



Jacob and the Angel, 1987

THE GOLDEN AGE

SHLOMO KATZ

Curated by Matthew Garson

Roe Green Gallery
Jewish Federation of Cleveland



Shlomo Katz



Moses in the Basket, 1982, screenprint

Israeli artist Shlomo Katz’s career spanned from the 1970s through the early part of the 1990s. Katz combined several styles from different periods in art history into his work. His influences included the composition of Egyptian art, the medieval art found in churches and manuscripts, the colorful Renaissance and Persian art, as well as the decorative Art Nouveau from the beginning of the twentieth century. His artistic style and preoccupation with beauty and aesthetics is deeply rooted in the European culture in which he was born, while distancing him from what other contemporary artists created in Israel at that time.

CHILDHOOD

Katz was born in 1937 in Łódź, Poland to Ida Kaplan and Kalman Katz. After World War II broke out, his difficult journey to survive the Holocaust began as he fled from one hiding place to another. He was only two years old when Poland was divided between Germany and Russia. The family ended up in Bialystok, a Russian occupied town. In 1941, the Nazis invaded the town and murdered all the men, including his father who was just 36 years old. Katz and his mother escaped and found themselves in a Ghetto between Poland and Russia. They miraculously escaped again, the night before the Nazis killed all the Jews there. Soon they were lucky enough to find the Bielski Partisans, a group who rescued Polish Jews and the only Partisans who accepted women, children, and the elderly. They survived by spending eighteen months with the Bielskis in the forest.

Immediately after the war, in 1945, when Katz was eight years old, he and his mother immigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine. Shlomo went to live at Kibbutz Mlshmar Ha’emek where he attended primary and secondary school. Ida settled in Jerusalem.

Katz’s artistic nature began as a small child. According to his mother, young Shlomo often communicated by drawing. While at the kibbutz he demonstrated an exceptional talent for drawing and eventually became the official illustrator of the group’s newsletter as well as the decoration designer for cultural events.

In 1956 Katz joined the IDF, initially serving as a combat soldier in the Golani Brigade. Soon his artistic talent led him to the position of the unit’s draftsman and illustrator for their military newspaper. While in the army Shlomo met Michal and they married in 1960.

GROWTH OF AN ARTIST

In 1962, the couple moved to Paris so that Katz could study lithography at the École des Beaux-Arts. While there, their only daughter Gilly was born. After graduating, the family returned to Israel and settled in Holon.

After returning from Paris, Katz began painting small delicate works with oil on masonite board that depicted biblical stories with great detail and intricacy. The images were executed without any depth, but were filled with vibrant colors and a very smooth, clean texture. Katz’s work during this time ranged between the genres of illustration and decorative painting. He drew a strong influence from the style of illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, reflecting highly iconic fragmented drawings.

During the 1970s, Katz exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Canada. The scale of his paintings began to increase significantly in size. He began painting on large canvas and plywood panels and the subject matter began to shift. He started concentrating on individual verses within the biblical tales. The complexity of his earlier style disappeared, giving way to more theatrical scenes with expressive characters on a black background. Decorative patterns became increasingly prominent in his work, especially in the depiction of fabrics and garments.

In the 1980s, Katz’s artistic style evolved, and he began to include themes of Greek mythology. His painting became more graphic and ceremonial, which allowed him to focus more on dramatic interactions between people. Great depth and richness were added to his color palette, and he elongated the figures and gave them decorative expressions. The black background of his previous work was replaced by a large gold surface.

THE GOLDEN AGE

Katz developed an original technique of painting, by applying oil on top of gold leaf. The result was a combination of deep vibrant colors combined with a metallic surface that glowed and created an antique look which paid homage to Byzantine art. The garments covering the figures created an illusion of light with transparent layers and were decorated in a variety of patterns and textures. The vegetation functioned as a structural element in these paintings and were inspired by Persian miniatures.



Winter, 1984, screenprint

He then was able to translate this technique onto paper, using metallic gold inks to create screenprints. These are created by using a stenciled design and pressing each color individually to its exact location on the paper through fabric. This was a very tedious process which in Katz’s work could be repeated up to fifty times to create a single final print.

At the time, this method was the ultimate in modern printmaking. He produced several limited-edition portfolios using this process, including the three in this exhibition; The Passover Portfolio (1982), The Four Seasons Portfolio (1984), and The Psyche Portfolio (1988).

A LASTING LEGACY

In 1985, Katz was commissioned by the Falcon Foundation to create nine large paintings for permanent display in the Jewish chapel of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Each painting was based on a narrative, moral command, or proverb from the Hebrew Bible. They were divided into three themed groups: Brotherhood, Flight, and Justice. Today, these paintings are considered a National Treasure.

The featured piece of this exhibition, “Jacob and the Angel,” on the wall as you enter the gallery, is a version of one of the works in this series. It was donated to the Jewish Federation of Cleveland by Katz’s family in 2023. It was this donation that encouraged me to delve deeper into his work and curate this exhibition, which is the first in the world since his sudden death in March 1992, at the age of 55.

Katz’s work is included in numerous public collections and museums all around the world.

-- **Matthew Garson**, curator

THE GOLDEN AGE SHLOMO KATZ



Jacob and the Angel 1987
oil paint, gold leaf
on loan from the JFC's
Permanent collection



The Seder 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



Moses in the Basket 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
SOLD



The Burning Bush 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



Narcissus 1988
screenprint, 13" X 19"
NFS



Electra 1988
screenprint, 13" X 19"
NFS



Psyche and Eros 1988
screenprint, 13" X 19"
NFS



Oedipus 1988
screenprint, 13" X 19"
NFS



Let My People Go 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



Ten Plagues 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



The Exodus 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



The Ten Commandments 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



Winter undated
oil paint, gold leaf
SOLD



Winter 1984
screenprint, 23" X 16"
\$1,000



Autum 1984
screenprint, 23" X 16"
\$1,000



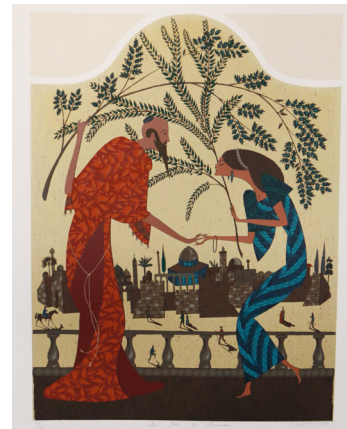
Summer 1984
screenprint, 23" X 16"
\$1,000



The Four Sons 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



Who Knows One...? 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



Next Year in Jerusalem 1982
screenprint, 28" X 21"
\$1,250



April 1990
oil paint, gold leaf
\$7,000



Spring 1984
screenprint, 23" X 16"
\$1,000

A complete edition of the Passover Portfolio, unframed, is available for sale.

For information, contact Debbie Yasinow at dyasinow@jewishcleveland.org or 216-593-2890.
Roe Green Gallery, Jewish Federation of Cleveland, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Building,
27501 Science Park Drive, Beachwood, OH 44122

Framing by Art Source, Inc, 23600 Mercantile Rd. #A, Beachwood, OH 44122, 216-464-0898



Electra 1988, screenprint



My Relationship with Beauty and My Father's Art

In her book *Necessary Losses* (1986), writer and poet Judith Viorst claims that “when we are infants, we accept our circumstances as normal because we have no basis for comparison.”

I had no basis for comparison. Ever since I was born, I was surrounded by beautiful art. My father was always there, creating more beautiful paintings. The studio was at home, available for me to wander through and examine the art and the creative process.

I understood early on that not every father is an artist and that my father's talent was somewhat unusual. But that knowledge didn't make me more excited or appreciative. To me, my father's talent, his artworks—they were a given. They were nice, I was proud of him and his paintings, but I never looked at them with fresh eyes or saw them in a new light.

Then, when I was 28, my father passed away suddenly at the age of 55. His death was shocking and left us in deep grief.

It was only after his death that I gained some distance from the art, and suddenly it dawned on me, like an epiphany: “Wow, these paintings are amazing! They are remarkably beautiful and unique! My father was so talented!”

After this realization, I felt embarrassed, ashamed, and very regretful. Was I blind? How come I had never seen this extraordinary phenomenon, which was in front of my eyes the whole time? How had I never told my father that he was an outstanding artist, that I admired his work and was amazed by his talent? And now, it was too late...

Since I am an only child, I again had no basis for comparison. Would a brother or sister have appreciated the art differently? Do all children of artists take their parents' work for granted?

Over the years, I have spoken to many children of deceased artists. They always describe a similar moment of enlightenment—the instant in which their gaze, perspective, and mind take a step back and look at the art (which was, until that moment, part of the unquestioned background of life) as something different, unique, meaningful. So, perhaps I wasn't alone in this experience. Still, the feelings of regret and missed opportunities continued to stay with me (some of them still exist).

My mother passed away about a year after my father, and I found myself responsible for his art. I was working full-time as an oncology nurse in a public hospital, raising two young daughters, married to a surgeon in residency...my plate was full.

I wondered: Should I take this on? Should I leave it and continue with my life on the path I had chosen? What would Shlomo have said or wanted? And did it really matter? Am I committed to my father's wishes? Or even to art itself?

Eventually, the sentiment that won is a notion shared by many artists' sons and daughters—that art is important. It's more important than our everyday life. It's more important than our individual choices. It's timeless, eternal. Important.

I realized that I would have to take on my father's legacy. But how? Where do I start? What do I say about these paintings? When I tried to present them to people from the art world, I was at a loss for words. So, I started studying art.

During my MA program in Contemporary Art Studies at the University of Liverpool, I was working on a paper when I

came across an essay by Kathleen Higgins titled “Whatever Happened to Beauty?” It explored the absence of beauty in modern art and the meaning of beauty in art. It was the first time I had encountered the word “Beauty” in any art-related text.

This was my second epiphany. I understood that beauty is the most prominent quality of my father's art. Yet it's a quality which is extremely hard to discuss, as it is deemed subjective (making it nearly impossible to define a painting as beautiful), and due to its problematic position in modern art (and in modern Israeli art, as I soon found out—even more so). Beauty was considered a trap, designed to draw attention to a specific work of art—probably for commercial rather than artistic purposes.

I decided to start researching and writing about the concept of beauty, and specifically beauty in art. It was in the late 1990s, when the subject was beginning to gain interest, and my final dissertation, “Beyond the Beholder's Eye”, explored this topic. In the introduction, I analyzed one of my father's paintings, *February*.

I now feel confident stating that his works are strikingly beautiful. Yes, it's subjective and personal, but I believe that anyone who looks at them will feel the same way—or at least understand that they were meant to be exquisite.

Since then, I have devoted myself to my father's art. It's been more than 30 years that I've been on this mission, with its highs and lows. I never gave up my career as a nurse and worked at the hospital until recently. I also continued my studies and completed a curatorial program last year. Along the road my daughter Netta, who grew up knowing the importance of art, joined my efforts. And this exhibition, a result of three generations' collaboration, marks one of the greatest moments of my journey.

-- Gilly Rosin

Opening September 2025

MEMORY: MOSHE GERSHUNI



*Curated by Matthew Garson and Katya Oicherman
Presented by the Cleveland Israel Arts Connection and
Mishkan Or Museum for Jewish Cultures*

Roe Green Gallery, Jewish Federation of Cleveland and Congregation Mishkan Or

“Memory” focuses on Gershuni’s book, “Kaddish,” a portfolio created in 1997. It includes 24 pages on which Allen Ginsberg’s poem the “Kaddish” from 1961 was printed with text in both English and Hebrew; the 1988 Hebrew translation by Nathan Zach was made in collaboration with Ginsburg. Gershuni’s exquisite prints incorporate images of wreaths, symbols of mourning in Western cultures. The portfolio, printed using black ink and gold-leaf, is quite simply breathtaking.



Cleveland native **Matthew Garson** is a fine art advisor, curator, and design consultant with over 30 years of experience. In the 90s, he was an assistant curator for Progressive Insurance’s Corporate Art Collection. In 2000, Matt established M%, a consulting firm specializing in collecting emerging contemporary artists and designing innovative spaces. He has owned galleries and produced art fairs in Cleveland, New York, and Miami, and has represented artists from all over the world. He is an original member of the Cleveland Israel Arts Connection and is currently chair of the Visual Arts Committee and the volunteer director of the Roe Green Gallery.



is generously sponsored by

Roe Green Foundation

The Leonard Krieger Fund of the



Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation



To schedule group tours or individual visits, email israelarts@jewishcleveland.org or call **216-593-2890**.

For information or to purchase works, contact Debbie Yasinow, dyasinow@jewishcleveland.org or **216-593-2890**.



Jewishcleveland.org/arts