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**The Canadian Jewish Connection to the Visual
Narrative of Nationhood at the Jewish Palestine
Pavilion in New York (1939) and the Pavilions of
Israel and Judaism in Montreal (1967)**

Erwin Panofsky was a renowned German–Jewish art historian who settled in the United States in 1934 after the Nazis came to power. He wrote *Studies in Iconology* (1939) and *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955), two canonical texts that are still at the core of art historical studies today.¹ In these writings he explains that art–related images are associated with concepts that originate in *Weltanschauung*, namely the way of thinking that determines our perceptions of, and interactions with, the world. Along these lines, the primary objective of this article is to consider the evolution of images relating to Israel’s visual narrative of nationhood as found in the pavilions at two World’s Fairs: New York City in 1939 and Montreal in 1967. The secondary objective is to demonstrate how this evolution interacted with Canadian Jewish attitudes and beliefs about Israel.

The development of this visual narrative of nationhood began with the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, founded in Jerusalem by the artist Boris Schatz.² Schatz wanted to create an expression of national and spiritual independence that synthesized European artistic traditions with the local culture of the Land of Israel. He proposed the idea to Zionist leader Theodor Herzl, and the Bezalel School officially opened in 1906, one year after receiving funding. It became the training ground for artists and craftsmen who would be tasked with designing a visual environment for what would become the Jewish state. In addition to their courses in drawing, painting, sculpture and crafts, all students at Bezalel studied Hebrew. This was more than a linguistic exercise. The revival of Hebrew became a central tenet of the ideology of Zionism. The “artist of the letter” was Ya’akov Stark, one of Bezalel’s first ten students who combined Art Nouveau designs with Islamic arabesques to create a distinctive calligraphy.

This new Jewish art was decorative and quite reminiscent of 19th century “Orientalist” paintings of biblical scenes. Religious motifs dominated descriptions of holy places, scenes from the Diaspora, and sayings from the Hebrew Bible. The images sought to make connections: between the Biblical period, the return to Zion from the Babylonian exile, the Hasmonean Kingdom of Israel, and the Zionist dream for a Jewish state. They often contained Zionist symbols such as the hands of the high priest raised in blessing or the rising sun which represented hope.



Shmuel ben David.
Frontispiece for an album
of postcards published
in 1926 by Y. Ben Dov.
Photomontage, india ink,
and brown wash on paper,
22X28.5 cm. The Israel
Museum, Jerusalem, O.S.
3003.66.

From its beginning, a significant component of the Bezalel School was the nature museum, whose purpose was to inspire the creation of a Hebrew style in depicting ecological motifs. Students spent considerable time drawing the specimens they found there. A motif we often see in Bezalel works is the palm tree, which is frequently described in the Bible. Schatz asked Israel Aharoni, a zoologist, to teach Hebrew at the school, and he was also put in charge of the museum's collections. One of his responsibilities was to gather different types of plants and animals and give them Hebrew names.

During this era, two Zionist institutions encouraged the practice of photography. In the same spirit that guided the Bezalel School, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and Keren Hayesod commissioned photographs to spread the Zionist message.³ Various artists documented the enterprise of Zionism, in particular the building of Jewish settlements, using photographic references and compositions that took their inspiration from Soviet art. Pictures of pioneers, mainly labourers, chronicled the importance of creative labour, one of the themes of Jewish socialist ideology.

The Jewish Palestine Pavilion in New York City in 1939

In 1939, Zionists seized the opportunity afforded by the New York World's Fair to promote a Jewish homeland in Palestine. They acted in concert with Jewish national aspirations that had been gaining strength in the shadow of the pogroms in Eastern Europe and the rise of Hitler and Nazism. The Pavilion was an expression of Jewish political sovereignty supported by aesthetic principles developed in Palestine in the first three decades of the twentieth century. These principles personalized Palestine as the Jewish homeland.

The architect and designer of the pavilion, Arie Elhanani, had been involved in designing the International Levant Fair held in Tel Aviv in 1934.⁴ He was hired by Meyer Weisgal, the Pavilion's director, who was active in the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and thought it best to have an Israeli designer rather than an American one.⁵ Weisgal was also adamant that the exhibits be constructed in Palestine, and Elhanani worked closely with artists and craftsmen at the Levant Fair Studios to create exhibits that envisioned the economic, cultural, social and industrial accomplishments of modern Jewish Palestine. The aim was to convey a Zionist ideology by means of an authentic "miniature Palestine" in order to "make a statement of fact; that in 1938 Jewish Palestine was a reality; its towns, villages, schools, hospitals and cultural institutions had risen in a land that until our coming had been derelict and waste."⁶



Meyer Wolfe Weisgal, ed. *Palestine Book: Jewish-Palestine Pavilion New-York World's Fair, 1939* (New York: Pavilion Publications, 1939), 40. <https://ia802503.us.archive.org/10/items/palestinebookjew00weis/palestinebookjew00weis.pdf>.

Before immigrating to Jerusalem in 1922, Elhanani was exposed to Russian avant-garde art as a student in Kiev. As a result of this influence and in keeping with the Bezalel School's vision of Zionism, he created, for the pavilion's main hall, a giant concrete sculpture of an indomitable pioneer, which expressed the heroic, utopian and socialist ideals of the period. Similar in spirit to his *Hebrew Worker* at the 1934 Levant Fair, the sculpture embodied the New York Fair's slogan: 'Building the World of Tomorrow.' In concert with this monumental statue, three 14-foot hammered copper relief figures, titled *The Toiler of the Soil*, *the Laborer*, and *the Scholar*, dominated the building's facade. The sculptor was the Hungarian Maurice Ascalon, who had studied in Brussels and Milan before immigrating to Palestine in 1934.



The Jewish-Palestine Building, New York World's Fair, colour postcard of the exterior of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, held in 1939 and 1940. William A. Rosenthal Judaica Collection, College of Charleston Libraries. <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:63910>.



Pavilion of Judaism. The Foundation for Judaism, 1967. Photo: Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives.

Many of the Pavilion's works displayed Jewish Palestinian motifs and a biblical style that had their origins in the Bezalel School. Certain features appropriated the Zionist iconography favoured by Bezalel artists. The courtyard at the Pavilion's entrance showed the creative genius of landscape architect J. J. Levison, who installed fifty varieties of trees and plants native to Palestine, including orange, lemon, lime, fig and date trees. The courtyard also had one of the largest trees on the fairgrounds, a 16-foot-high date palm with a 14-foot spread. Inside the pavilion, on the central wall, was a painting on glass of the sun rising. A Jewish flag was placed in front of the painting to symbolize the approaching redemption of the Holy Land and the salvation of oppressed Jewry throughout the world.

To emphasize the biblical continuity of the Jewish people, a model of the Temple of Solomon was on view, as were bronze tablets with raised silver lettering. These tablets summarized the important dates in the four thousand years of Jewish history, from the time of Abraham to the present. In the Hall of Culture and Education, a mural showed written Hebrew in its various stages of development. Throughout the Pavilion Hebrew was prominently on display: on a roll of newsprint, on a calendar, and on posters.

The Jewish Palestine Pavilion and Canadian Zionism

The Palestine Book, edited by Weisgal, served as a guide to the Pavilion and explained the historical context and social reality of Jewish Palestine. In the book, Weisgal comments:

Inspection of the exhibits would naturally develop in the visitor intellectual curiosity regarding some much-discussed issues ... of profound import for anyone desiring a full understanding of the Jewish Homeland today. Such questions as the will of the Jewish people to return to Zion, Arab nationalism versus Jewish nationalism, the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine and the political role of England with respect to the Jewish Homeland are therefore authoritatively dealt with in this book.⁷

With respect to North America, he explains that the 1939 pavilion and *The Palestine Book* had four purposes: to protest Nazi Germany's anti-Semitism, to raise funds for German-Jewish refugees, to demonstrate the solidarity of North American Jews with World Jewry, and to expand support for Zionism.

A Canadian connection to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion is apparent in the pages of *The Palestine Book*. Samuel Bronfman, who founded Seagram Co. Ltd. and was the president of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), appears in the list of the pavilion's major sponsors. In acknowledgement of his generous contribution, the book's first

advertisement is for Seagram's Whisky. The ad is dominated by a painting made in 1770 by the Anglo-American artist Benjamin West, called *The Death of General Wolfe*. The painting links Seagram's whisky, referred to as "Canada's Finest", with Wolfe's death at the 1759 Battle of Quebec during the French and Indian War. The caption describes General Wolfe, who was British, as a "military genius" and "great humanitarian" who "won for Great Britain all of New France." This reference to Britain not only expresses Canada's pride in its British origins, but its appreciation for the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which proclaimed the British government's support for the establishment of a "national home" for the Jewish people.⁸

Canadian Jews in the 1930s had two prominent beliefs about Great Britain. First that it was Canada's devoted and lawful mother country, and secondly that it was a principal and important supporter of a Jewish national homeland. Canadian Zionists had no problem being simultaneously loyal to Zionism, Canada and the British Empire.⁹ Knowing this, the advertisement encourages Britain to live up to the trust the people had placed in it. In fact, its underlying plea is a reaction to Britain's March 1939 draft of its White Paper, written in response to the 1936–1939 Arab Revolt.¹⁰ While the paper confirmed the establishment of a Jewish national home in a sovereign Palestinian state within ten years, its recommendations contradicted this commitment by placing limits on Jewish immigration for five years, after which immigration policy would be decided by the Arab majority. The paper also restricted the right of Jews to buy land from Arabs.

An even more direct connection to Canada was Meyer Weisgal himself, who had moved from New York City to Toronto in 1929 to become the first editor of the Canadian Zionist journal *The Jewish Standard*. He did so at the beckoning of Rose Dunkelman, a Jewish community leader and philanthropist and the wife of David Dunkelman, a major Toronto clothing manufacturer. Rose had resolved to establish a paper to counter the influence of the anti-Zionist Maurice Eisendrath, an American reform rabbi who had recently been hired by Holy Blossom Temple. Weisgal writes in his autobiography:

Toronto had acquired a new rabbi by the name of Maurice Eisendrath, a furious anti-Zionist who was poisoning the air of Toronto with his articles in *The Jewish Review*. At stake, said Rose Dunkelman, was nothing less than the soul of Toronto and perhaps of all Canadian Jewry. 'We need an editor,' she repeated, 'and we are willing to finance him. Can you get me someone like you?' With my usual restraint and modesty, I said: 'Mrs. Dunkelman, there is no one like me; you can have the original if you like.'¹¹

Before making the move, Weisgal resigned from his positions as national secretary of ZOA and editor of *The New Palestine*, as well as from a dozen committees. He talked

himself into believing that “just as the provincial town of Manchester could have its famous *Guardian* so the provincial town of Toronto could have its famous *Standard*.”¹² Although he spent only two years in Toronto, the visual and textual templates he created for *The Jewish Standard* were so successful they were kept by his successor, Moses Frank. Not surprisingly, they also found their way into *The Palestine Book*. Both publications used photographs commissioned by the JNF and Keren Hayesod. Both also featured writings by the same authors, including Chaim Weizmann, president of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the World Zionist Organization; Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, national chairman of ZOA, and Dr. Solomon Goldman, its president; Louis Lipsky, national chairman of Keren Hayesod; Dr. Samuel Dinin, president of the National Council for Jewish Education; Abraham Goldberg, president of Histadruth Ivrit; and well-known critics Maurice Samuel, Thomas Mann and Ludwig Lewisohn.

Another interesting contributor to *The Palestine Book* was Pierre van Paassen, a Dutch-Canadian-American Unitarian minister and journalist for the *Toronto Globe* and *New York Evening Post* who had covered the Palestine riots of 1929. Passionately pro-Zionist, van Paassen penned an essay titled “Armageddon, The Battle of the Lord.” He writes:

What has taken place in the Holy Land in the last few years and in sight of the whole world is a miracle as wondrous as the blossoming of Aaron’s Staff in the magic stillness of the mythological night... The country has been covered with an extensive network of highways, swamps have been dried, rivers have been harnessed, long chains of agricultural settlements have been established, harbors have been constructed and the people have built themselves a cultural and educational apparatus – schools, technical colleges, laboratories, clinics and a university that compares favorably with that of the most advanced European countries...¹³

His inspirational writings and eyewitness accounts were a constant presence in *The Jewish Standard*: “The Half Has Not Been Told” (April 1930); “It Is Up to Us Goyim to Tell the Jews That It Is Real This New Palestine” (June 1932); “The New Hebraic Generation” (February 1934); “Danger Signals in France... Anti-Jewish Activity in the French Metropolis” (1934); and “Van Paassen Sees in Palestine the Regeneration of a World Jewish Culture” (July 1934).

Modernist Art at the Jewish Palestine Pavilion

Despite its prominence at the Jewish Palestine Pavilion in 1939, the socio-political art inspired by the Bezalel School was in decline. In a separate gallery in the pavilion, the exhibit “Art of Palestine” revealed that the modernists offered a more persuasive

expression of Zionist feeling. Curated by the American–Palestinian artist Elias Newman, the exhibit was a heartfelt response to the land and Jewish people of Palestine.¹⁴ Fifty artists were represented, mainly originating from Poland, Russia, Germany, and Ukraine, though they had trained in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Florence.

Even in the 1920s, many Bezalel students had begun to rebel against the rigid artistic traditions the institution insisted on.¹⁵ Encouraged by the influx of artists from other countries, they were drawn to a more “subjective” art. To a significant extent, they eventually created a “Hebrew” version of Impressionist and Expressionist art using a palette of light colours and energetic brushstrokes. In particular, the influence of Picasso, Braque, Chagall and Matisse was visible in their work. In 1948, after Israel was founded, the New Horizons group, *Ofakim Hadashim* in Hebrew, came to prominence.¹⁶ The paintings of these artists reflected a tremendous love for Israel’s singular development and for its modernism. Their passion and ideas came to shape the face of Israeli art, not only in small landscapes and figurative works, but in the large-scale murals, sculptures and monuments that were installed in public spaces.

Israel Pavilion at Expo ‘67 in Montreal

To a certain extent, the Israel Pavilion at Expo ‘67 presented a visual narrative that recalled the stories told at the Jewish Palestine Pavilion in 1939. It celebrated Israel’s rebirth and growth in the wake of the Holocaust through a beautifully landscaped biblical garden, a telling of the history of ancient Israel that included the Dead Sea Scrolls and other archaeological treasures, a display of Israel’s achievements in agriculture, and panels and films that documented the country’s social and cultural accomplishments. It also acknowledged the revival of Hebrew as a vibrant spoken language.

However, the members of the design team – Shmuel Grundman, Paul Kor, and Dan Reizinger – were determined to imbue the Pavilion’s spaces with a colourful modernist visual language. Partly, their conviction was a response to certain negative reactions that had been expressed about the Israel Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair.¹⁷ While it received a gold medal and was ranked 14 out of the 120 pavilions, and many people thought it had been tastefully designed, its visual presentation was criticized by several members of the Israeli press. Journalists at *Ma’ariv* and *Al Hamishmar* described being disappointed by displays that were somewhat monotonous and only occasionally original. One reporter wrote that having a figure of a Yemenite man seated on the ground weaving on an ancient loom was a poor choice as visitors who were unaware of Israel’s history might misconstrue his presence as primitive and colonial.¹⁸

To attain their modernist vision, the design team selected a wide array of provocative

artists who would bring a rich and lively modern aesthetic to the displays. One was Ruth Zarfati, the only woman in the New Horizons group. Zarfati was known for her sophisticated naive sculptures and her illustrations for children's books. In her contribution, she depicted Israel's biblical history and the diversity of its people and places through panoramic scenes created using toy-like sculptures made of wood, bronze and ceramics.

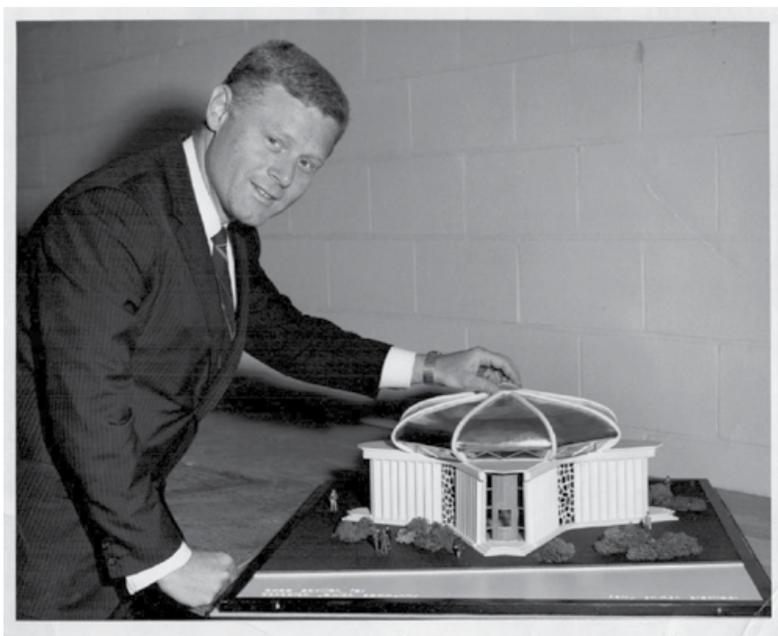
Jean David, also a member of the Horizons group, was recognized for his large-scale murals, posters and graphic designs. In his surrealistic illustrations of Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Tiberias, he used collage to convey a joyful appreciation of the people, architectural features, and views of each city. Igaël Tumarkin, a stage designer and sculptor who rebelled against the lyrical abstraction of the Horizons group, recalled the technological inventiveness of Israel's pioneers through found objects he assembled in the shapes of agricultural and industrial implements.

The Relationship of the Israel Pavilion to the Pavilion of Judaism at Expo '67

In preparing the exhibition for Expo '67, the designers were not interested in presenting a global history of Judaism. Rather, the plan for the Israel Pavilion was to promote a narrative that focused on the history and achievements of the State. In all likelihood, the organizers were determined to develop something very different from the narrative showcased at the American-Israel Pavilion in 1964, when the World's Fair was again in New York.¹⁹ Israel had decided not to participate, for financial reasons, according to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. He cited defence expenditures in the face of hostile Arab neighbours and the need to build infrastructure to absorb the massive wave of immigrants that had arrived in the 1950s and early 1960s. As a result of his decision, the Pavilion was privately sponsored by American benefactors who created exhibitions that focused on Jewish religious history in medieval Spain, Hasidic Eastern Europe, and colonial America. Other exhibitions emphasized American contributions to Israel.

This was not how Israel wanted to see itself at Expo '67. In fact, the organizers of Israel's pavilion explicitly wanted to avoid references to reciprocal relations and cooperation between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. They sought to focus on the State itself. The Canadian viewpoint, however, was that Judaism and World Jewry needed a strong presence at Expo '67. When Pierre Dupuy, the exposition's commissioner-general, failed in his attempt to organize an interfaith pavilion for the fair, and Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat of the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue heard that an ecumenical Christian Pavilion was being planned that would represent eight denominations, he contacted the organizers of Israel's Pavilion. He hoped to convince them to have a synagogue in the Israel Pavilion.²⁰

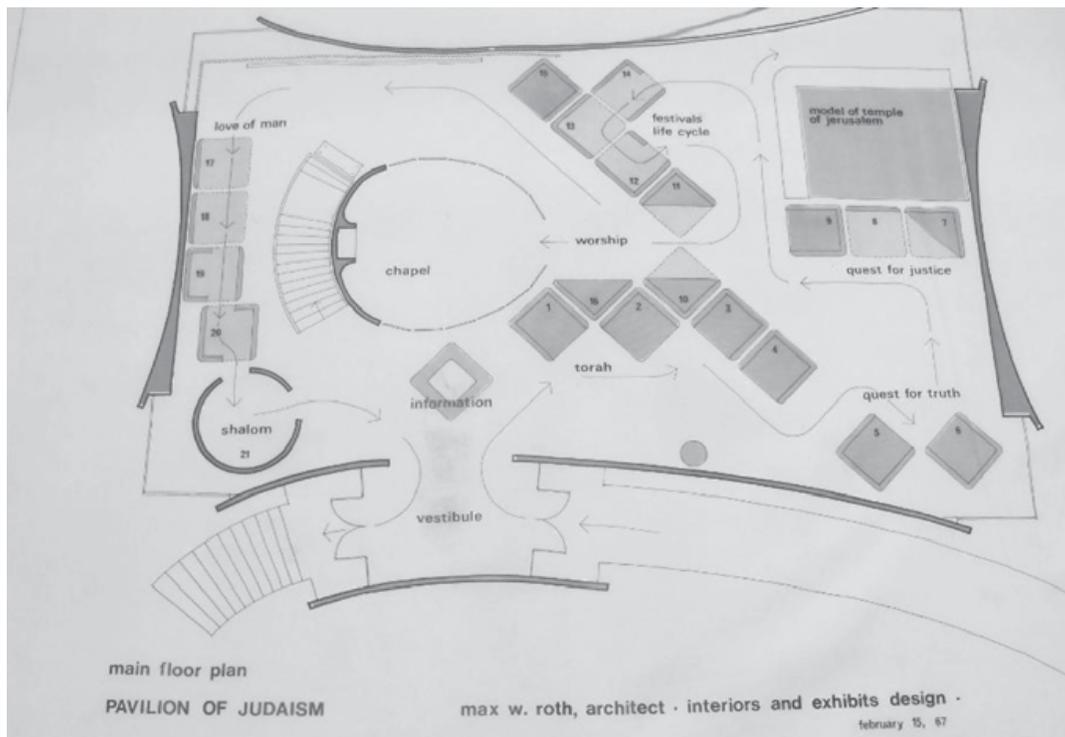
The idea was to have a *shul* where Jews visiting the fair could celebrate the Sabbath and attend services on Jewish holidays, and where a *minyan* would recite prayers for *yahrtzeits*. The architect Harry Stilman was asked to design a small chapel.²¹ The plan was a four-sided star structure with truncated tips and a central dome reminiscent of a Spanish-Moorish synagogue. But the request to incorporate the chapel into Israel's pavilion was refused for the reasons stated above. In addition the Montreal delegation was told that Israel was a modern state that was home to many religions.



Harry Stilman,
Architect, with the
design of the proposed
chapel, 1966. Photo:
Montreal Star.

By now it was 1966, about one year from the opening date of the 1967 exposition. Nonetheless, Rabbi Shuchat and a committee of rabbis and community leaders decided it was enough time to create their own pavilion, which they would call the Pavilion of Judaism. The exterior was a flat-roofed, 2,500-square-foot building in the shape of a four-point star, crowned by a low dome. As Stilman simplified and refined the design of the building's exterior, the narrow panels in the earlier version gave way to elegant, wide curved walls in the shape of an open scroll that would serve as a backdrop for Hebrew letters. Stilman knew that Judaism placed the written word at the highest level of the creative imagination, and he was also an admirer of the artist Ben Shahn's integration of the Hebrew alphabet into his art. Drawing on these influences, he designed an exterior that juxtaposed Hebrew lettering with an expansive surface that recalled an opened scroll of the Torah. The letters, cut out of Douglas-fir plywood and stained a dark brown, were slightly raised to cast shadows on the white concrete. Members of the planning committee proposed a different quotation for each wall: two from the Bible, one from the medieval Sephardic rabbi and philosopher Maimonides, and the last from Isaac Leib Peretz, the nineteenth-century Yiddish poet and playwright from Poland.

The Pavilion's interior was a colourful contemporary design by the architect Max Roth.²² It was divided into a lower floor that held a 125-seat auditorium and a large space for temporary exhibitions, events and programs, and a main floor with a chapel in an enclosed glass space surrounded by permanent displays. The six themes of the exhibition were based on two of the best-known and most-cited maxims from the *Ethics of the Fathers*.²³ The first, representing the inner life of the Torah (Avoth 1:2), is that the world stands upon three things: Torah, which is learning; *avodah*, which is worship; and good deeds, which are acts of charity and loving-kindness. The second maxim (Avoth 1:8) proclaims the universal hopes of Judaism for all humankind: by three active pursuits – truth, justice, and peace – the world is preserved.



Max W. Roth, architect, interiors and exhibits design, *Pavilion of Judaism, Expo 67, Montreal, Quebec: main floor plan*, 15 February 1967, ink, graphite, dry transfer on translucent paper, 70.8 x 91.1 cm. Max Wolfe Roth fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture. Gift of William D'Onofrio Architect, with the support of Stephen J. Roth and Sharon Lichtman.

To give meaning to these themes and to depict Judaism's development through the ages, a rich array of artifacts was displayed in the exhibition space. These included ceremonial objects, ancient books, rare documents, illustrative texts, portraits, paintings, sculptures, photographs, and films. In one corner stood a 400-square-foot model of the Temple of Solomon, the culmination of more than thirty years of biblical research and dedicated labour by Lazare and Suzette Halberthal. At the heart of the exhibition was a modest chapel with a graceful interior, over which arched a dome that proclaimed "Love of God," letting visitors know that worship was essential to the Jewish faith. Stilman's concept of the dome as a source of dramatic

light to heighten the spiritual atmosphere of the interior was enhanced by an amber Plexiglas enclosure designed by Roth directly below the dome. In this tranquil place, visitors were welcome to listen to recorded performances of liturgical ceremonies and participate in, or observe, the daily services led by Montreal rabbis.

The Pavilion of Judaism presented a Canadian perspective on Judaism's impact on generations of Jews around the world, as well as on the spiritual strength of the Jewish religion. Since its sponsor was the Canadian Jewish community, it was also deemed important to include an introduction to Canadian Jewry.²⁴ This was accomplished through historical documents and pictorial records, including a portrait of Aaron Hart, one of the first Jews to settle permanently in Canada in 1760; a genre painting titled *Immigrants at Montreal* (1862) by the earliest Canadian Jewish artist, William Raphael; and the Emancipation Act of 1830, by which the legislature petitioned the administrator of Canada to obtain the Crown's approval of "an act to extend certain privileges to persons professing the Jewish religion." Canadian Jews who made their mark elsewhere were also lauded, as in a newspaper illustration of Rabbi Dr. Abraham de Sola, pictured delivering the opening prayer at the House of Representatives in Washington on January 9, 1873. In 1858, de Sola was the first Canadian Jew to receive an honorary doctorate from McGill University, where he lectured in Semitic literature.

Significantly, numerous contemporary works by Jewish Canadian, American, and Israeli artists further articulated the Pavilion of Judaism's themes, as was the case at the Israel Pavilion, though there only Israeli artists were shown.²⁵ Early on in the committee's deliberations on how best to visually express Judaic ideas, Rabbi Shuchat proposed that art was superior to photographs or objects because a painting was an interpretation, not just a representation. Igor Kuchinsky, the program director, was keenly supportive of this point of view, and at the same meeting reported that in the space of only two weeks he had received replies from 57 of the over 200 Jewish artists with whom he had corresponded about works of Judaic interest.²⁶ According to the record of the committee's proceedings, the goal was "to accomplish two purposes: an expression of Jewish particularity and an expression of Jewish universality. We tried to interpret Jewish individuality as an expression of universal values."²⁷

Among the artworks on display at the Pavilion were recent works by Canadian artists.²⁸ The theme "Quest for Justice" was brought to life in a trio of Holocaust-related works based on the biblical quotation "Am I my brother's keeper?" : *Klippoth* by Jan Menses, a monochromatic, sharp-edged drawing that evoked the dark, Kabbalistic vacuum of evil; *Riot* by Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, which referenced the inhumanity and death at the concentration camps; and *The Broken Man*, a sculpture by Anne Kahane that expressed the unbearable suffering of Holocaust victims and survivors.

As the permanent exhibition space was unable to accommodate all the Canadian Jewish artists who wished to participate, the space set aside for temporary exhibitions was put to use. For the Pavilion's opening, an exhibition of graphic artworks included David Silverberg's illustrations for the *Song of Songs* and *The Psalms of David*, and stone-cut prints by Stanley Lewis that evoked the theme of creation found in Genesis.

The Pavilion of Judaism was purposefully located next to other pavilions sponsored by Canadian organizations and at some distance from the Israel Pavilion. Still, once the organizers of the Israel Pavilion came to terms with its presence, they recognized that a relationship between the two was imperative. As Dov Sinai, Consul General of Israel to Montreal, wrote to Allan Bronfman in August 1966 in a letter that was immediately relayed to the Pavilion of Judaism committee:

Attempts to separate and to alienate Jews of the world from Israel are frequent. Their aim is to represent us as two different and even antagonistic entities. The motives for these attempts – whether they be made by our Arab neighbours or by others, are only too clear: to widen the gap between the Jews of Israel and the Jews of the world, and, to weaken Israel... I should like to suggest, therefore, that that part of the Canadian-Jewish pavilion's exhibit dealing with Jewish history and culture convey the nature of the link with the Land of Israel through the ages; that this link be depicted not only as viewed today, but as seen by our fathers, and grandfathers; that the rebirth of Israel be presented as the realization of the dreams and aspirations of all generations of Jews in all countries of the world, as expressed in their prayers, writings, and lore composed wherever they lived; that the centrality of Israel in Jewish life today be duly reaffirmed.²⁹

Without doubt, the contemporary artworks in the Israel Pavilion and the Pavilion of Judaism re-affirmed the relationship between Israel and World Jewry through shared visual imagery and symbolic language. For example, the large-scale, illuminated menorah in Shmuel Grundman and Paul Kor's *The Ingathering of the Exiles by the New State*, on display in the Israel Pavilion, tied in with the Pavilion of Judaism's *The Procession* by the American artist Elbert Weinberg. The latter depicted a group of figures representing rabbis holding a menorah, the Torah, and a prayer book. Yigael Tumarkin's *Early Days*, a sculptural installation that symbolized the agricultural implements of pioneer life in the new State, in turn related to Ludwig Wolpert's bronze sculpture, an abstract image that visualized Isaiah's prophecy "And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares." *The Homecomers*, a wall mural by Naftali Besem recalled the rebirth of the Jewish nation through the arrival of a shipload of Jews from the ghettos of Europe, while *The Last March* by Nathan Rapoport suggested the spiritual devotion of Jews murdered in the Holocaust and the death of European Jewry.



Nathan Rapoport, *The Last March*, 1948. Yad Vashem, Jerusalem (installed 1976). Photo: Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Jerusalem, 1495/9.

Finally, the Israeli art shown at the Israel Pavilion and the Pavilion of Judaism connected the two narratives through shared themes and similar aesthetic principles. There were religious works like Shmuel Katz's *Synagogue* and Yossi Stern's *Rejoicing with the Torah*, and secular works such as a portrait of Israel's President Zalman Shazar by Ranan Lurie, which was made to honour Shazar's planned visit to the Pavilion of Judaism. An article in *Life Magazine* (June 30, 1967) titled "A Major's Long Ride to a Short War" describes that visit:

On the morning of May 23, Shazar arrived at the Israel Pavilion to open Lurie's solo exhibition of portrait paintings of distinguished Israelis, and later in the day, he and Lurie made their way to the Pavilion of Judaism, where Shazar unveiled his large portrait in a special ceremony. Four days later, Lurie, a combat officer in the Israeli army, left for the Six-Day War. When he was unable to book a seat on a plane from Montreal to his connecting flight in New York, Samuel Bronfman offered his private airplane. "Few warriors," writes Lurie, "ever went to their wars in such a convenient and comfortable way as I did."³⁰

According to Panofsky, the meanings we give images derive from our worldview, and even as the images change over time, our perceptions can remain the same. The Jewish Palestine Pavilion in 1939 and Israel Pavilion in 1967 presented a consistent worldview of Israeli nationhood in which works of art interpreted the past,

showcased the accomplishments of the present, and proposed a vision for a better tomorrow. In New York City in 1939, the Canadian connection to this worldview derived from the Zionist beliefs of Jewish Canadians, and at Expo '67 in Montreal, it was a result of the dedication of Canadian Jews to Israel as manifested in the Pavilion of Judaism. In both instances, contemporary works of art gave voice to the Jewish religion and to Israel's nationhood within the framework of its unique history, beliefs and achievements.

From the 1960s to the present, Israeli art has evolved in numerous directions, exploring political, historical, and religious issues through experimental practices in painting, sculpture, video, performance, and installation art. Nevertheless, this proliferation has seldom been displayed at recent fairs. Furthermore, the response of pavilion designers to the various themes of successive fairs has been essentially different from those of earlier fairs. At Expo Shanghai 2010, where the slogan was *Better City, Better Life*, the displays featured a range of pioneering developments along with traditional Jewish culture.³¹ Israel's pavilion had three distinctive areas: the Whispering Garden, consisting of an orchard with trees that murmured greetings to visitors; the Hall of Light, with a large screen featuring videos that highlighted technological achievements; and the Hall of Innovations, where visitors could speak with Israeli scientists, inventors, physicians and children via hundreds of audio-visual screens.

On the other hand, the theme of Expo Milano 2015 was *Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life*. In response, Israel named its pavilion 'The Fields of Tomorrow' and developed a mandate that would call attention to the country's achievements in agriculture, in particular its development of drip irrigation systems that improve crop yields.³² Outside the Pavilion, a female video character appeared to interact with the hosts, whose responsibilities included explaining Israel's reforestation program. Once inside, visitors found themselves in an exhibition space devoted to the history of agriculture in Israel, from its beginnings in Jewish Palestine to the present day. In a second room, videos showed how Israel helps other nations with new technological inventions that are revolutionizing farming worldwide.

In both Shanghai and Milan, Israel's pavilions consisted of multimedia presentations that visualized a nation whose history and achievements were the result of self-determination. This vision recalls the mission of the Bezalel School – to develop an artistic expression of national and spiritual independence. It also returns to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion of 1939, whose mandate was to create an exhibition that expressed Jewish political sovereignty, and the Israel Pavilion at Expo '67, which focused on the nation-state. Nevertheless, connections to World Jewry, in particular Canadian Jewry, surfaced in these pavilions as a result of both World's Fairs being held in North America.

Not surprisingly, mentions of the country's many connections to the Jewish Diaspora were absent in Shanghai and Milan. Only visitors in the know would have been aware that Israel's economic, social, educational, and scientific endeavours and successes were indebted to the financial assistance and multifaceted collaboration of Jews worldwide. Since its early formation as Jewish Palestine, Israel has attempted to promote a narrative of autonomous nationhood at World's Fairs. While Jews in the Diaspora have believed in a worldview of Israel that includes Jews everywhere, and have contributed substantially to Israeli's development, the country's own approach has been to design pavilions that show visitors a nation that is uniquely and independently Israeli.

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Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939); *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955).

2

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Loren Lerner, telephone conversation with Harry Stilman, August 7, 2017. For the architectural drawings of the proposed chapel and

exterior of the Pavilion of Judaism, see Harry Stilman, CAC Accession no. 86, Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University, Montreal.

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For the architectural drawings and notes on the interior, see Pavilion of Judaism, Expo 67, Max Wolfe Roth Archive, Pavilion of Judaism, Expo 67, no. 66954, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.

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Moses Rowell, "Expo '67 Pavilion of Judaism: A View of the Ages." Merrill Mueller interviewing Rabbi Shuchat, transcript, originally aired on NBC/ TV Network, November 5th, 1967. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress collection, Series ZA (chronological files), ZA1967, box 2, file 20D.

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The American works were borrowed mainly from the Jewish Museum in New York City with the assistance of Stephen Kayser, its former director and curator. Igor Kuchinsky, "Pavilion of Judaism – Expo '67: Preliminary Preparation for Programming. Report on Trip to New York/ Memo, September 7th, 1966." Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress departmental records, Series CA, box 92, file 1079: "Following the decision of the Planning Committee I went to New York with Dr. Stephen Kayser to have first-hand knowledge of every possible source for material in New York which could be used for permanent or changeable exhibits and for building a program for the Pavilion based on the chosen themes. Our operating plan included visits and research in the Jewish Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Modern Arts, the Guggenheim Museum, the Theological Seminary, the Yiddish Scientific Institute and a number of private collections, particularly collections of Jewish ceremonial arts... We also had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Cecil Roth, who is presently in New York, and Dr. Avrum Kampf, the new research director of the Jewish Museum, and to discuss programming ideas with them."

26

"Programme Committee for Pavilion of Judaism," Minutes of Meeting, August 10th,

1966. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress departmental records, Series CA, box 92, file 1079.

27

"Pavilion of Judaism," The Foundation for Judaism. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress collection, Series ZA (chronological files), ZA1967, box 2, file 20D.

28

A booklet *Pavilion of Judaism / Pavillon du judaïsme* (Foundation for Judaism, 1967) provides an overview of the exhibition themes and includes some photos of the works. For images of the displays at the Pavilion of Judaism and the Israel Pavilion see "Judea at Expo 67," a video version of a slide lecture by Reuben Lightstone, Ottawa, 1971, available at the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress collection. Carol Kotlarsky writes about *Judea at Expo '67* in the *Canadian Jewish News*, (Friday, September 17, 1971): "Combining the resources of the Ottawa Jewish community and his own considerable photographic and electronic skills, Lightstone has assembled a two-hour sound and light show, which he calls Judea at Expo '67... From the first roll of the drums that sets the stage with Hatikvah, music, together with the mood-setting narration, provides a compelling complement to the quickly-moving slides. These 35 min. slides take the audience from the Ten Commandments and the Temple in Jerusalem, through the exodus from Europe to modern-day Israel. Just as Hebrew psalms played such a vital part in the Temple ritual, so Yiddish song was an essential element in European Jewish life, it continues, along with the rousing Hebrew music that today is popular far beyond Israel to express every mood of Jewish life."

29

Dov Sinai to Alan Bronfman, August 1, 1966. Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress departmental records, Series CA, box 92, file 1079.

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Ranan Lurie, "A Major's Long Ride to a Short War," *Life* (June 30, 1967), 60A.

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Howard Goodman, "Shanghai's Israel Pavilion: Introducing the Chinese People to the Jewish Story," *Haaretz* (May 11, 2010), available

at <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/shanghai-s-israel-pavillion-introducing-the-chinese-people-to-the-jewish-story-1.289706>

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Loren Lerner, "Knafo Klimor Architects' 'The Fields of Tomorrow' Israel Pavilion at Milano Expo, 2015: The Challenges of Embodying Agricultural Sustainability in an Architectural Concept," unpublished paper, Association for Israel Studies Conference, Azrieli Institute of Israeli Studies, Concordia University (June 1, 2015).