

**THE FRITZ ASCHER SOCIETY  
FOR PERSECUTED, OSTRACIZED AND BANNED ART**



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2020**



We were looking forward to a busy year, with the exhibition “Fritz Ascher, Expressionist” opening on January 16 at the Joel und Lila Harnett Museum of Art of Richmond University in Richmond, VA - a wonderful museum partner with highly professional, creative staff. We presented a gorgeous and meaningful installation, planned diverse programming for the university audience as well as the general public, developed new educational materials and custom tailored tours for Richmond area schools, educational institutions and organizations, as well as a High School competition.

When COVID-19 hit, the exhibition was closed, and scheduled tours and programs were cancelled. We decided not to cancel our annual competition. After our virtual award ceremony, a mother of one of the winners wrote, “I have been searching for the words to express my gratitude ... Ori's observations ... had an incredible impact on our whole family. I believe his words will change [my child's] course in a meaningful and positive way.”

We reached out to our audience with digital programs: lectures, panel discussions and a conference, a digital exhibition and a digital engagement project were there to discover and learn, to discuss and connect, and to be part of our growing global community. The positive feedback encouraged us: “Thank you for making these difficult times easier on me with your eye opening zoom lectures,” wrote a regular attendee.

We thank our partners, especially our museum partners, for their flexibility and creativity. Together we were able to adjust our plans, overcome most of the many challenges and actually realize all exhibition and book projects!

We thank our sponsors Allianz Partners, the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in New York, and Reinwald GmbH for their unwavering support throughout.

We also thank the individuals who came forward to support us. Your support could not have been more important.

In gratitude, we look forward to continue discovering and growing with you, both virtually and hopefully soon again in personal conversation and in direct dialogue with original art.

Rachel Stern  
Director and CEO  
The Fritz Ascher Society  
for Persecuted, Ostracized and Banned Art





# EXHIBITIONS

**“Fritz Ascher, Expressionist” was on view at the Joel und Lila Harnett Museum of Art of Richmond University in Richmond, VA from January 16 until May 24, 2020.**

The exhibition was accompanied by a richly illustrated bi-lingual catalogue. A 22-minute biographical film played on loop in the exhibition. A manual for students was produced and made available at the museum and digitally on the FAS website. The Goethe-Institut Washington produced a German-language manual for students. A wide range of school groups, college classes and community groups were scheduled to visit the exhibition and had scheduled custom tailored tours. An international panel discussion and lectures took place, as well as receptions, gallery talks and tours, before the exhibition was prematurely closed on March 6, 2020 due to COVID-19.

Students from Richmond area schools were invited to submit an essay, a poem or an artwork reflecting on “Otherness,” using Fritz Ascher’s art or life as a stepping-off point. The winning entries were celebrated during the virtual exhibition closing event and award ceremony “Otherness and Hiding. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany” on May 5, 2020.



January 16, 2020

“Forgotten but not Lost: The German Expressionist Fritz Ascher (1893-1970)”

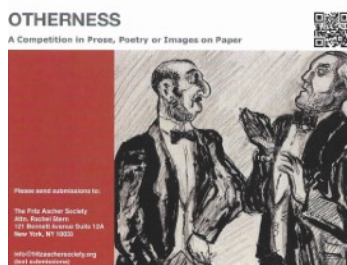
Lecture by Rachel Stern, curator of the exhibition



February 12, 2020

“Expressionisms: Germany and the United States”

International panel discussion with Elizabeth Berkowitz (New York), Eckhart Gillen (Berlin), and Ori Z Soltes (Georgetown University, Washington DC); moderated by Sarah Eckhardt (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond VA)



May 5, 2020

“Otherness and Hiding. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany”

Keynote: “Hiding: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany” by Prof. Marion A. Kaplan, NYU. Opening remarks by Richard Waller (director, Richmond University Museums) and Rachel Stern (director, Fritz Ascher Society). Award ceremony by Ori Z Soltes (Georgetown University).







**“Der Vereinsamte. Clowns in der Kunst Fritz Aschers (1893 – 1970)” [“The Loner. Clowns in Fritz Ascher's Art (1893-1970)”] was on view at the Forum Jacob Pins in Höxter, Germany from September 6 until November 29, 2020.**

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the artist's death, Forum Jacob Pins showed 40 paintings and works on paper by the Expressionist Fritz Ascher (1893-1970). The exhibition was co-organized by The Fritz Ascher Society for Persecuted, Ostracized and Banned Art and the Jacob Pins Gesellschaft Kunstverein Höxter e.V., and was co-curated by Rachel Stern and Julia Diekmann. It was accompanied by a bi-lingual, richly illustrated catalogue.

The exhibition for the first time showed Ascher's entire group of works on the subject of the clown, which occupied the artist throughout his life, and contrasted these works with the soul landscapes that dominated his work after 1945.

The exhibition was prematurely closed on November 1, 2020, due to COVID-19.



Introducing DigiFAS  
The digital engagement platform of the  
Fritz Ascher Society

**Come explore!**

<https://fritzaschersociety.org/digifas/>



# VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

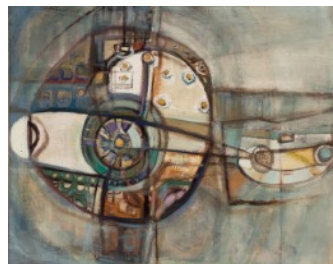
Reacting to the lockdowns caused by COVID-19, we developed virtual programs.



On March 26 we commemorated the 50th anniversary of Fritz Ascher's death with **"Housebound and Hiding. From Fritz Ascher in 1942 to Ourselves Today in 2020."** Looking at Fritz Ascher's life and work, Eva Fogelman (Psychologist), Ori Z Soltes (Georgetown University) and Rachel Stern (Fritz Ascher Society) discussed the psychological repercussions of having to go into hiding for a long stretch of time.

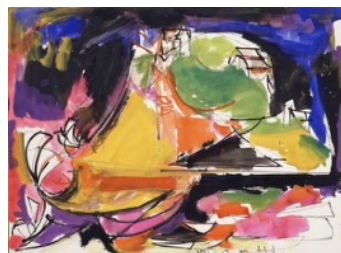
In June, we started **"Flight or Fight: Stories of Artists Under Repression,"** a monthly lecture series that investigates the fates and creative capacity of both well-known and obscure artists who were affected by German National Socialist rule. All lectures were recorded and are available on our YouTube channel.

All lectures were moderated by Rachel Stern, director of the Fritz Ascher Society.



June 3, 2020

**"More Surreal than Surrealism. Hedda Sterne's Emigration"**  
Sarah Eckhardt (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA)  
and Shaina Larrivee (The Hedda Sterne Foundation, New York)



July 1, 2020

**"Hans Hofmann (1880-1966): Coming to America"**  
Karen Wilkin, Independent Curator and Critic in New York



August 5, 2020

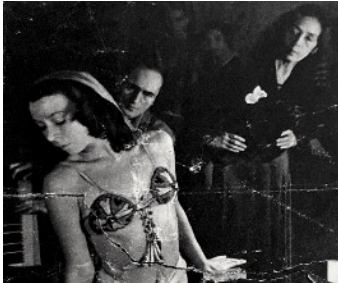
**"Jewish Identity and Communist Belief. Lea Grundig's path from Dresden to Palestine and back to Dresden"**  
Eckhart Gillen, Independent Curator in Berlin (Germany)



September 2, 2020

"The difficult case of painter Emil Nolde (1867-1956)"

Aya Soika, Professor of Art History at Bard College in Berlin (Germany)



September 16, 2020

"Dance under the Swastika: Mary Wigman and Gyp Schlicht (1917-2015)"

Sabine Rollberg, Board member of Freiburg University and Teaching Professor at the Freiburg University College for Liberal Arts and Sciences in Freiburg



October 7, 2020

"Painting as an Act of Resistance. The artist Felix Nussbaum (1904-1944)"

Anne Sibylle Schwetter, Curator of the Felix Nussbaum Collection at Felix-Nussbaum-House in the Osnabrück Museum Quarter in Osnabrück (Germany)



November 4, 2020, 12:00pm

"John Heartfield (1891-1968). His Political Engagement and Private Life in London"

Rosa von der Schulenburg, Head of the Art Collection at the Academy of Arts in Berlin (Germany)



December 2, 2020

"White Shadows: The Photograms of Anneliese Hager (1904-1997)"

Lynette Roth, Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum and Head, Division of Modern and Contemporary Art, Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge (MA)



Since October, the digital engagement platform **DigiFAS** houses diverse digital initiatives.

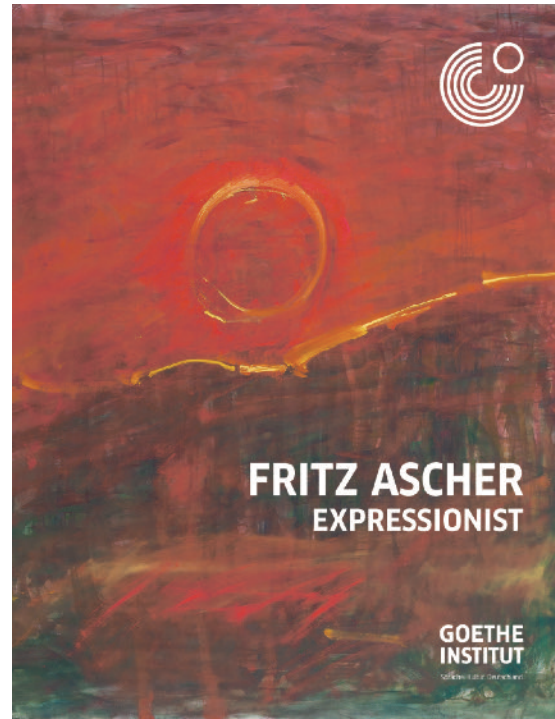
The **digital exhibition “Fritz Ascher: Themes and Variations”** allows a virtual tour of important examples from the oeuvre of the German Jewish Expressionist artist Fritz Ascher (1893-1970). These selected works are representative not only of critical moments in Ascher’s personal and artistic development, but also of key themes that occupied Ascher’s attention throughout his career. Through the links in every image description, and again on the website page dedicated to the exhibition, those key themes are explored in videos and interviews, photos and artworks, short introductions and scholarly texts.

The 2-week interdisciplinary digital engagement project **“Send in the Clowns”** explored and expanded the understanding of the role of the clown in society at large, as well as in Fritz Ascher’s oeuvre. The clown as a character between self-identification and stage, who (literally) masks his/her true feelings behind a façade of happiness provided a platform for discussions about contemporary concerns and challenges. The virtual discussion engaged an interdisciplinary group of experts and practitioners: current clowns, hospital clowns, a commedia dell’arte scholar, and a humanities scholar. In moderated virtual roundtables, Twitter events, and curated guest social media posts we explored and expanded our understanding of the role of the clown in society at large, as well as in Fritz Ascher’s oeuvre.

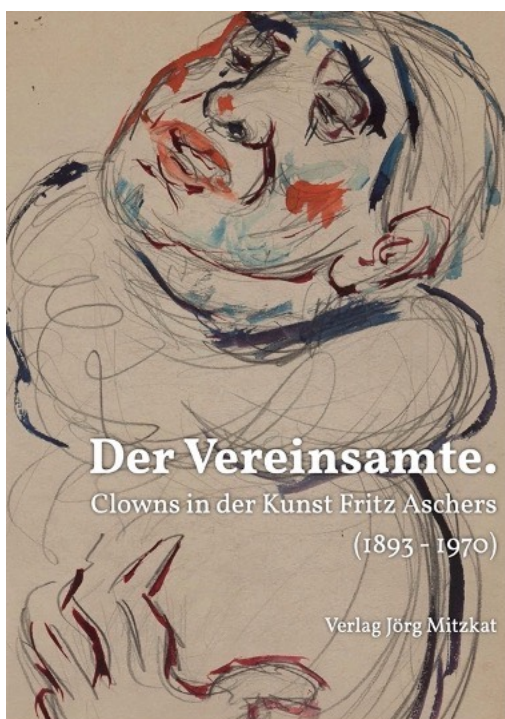
**“Trauma, Memory and Art”** explores how trauma and especially the Holocaust experience is remembered, and which role the arts play in expressing and/or overcoming trauma. Starting point and centerpiece of that investigation is the book *Immortality, Memory, Creativity, and Survival: The Arts of Alice Lok Cahana, Ronnie Cahana and Kitra Cahana*, which was published by the Fritz Ascher Society in December.

These virtual programs were communicated via the website, newsletters and event emails, Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram accounts and drastically expanded the audience. Our website had more than 110,000 visitors.

# PUBLICATIONS



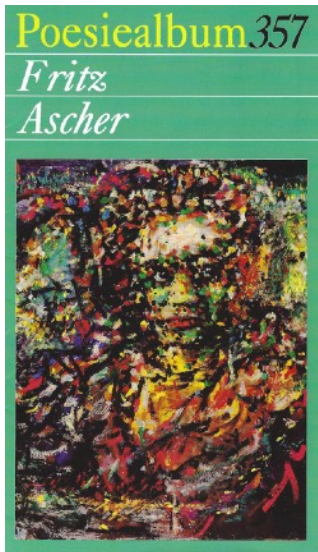
In January, a **manual for students** was produced and made available during the exhibition at the Joel und Lila Harnett Museum of Art in Richmond, VA, and digitally on the FAS website. The Goethe Institute Washington produced a **German-language manual for students** that was made available at the museum and digitally on the FAS website.



In September, **“Der Vereinsamte. Clowns in der Kunst Fritz Aschers (1893 - 1970)”** [“**The Loner. Clowns in Fritz Ascher's Art (1893-1970)**”] was published by The Fritz Ascher Society for Persecuted, Ostracized and Banned Art and Forum Jacob Pins (Holzminden: Verlag Jörg Mitzkat 2020). Edited by Rachel Stern and Julia Diekmann, the bilingual (German/English) exhibition catalogue includes essays by Jutta Götzmann, Rachel Stern and Ori Z Soltes.

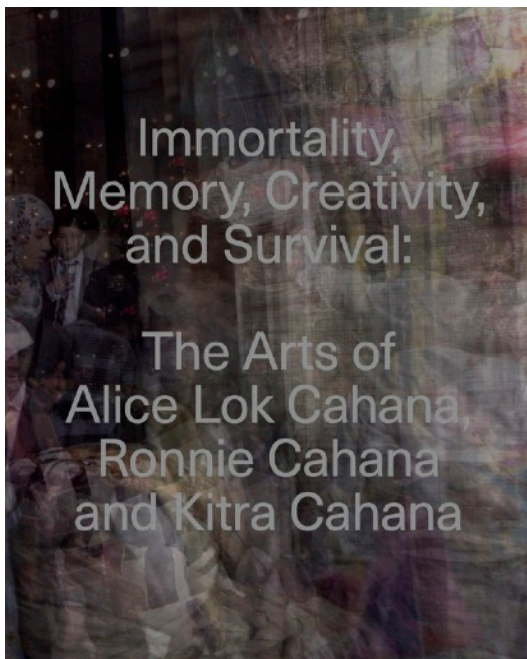


For Fritz Ascher, the ambivalence of the clown as an outsider in society was a central motive. Fritz Ascher found his Bajazzo motif during the First World War, a time of political, societal and social upheaval. In her introduction to this catalog, Rachel Stern traces Ascher's world as well as his artistic development and illuminates the further life of the persecuted and ostracized artist through the horrors of the Nazi regime. In the catalog essays, the authors Jutta Götzmann and Ori Z Soltes highlight Fritz Ascher's Bajazzo works in a focused way. In addition to Ascher's Bajazzo works, the catalog also includes depictions of landscapes created after 1945, which clearly show the personal and artistic break through experiencing persecution by the Nazi regime and survival.



In December, Märkischer Verlag Wilhelmshorst (Germany) published a booklet of **poems by Fritz Ascher** as **Poesiealbum 357** in the series "Ostracized Poets - Burned Books". The publication was edited by Rachel Stern.

This is the first publication of Fritz Ascher's poems, which were written in hiding from persecution by the Nazi regime 1942-1945.



Also in December, the Fritz Ascher Society published "**Immortality, Memory, Creativity, and Survival: The Arts of Alice Lok Cahana, Ronnie Cahana and Kitra Cahana.**" The publication was edited by Ori Z Soltes and includes essays by Eva Fogelman (New York), Natan P.F. Kellermann (Jerusalem, Israel) and Larry R. Squire (San Diego).

Starting with the Holocaust survivor Alice Lok Cahana, the book investigates three generations of the Cahana family and their art in the context of biological and psychological research, which allows a deep understanding of how trauma and especially the Holocaust experience is remembered.

This interdisciplinary publication offers an important contribution to the fields of Holocaust studies, art history, history, psychology, and biology.

In November, we added the webpage **“Trauma, Memory and Art”** to DigiFAS, and organized virtual events that communicate the content of the book:



November 9, 2020

**“Trauma, Memory and Art”**

An interdisciplinary virtual conference with Ori Z Soltes (Washington DC), Larry R. Squire (San Diego CA), Natan P.F. Kellermann (Jerusalem, Israel) and Eva Fogelman (New York)  
Moderated by Rachel Stern (New York)



November 18, 2020

**“Immortality, Memory, Creativity, and Survival:**

**The Arts of Alice Lok Cahana,  
Ronnie Cahana, and Kitra Cahana”**

Lecture by Ori Z Soltes (Washington DC)  
Moderated by Rachel Stern (New York)



November 25, 2020

**“Legacy and Creativity:**

**The Filmmaking and  
Photography of Kitra Cahana”**

Kitra Cahana in conversation with Ori Z Soltes  
Moderated by Rachel Stern (New York)