**David Bekker – Artist, Identity, Place** - <http://davidbekker.com/>

The artistic oeuvre of David Bekker (1897-1956) expresses a mosaic of Jewish identities. His works tell the story of his turbulent life and the changes and transformations in the Jewish world, which Bekker both responded to and experienced.

David Bekker was born in Vilna, Lithuania and immigrated to Palestine with his family during the Second Aliyah (1911). The Bekker family played a central role in the early days of the Zionist settlement and in HaShomer, the Jewish defense organization in Palestine. Bekker’s three sisters, Zipporah, Kayla and Esther, married the HaShomer leaders Alexander Zaïd, Yisrael Giladi, and Meir Kozlovsky, while his brother Moshe founded a Jewish colony. Bekker studied art at the Bezalel Academy (1911-1914) in the early days of the institution under Boris Schatz and Abel Pann, and won awards for his work while still a student.

In 1914, Bekker shot Yaakov Weintraub, a groom, on his wedding night because Weintraub had broken off his engagement to one of Bekker’s sisters. Following the shooting incident Bekker was smuggled by HaShomer colleagues to Lebanon. From there he continued to Europe, where he designed medals for the king of Bulgaria and carved portraits in ivory for the royal family of Romania. While in Paris, Bekker was exposed to modern art. He continued to the United States, where he finally settled in 1926. He established a group of Jewish artists, today known as American Jewish Artist Club. Bekker took part in the New Deal’s Federal Art Project and exhibited in many exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago and other American museums. His works are found in many collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian Institute and in museums in Israel.

The art produced by Bekker cannot easily be classified, but two leading characteristics are his engagement with the diversity ­­­of Jewish existence and his interpretations of Jewish culture and tradition. He paints the world of Jewish Vilna, children learning with the rabbi and synagogue prayers, the heartbreaking death of his revered brother-in-law Alexander Zaïd, and the daily life of Jewish immigrants in Chicago. Through Bekker's eyes, Jewish existence is never tranquil. Bekker‘s art responds to the current events of his time. He organized an artistic gift by Jewish artists to celebrate the establishment of the Jewish autonomous region in Birobidzhan and he served as the art editor for the first Yiddish humor magazine in the United States. Bekker also painted scenes from the Bible, Midrash and Bialik’s poetry. He died in 1956 in Chicago.

This project will present, for the first time, Bekker’s life and works though an exhibition and an accompanying catalog. The retrospective of Bekker’s artistic works in a historical context will expand the boundaries of the artistic discourse surrounding Jewish American art and the connection between art and Jewish identity, immigration, the Zionist movement, and Israel.

**Exhibition List**

**The Art Institute of Chicago**

Artist Duo David Bekker and Copland C. Burg, The Room of Chicago Art, 1943

Group Exhibitions

*They Seek a City*: Chicago and the Art of Migration, 1900-1950, 2013

The 54th Annual Exhibition by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, 1950

The 56th Annual American Exhibition of Paintings, 1946

The 47th Annual Exhibition by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, 1943

The 53rd Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture, 1942

The 46th Annual Exhibition by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, 1942

The 21st International Exhibition of Water Color, 1942

The 20th International Exhibition of Water Color, 1941

The 44th Annual Exhibition by Artist in Chicago and Vicinity, 1940

The 19th International Exhibition of Water Color, 1940

The 5th International Exhibition Etching and Engraving, 1939

The 18th International water colors, pastels, drawings and monotypes, 1939

The 42nd Annual Exhibition by Artist in Chicago and Vicinity, 1938

*Art for the Public*, by Chicago Artists of the Federal Art Project, 1938

The 40th Annual Exhibition by Artist in Chicago and Vicinity, 1936

The 39th Annual Exhibition by Artist in Chicago and Vicinity, 1935

Additional Exhibitions

National Gallery of Art Washington D.C.

Oakton Community College, the Koehnline Museum of Art, A Gift to Biro-Bidjan, Permanent Exhibition.

Spertus Museum, American Jewish Art Club Golden Anniversary Exhibition 1928-1978, Chicago, 1978

College of Jewish Studies, (beside Chagall, Geller, Groper, Rubin etc.), 1963.

Annual State Fair, First Annual Exhibition by Artist of the Northwest Territory, 1947

The Covenant Club and Chicago Bnai Brith Council, First Annual Exhibition by Jewish Artist of Chicago and Vicinity, 1936

Awards

1. Three first prizes compositions contest Bezalel Art School, 1911 – 1912
2. Second prize for ivory carving, State Fair, Pueblo, Colorado, 1923
3. Honorable mention, International exhibition of Water Color Show, 1942
4. Martin B. Cahn Prize 53rd Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture of art Institute of Chicago

Collections

1. Art institute of Chicago
2. National Gallery of Art ,Smithsonian institute, Washington, DC
3. Massachusetts State Capitol
4. Museum of Art Phoenix Arizona
5. University of Oregon
6. Chicago Public Library
7. Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Israel
8. Petach-Tikva Museum of Art, Israel
9. Privet collections

Author of Two Books of Prints

1. Myths and Moods 1932
2. Two Worlds 1936

Education

1. Antokolsky Art School, Vilna, 1910
2. Bezalel Art School, Palestina, 1911
3. Denver Academy, Colorado, 1923

Commissions

* Ring engraver, designer of coins and medals for the royal court of Bulgaria 1914
* Ivory carvings for King Carol I of Romania.
* Two plaques for tomb of King Carol I of Romania.
* Ivory carving of President Warren G. Harding 1921
* Ivory carving of Governor C.H. Cox Mass. 1921
* Portrait of Nobel prize recipient in the realm of Physics, Pros. Arthur Compton.
* Art editor - *Peck and Schwebel*, Yiddish magazine.
* Designer of stained glass windows for synagogues in the U.S.A.

News Paper Citations

"David Bekker believes in the integrity of a Jewish art. In his native Russia, in Palestine, in various capitols of Europe and in the United States from the Atlantic seaboard to the Rocky Mountains, he has painted and etched his people, finding without any overlay strenuous seeking a unity of spirit that the Jews themselves are apt to deny. This spirit he has caught and fixed emotionally in his picture, in whatever locale he has been working. His Hebrew frankness is matched almost solely by Chagall, among Europe's contemporary geniuses. Picasso of Jewish Blood is a Spaniard; Matisse is French as was Pizzarro; Israels was Dutch..."

*(Chicago Daily News*, art critic, C.J. Bulliet, 1936)

"…..Bekker has etchings on display in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., and his ivory portraits include likenesses of Arthur Compton, Nobel prize winning physicist, and Warren Harding, the late President….."

(Chicago Daily Tribune, Robert Carmody, June 5, 1952)

CURRICULUM VITAE**: RONIT BEKKER BLANKOVSKY**

Email: [**rbekker@gmail.com**](mailto:rbekker@gmail.com)

Tel: 972-50-6627782

Citizenship: US, Israel

Place of Birth: Israel

Personal status: Married, mother of 2

**Summary**

* Wide organizational experience in the areas of Jewish and general arts and culture.
* Content development for artistic events including supervision of events from planning to full completion.
* Overseeing budgetary requirements and coordinating activities with external contractors
* Experience working with artists and artisans
* Planning and curetting exhibitions, production of catalogs, announcements and advertisements in a wide variety of media.
* Presently studying towards a masters degree in "Policy and Theory of The Arts" in The Bezalel Academy for Art and Design affiliated with The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

**Employment experience**

2015 **The Jerusalem Biennale for Contemporary Jewish Art**

This project included; the production of the catalog for the event, development of artistic events at the different sites such as; Tower of David- Museum of the History of Jerusalem, Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, Skirball Museum of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem.

2006 to 2015 **Bet Avi Chai** - A Center for Jewish and Israeli Culture in Jerusalem:

Director of Music and Art Department

* Initiation, planning and development of original content in the realm of art and culture, such as Piyyut Festival and Festival of Jewish Dance (*Machol ba-ruach*)
* Management of fulltime and temporary workers and producers including budgeting.
* Advancement of original content for external organizations such as-The JNF, Israeli Broadcasting Authority, Holon Institute of Technology and The Israeli Choreographers Association.
* Work with advertising and marketing personnel and preparation of material for advertising in various media.
* Establishment of study sessions of artists and artisans in varied artistic forms for the presentation of multifaceted production.

In charge of exhibitions in Bet Avi Chai Gallery

* Establishment of artistic committee
* Planning of yearly gallery calendar
* Responsibility for all stages of the exhibition
* Production of catalogs for all exhibitions
* Partial list of exhibitions: '*Piyyut, Emotion and Though', 'Deep-Rooted- 111 Years of the Jewish National Fund', 'Reap in Joy- The Harvest Festival on Kibbutz'*

2005-2006 **Musrara School of Photography and New Media**

* Responsible for producing exhibitions in The Morel Derfler Gallery
* Responsible for production of publications for the school including the production of The Musrara Mix Festival

2004-2005 **Chotam** – A company for developing and producing cultural events

* Production of cultural events and manager of advertising for the Israeli Book week

1999-2004 **Dada Center for Photography**

* Instructor of photography to a diversity of populations from secondary school age to retirees.

**Education**

2015-Present M.A, **Policy & Theory of the Arts, Bezalel Art Academy,** Jerusalem

2008-2012 B.Ed., **David Yellin Academic College of Education,** Jerusalem

2011-2012 Teacher's Certificate, **David Yellin Academic College of Education,**

Jerusalem

1995-1998 Certificate in photography, **Musrara School of Photography**, Jerusalem

1994-1995 Certificate in Silvercraft and Jewelry Design, **Meimad School of**

**Visual Arts**, Tel Aviv

1982-1986 **Regional Religious High School**, Kibbutz Yavne

**Articles in preparation:**

1. Various Identities in David Bekker’s art
2. Personal signatures and the wheel motif in David Bekker’s art

**Languages:**

Hebrew: Mother tongue

English: Fluent

**Community Contributions:**

1999 **Musrara School of Photography**, Awarded a special stipend   in recognition of excellence in social involvement and contributions to educational activities performed with high motivation and dedication.

1989- 1999 **Kibbutz Yavne**, Israel

1992 summer Staff**, Camp Moshava**, PA,

1989-1991 **Military Service I.D.F.** - secretary in Field Forces Command office