

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



**PROGRAM
REPORT
2021**



Thinking about this past year, I am most grateful for the interest from and conversations with our global community. We learned about the stimulating effect of our virtual programs and the comfort of our community, so we continued to take our core mission into the virtual space, where we now discuss, publish and exhibit artists whose life and work were affected by the German Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945. With our work we commemorate their artistic achievements, introduce work that may have been forgotten to a broad audience, and initiate an active dialogue about individuality and artistic integrity in response to conditions of extreme duress and to political tyranny.

We embarked on two large research projects:

With the renown musicologist Prof. Dr. Matthias Henke and Siegen University (Germany), we brought his 20+ year research about the music patron Emmy Rubensohn (Leipzig 1884-1961 New York) and her cultural network to the famed Gewandhaus zu Leipzig (Germany), in an exhibition accompanied by a 365 page bi-lingual book publication. Exhibition and book will travel in the years to come.

The other large research project very much resonates with today's challenges. Due to the Nazi and other totalitarian regimes in Europe, the first half of the 20th century experienced the largest number of migrants in recent history, second only to today. "Identity, Art and Migration" investigates the experience of seven Jewish European artists who were forced to abandon their country of origin and migrated to the US. Leading scholars wrote about the effect that migration had on the selected artists. Scholars of immigrant psychology, linguistics, US immigration history and contemporary immigrant artists provided interdisciplinary context for our investigation, which was virtually discussed in eight expert talks and two conferences, which are part of a virtual exhibition launched in February 2022.

The virtual nature of most 2021 projects allowed us to tap into our international network and expand collaborations with scholars, institutions and organizations from the US, Germany, Austria, the UK and Israel.

Thanks to these collaborations, we were able to offer a wide range of virtual programs to our exponentially growing audience, including virtual lectures, expert discussions and conferences and a virtual exhibition to discover, learn and discuss. Questions, thoughts and comments from the audience enriched these events, and also took place on our social media platforms, including facebook, instagram, and twitter. We watched and discussed documentaries by renown filmmakers and producers from the US and Canada, among them "The Last Days" by Steven Spielberg, which had just become available on Netflix.

Featuring Alice Lok Cahana, it continued our investigation into “Trauma, Memory and Art.” Virtual events were recorded and are available on our website and our YouTube channel.

We are proud of our community’s contribution to the Largest Digital Memorial to the Victims of Nazism. As the first US partners of the Arolsen Archives (Germany), we actively contributed to the Archive’s digitalization efforts, showing that #EVERYNAMECOUNTS.

We thank our institutional and organizational partners, and 2021’s main sponsors, the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in New York, Reinwald GmbH, the Siegen University and Allianz Partners for their support. And we very much thank the growing number of individuals who generously support us.

In 2022, we plan to build on the virtual projects we developed over the past two years:

- “Flight or Fight: Stories of Artists Under Repression”
<https://fritzaschersociety.org/flight-or-fight/>
- “Identity, Art and Migration”
<https://migration.fritzaschersociety.org>
- “#EVERYNAMECOUNTS Arolsen Archives Crowdsourcing Initiative”
<https://fritzaschersociety.org/digifas/everynamecounts/>
- “Trauma, Memory and Art”
<https://fritzaschersociety.org/trauma-memory-art/>

We look forward to continue developing virtual events, and to return to in-person events and exhibitions.

Thank you for being part of our community.

With gratitude and well wishes,

Rachel Stern

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



EXHIBITION AND BOOK PUBLICATION

“Curtain Up for Emmy Rubensohn! Music Patron from Leipzig” was on view at Mendelssohn Foyer of famous Gewandhaus zu Leipzig in Leipzig, Germany from November 10 until December 19, 2021

Emmy Rubensohn (1884-1961) had a tremendous impact on the music world of the first half of the 20th century while she stayed in the background encouraging and connecting, supporting and enabling musicians and visual artists, maintaining and renewing her network even while fleeing Nazi persecution from Kassel via Berlin to Shanghai and New York.

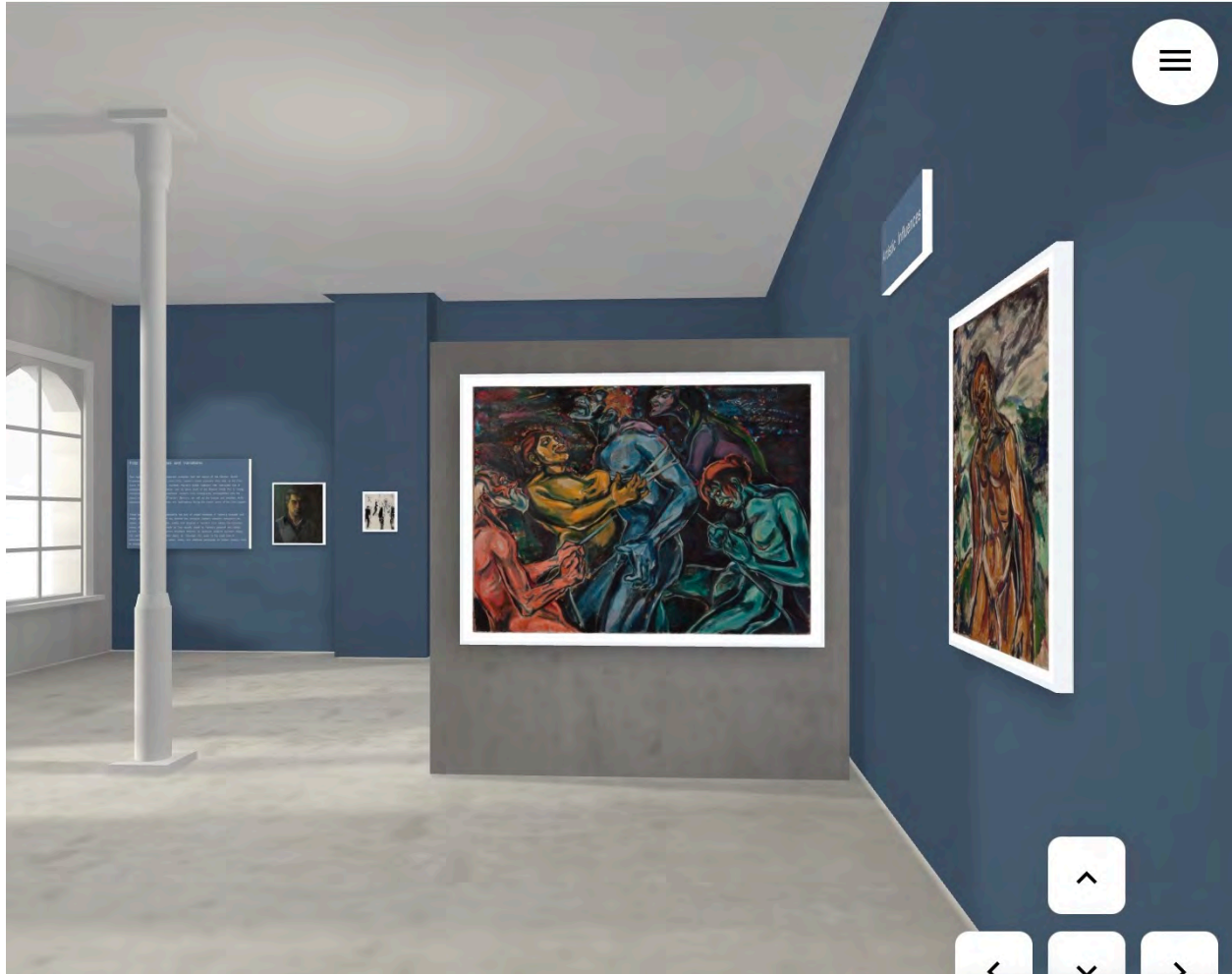
She was a music patron, concert manager, salonnière, and letter writer. Born in Leipzig in 1884 to the Jewish Frank family of entrepreneurs, she was passionate about going to concerts as a child, especially at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and collecting autographs of prominent artists of her time.

After marrying Ernst Rubensohn in 1907, she moved to Kassel, where she and her husband made their house a cultural meeting place that was frequented by the likes of conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and painter Oskar Kokoschka. Thanks to a "residence scholarship", the composer Ernst Krenek was also able to complete his opera "Jonny spielt auf" here, which had its world premiere in Leipzig in 1927 before becoming a worldwide success.

After the National Socialists came to power, Emmy Rubensohn founded the Jewish Cultural Association in Kassel and organized dozens of concerts, for example with the conductor Joseph Rosenstock and the pianist Grete Sultan. It was not until 1938 that the Rubensohns decided to emigrate, fleeing to Shanghai in 1940 and finally to the USA in 1947. At all stations of their lives, Emmy Rubensohn and her husband maintained an artistic circle of friends, who they often supported, even after his death in 1951. This circle included the likes of violinist Roman Totenberg, as well as conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos or Alma Mahler-Werfel, and can be reconstructed by virtue of their surviving guest book.

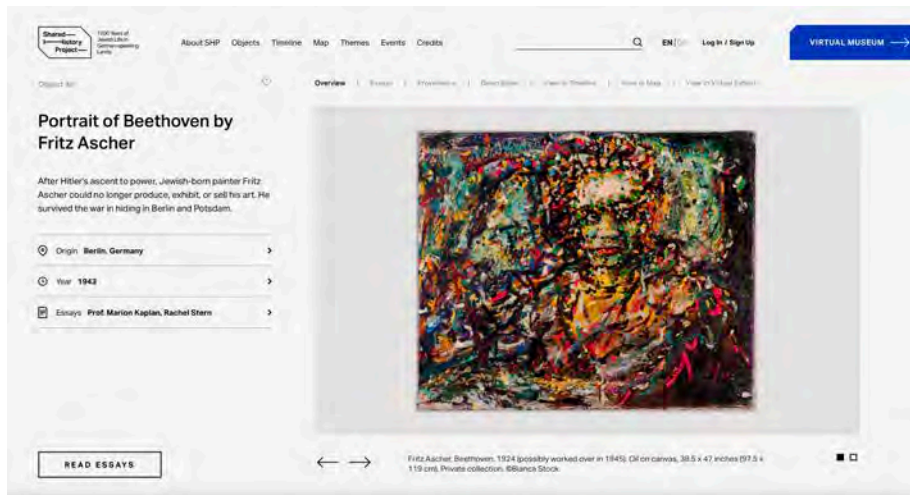
The exhibition was accompanied by a richly illustrated, bi-lingual book. A two-day conference “Ernst Krenek and Leipzig” celebrated the life-long relationship between Krenek, the Rubensohns and Leipzig, and an exhibition focussed on the Frank Family history in Leipzig at Ariowitsch-Haus Leipzig accompanied the exhibition, as well as lectures and musical performances. A short film in the exhibition showed the story of Emmy Rubensohn’s discovery. The project was an important part of the festival year “1700 Years of Jewish Life in Germany” and was led by Prof. Dr. Matthias Henke (University of Siegen). It was made possible by #2021JLID – Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland eV with funds from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Building and Home Affairs (BMI), by the Ernst Krenek Institute Krems, Reinwald GmbH Leipzig and the University of Siegen.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING



The **virtual exhibition “Fritz Ascher: Themes and Variations”** was extended to January 30, 2022. (<https://fritzaschersociety.org/fritz-ascher-themes-and-variations/>).

It 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.



Virtual exhibition **"Shared History"** by the Leo Baeck Institute New York

Portrait of Beethoven by Fritz Ascher

Essays by Prof. Marion Kaplan and Rachel Stern

The virtual project and exhibition tells the story of Jews in central Europe using 58 objects, beginning with an edict from Constantine the Great in 321 C.E. that granted the Jews of Cologne the right to hold public office and concluding with a contemporary artifact in 2021. Each object illustrates how German-Jewish history is deeply interwoven with the peoples and countries in this region. A book featuring all objects will be published.

(<https://sharedhistoryproject.org/object/portrait-of-beethoven-by-fritz-ascher>)

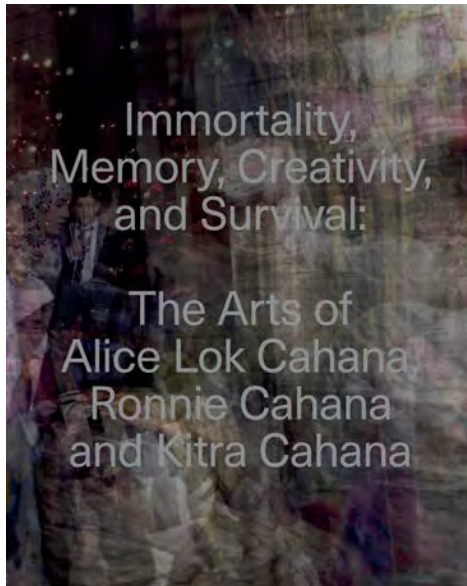


Audiotour **"Jewish Life in the Grunewald Villa Colony,"** Museum of the City of Berlin (Germany)

Fritz Ascher, Alfred Kerr and Konrad Latte under Nazi persecution

The audio tour follows the footsteps of three Berliners with a Jewish family background who managed to survive the period of Nazi terror and anti-Semitic excesses: the theater critic Alfred Kerr, who had to go into exile in 1933, the musician Konrad Latte, who became involved with Fake Papers and fled underground and the painter Fritz Ascher, who survived in hiding from 1942.

(<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/juedisches-leben-villenkolonie-grunewald>)



We built on last year’s book publication and continued and expanded our **interdisciplinary investigation** into the relation between **trauma, memory and art**. 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. (<https://fritzaschersociety.org/trauma-memory-art/>)



April 28, 2021
 Worlds Apart: Antithetical Jewish Experiences in the Twentieth Century
 Book discussion of “Immortality, Memory, Creativity, and Survival: The Arts of Alice Lok Cahana, Ronnie Cahana and Kitra Cahana” and “Growing Up Jewish in India” with Dr. Ori Z Soltes, Washington D.C. In partnership with the Center for Jewish Civilization, Georgetown University



June 10, 2021
 Alice Lok Cahana – Beyond ‘The Last Days’: Familial Continuity, Creativity, and Immortality
 Panelists: Michael Berenbaum (Historian), Michael Z Cahana (Son), Ken Lipper (Producer), Ori Z Soltes (Book Editor)
 Celebrating the release of the just remastered, Academy Award®-winning documentary, *The Last Days*, presented by Steven Spielberg and USC Shoah Foundation.



September 13, 2021
 Memory, Empathy and Image: The Art of Luise Schröder (Germany) and Kitra Cahana (Canada)
 Discussing the work of two young artists — Kitra Cahana, from Canada; and Luise Schroeder, from Germany — whose photography, and documentary filmmaking and other work have been informed by an acute awareness of the myriad complications that have beset diverse individuals and groups within the complexities of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century world.



We continued the highly successful **monthly Zoom lecture series “Flight or Fight. stories of artists under repression”**, which 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.



January 6, 2021

Biala (1903-2000): The Rash Acts of Rescue and Escape
Jason Andrew, representing the estate of Biala and Julia K Gleich,
Choreographer, both New York



February 10, 2021

Excluded and yet entangled in two dictatorships: The political
constructivist Oskar Nerlinger
Eckhart Gillen, Independent Curator in Berlin (Germany)



March 3, 2021

Becoming Jewish: The Sculptor Benno Elkan (1877-1960)
Christian Walda, Museum for Art and Cultural History in Dortmund
(Germany), with Wolfgang Weick, Retired Director of the museum and
Ori Z Soltes, Georgetown University in Washington DC



April 7, 2021

Cartoon Crusader: Arthur Szyk's War against Nazism
Steven Luckert, PhD, Senior Program Curator, Levine Institute for
Holocaust Education at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,
Washington DC



May 5, 2021
Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980): The Making of an Artist
Rüdiger Görner, Professor of German with Comparative Literature
at Queen Mary University of London (UK)



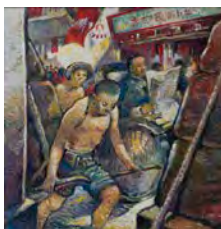
June 2, 2021
Jeanne Mammen (1890-1976) - A Life Dedicated to Art
Dr. Martina Weinland, PhD, Commissioner for Cultural Heritage at
the Museum of the City of Berlin in Berlin (Germany)



July 7, 2021
Becoming Gustav Metzger: Uncovering the Early Years
Nicola Baird, Research Officer and Curator, Ben Uri Gallery and
Museum, London (UK)



August 4, 2021
Sculpting the Light: Avant-Garde to Auschwitz and Beyond. Moissei Kogan
(1879-1943)
Helen Shiner, Oxford (UK)



October 6, 2021
Through the Prism of Time: John H. Less (1923-2011) and His Visual
Impressions of Holocaust Refuge in Shanghai
Steven Less, son of the artist in Heidelberg (Germany) and Hannah-Lea
Wasserfuhr, PhD Candidate at the Center for Jewish Studies in
Heidelberg, Heidelberg (Germany)

Identity Art and Migration

Responding to today's unprecedented numbers of migrants, our **virtual project "Identity, Art and Migration"** investigated the experience of seven Jewish European artists who were forced to abandon their country of origin, or remain in hiding for years, in response to Nazi policies in effect from 1933 to 1945. These six artists: Anni Albers, Friedel Dzubas, Eva Hesse, Rudi Lesser, Lily Renée and Arthur Szyk emigrated to the United States, while one, Fritz Ascher, stayed behind in Germany, hiding in a basement for three years. These artists' lives and work address the multi-layered concept of identity and the particulars of its expression from slightly different angles. In scholarly essays, weekly virtual discussions and two virtual conferences between October 13, 2021 and January 5, 2022, and a multi-layered virtual exhibition launched in February 2022, we explored how these wrenching experiences affected their sense of who they were, and the art they made.



October 13, 2021
Eva Hesse (1936–1970): *Returning to the Source?*
Helen Charash (sister) and Ori Z Soltes, PhD, Georgetown University, Washington DC



October 20, 2021
Rudi Lesser (1901–1987): *The Forgotten and Rediscovered Artist*
Lillie Johnson Edwards, PhD, Professor Emerita of History and African American studies at Drew University in Madison, NJ and Ori Z Soltes, PhD, Georgetown University, Washington DC



October 27, 2021
Remembering Friedel: An Intimate View of Friedel Dzubas (1915 – 1994)
Karen Wilkin, Independent Curator and Writer, New York and Sandi Slone, Artist, New York



November 3, 2021

From Sea to Shining Sea: Anni Albers in America (1899–1994)
Laura Muir, Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge MA and Ori Z
Soltes, PhD, Georgetown University, Washington DC



November 10, 2021

The Cartoon Crusader Comes to America: Arthur Szyk's Battle
against the Nazis in the New World
Steven Luckert, PhD, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,
Washington DC and Irvin Ungar, Arthur Szyk scholar



November 17, 2021

Lily Renée: From Refugee to Renown (born Vienna 1921)
Featuring Trina Robbins, Comic Historian and Artist, San
Francisco CA, Adrienne Gruben, Mexican-American director of
the film "Lily" and David Armstrong, producer



December 1, 2021

Conference: Identity and the Arts

Expert Panel: Libby Copeland, Award-winning journalist and author;
Deborah Tannen, Georgetown University (Washington DC); Ori Z
Soltes, PhD, Georgetown University (Washington DC); Oksana
Yakusho, PhD, Psychologist and Psychoanalyst (Santa Barbara CA)



December 8, 2021

Fritz Ascher (1893–1970): Coming Back to Life

Elizabeth Berkowitz, PhD, Art Historian currently serving as the
Executive Director of the American Trust for the British Library,
New York and Karen Wilkin, Independent Curator and Writer, New
York



December 15, 2021

Conference: Artists Migrating to the United States, In and Beyond the
Nazi Period

Expert Panel: Rebecca Erbelding, PhD, United States Holocaust
Memorial Museum, Washington DC; Katya Grokhovskaya, Artist and
Founding Director, The Immigrant Artist Biennial (TIAB) New York;
Ori Z Soltes, PhD, Georgetown University, Washington DC; Moderator
Rachel Stern, Fritz Ascher Society, New York NY

In addition, throughout the year we featured **innovative projects** and responded to important anniversaries in Holocaust history with **unique virtual events**:



January 19, 2021
“Mischlinge Exposé” by Carolyn Enger
Live from Museum of Jewish Heritage

Carolyn Enger is a pianist based in the greater New York City area, with roots reaching back to Breslau, now Wroclaw, Poland. Her *Mischlinge Exposé* brings to light the stories of Mischlinge—a derogatory term used by the Nazis to describe people with both Jewish and Aryan ancestry—like her father and godmother, interwoven with the music and writings of prominent German Jewish converts and people of “mixed race”. In partnership with the Museum of Jewish Heritage New York.



January 27, 2021
Between Art and Record Keeping – Artistic Representations of the Holocaust

Lecture by Ori Z Soltes, Washington DC
In honor of



March 10, 2021
Building the Largest Digital Memorial to the Victims of Nazism: The Arolsen Archives (Germany)

Floriane Azoulay (Director) and Giora Zwilling (Deputy Director of Archives), Arolsen

As the first US partner in the crowdsourcing initiative “everynamecounts”, this event starts our ongoing partnership with the Arolsen Archives.

(<https://fritzaschersociety.org/digifas/everynamecounts/>)



May 27, 2021
LIVE DATA ENTRY EVENT to help build the world’s largest digital monument to victims of the Holocaust: the Arolsen Archives’ #everynamecounts.
Elizabeth Berkowitz, Digital Interpretation Manager of the Fritz Ascher Society
With the Fort Tryon Jewish Center (FTJC) in New York



May 26, 2021

Screening of “Undying Love.” Stories of Romance, Marriage and Rebirth in Displaced Persons’ Camps

Followed by discussion featuring Helene Klodawsky, Film Director (Canada) and Sabine Rollberg, Expert of Documentary Film (Germany)



June 14, 2021

Weaving Resilience: Shoshana Comet’s Tapestries. An Interactive Virtual Tour by Ted Comet, Honorary Associate

Executive Vice President of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and husband

In partnership with DOROT, an innovative leader in designing intergenerational programs, supportive services and opportunities that enhance the lives of older adults.



July 21, 2021

New Frontiers of Provenance Research: The Mosse Art Research Initiative (MARI)

Prof. Dr. Meike Hoffmann, Director of the Degenerate Art Research Center, the Mosse Art Research Initiative (MARI) as well as the Abraham Adelsberger Art Research Project (AAARP) at FU Berlin (Germany)