(Dekel 2009; Grossmann2018)

6. References

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Grossmann, R. (2018). Negotiating Presences: Palestine and the Weimar German Gaze. *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society*. 23 (2), pp. 137–172.

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The Association of Israelis of Central European Origin (AICEO)

<https://irgun-jeckes.org/yellow-post-2/>

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<https://irgun-jeckes.org/german-jewish-emigration-to-palestine/>

Yosef, D. (2014). From Yekke to Zionist: Narrative strategies in life stories of Central European Jewish women immigrants to Mandate Palestine. *Journal of Israeli History*. 33(2), pp.185-208.

The German Aliya

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2S4PLAf6BU&list=UUTpVuXIKz-h6N4dX45gUXlg&index=20>

Zimmerman, M. and Hotam, Y. (Eds.) (2006). *Between homelands; Jeckes in their districts*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for the Study of the History of the Jewish People [Hebrew].

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