

President's Foreword

Art and science share a great deal in common. Both are the fruit of curiosity and creativity – two essential qualities of human culture and the human spirit, and both have a huge impact on our spiritual world and everyday life.

The Hebrew University is an important factor in the fields of science and arts in Israel. Many of our programs explore art, literature, cinema, and music, as well as the connections between art and other fields of knowledge.

The strong connection between science and art is manifested in many ways throughout the university. One such example can be seen in the activities of the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Sciences. The Center conducts joint activities with artists on the theme of the brain: It organizes actual meetings between artists and scientists, publishes collaborative books, and holds temporary exhibitions in its art gallery, among others. Similar activity takes place in other units too. For instance, units across the university host different artists for long residencies, and the gallery on the Mount Scopus Campus displays different and diverse temporary exhibitions.

This book represents another aspect of the close connection between the university and art – the physical aspect. Over the years, the university has had the privilege of receiving many artworks, some of which are displayed on the two campuses. This is an extensive and impressive collection. In celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the university's founding and to mark the strong link between science and knowledge and art in general, and between the university and art in particular, we present eighty-three of the collection's 2,500 artworks in this book. As demonstrated by the texts that accompany each work, the members of our community have a special relationship with these pieces, which are a constant presence in our lives.

Many people have been involved in the creation of the book. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Michal Mor, the university's art curator, without whom this book would never have come into existence.

Prof. Asher Cohen

President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Introduction: The Campus as a Gallery – Artworks and Stories from The Hebrew University

The space around us as we walk through the different campuses of the Hebrew University is a testament to a century-old vision. At the turn of the twentieth century, prominent Jewish scholars and leaders – among them Prof. Zvi Hermann Schapira, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Prof. Mordechai Martin Buber, Dr. Berthold Feiwel, and Prof. Albert Einstein – envisioned a “Hebrew university,” the university of the Jewish people. The university’s past is reflected in its historical buildings, its landscape architecture, and in the many works of art in it. All these highlight the realization of the vision to create “a place where the universality of the human spirit manifests itself,” and serve as a major spiritual center that imparts multicultural, innovative, and original knowledge.

The national-academic endeavor of founding a university was accompanied by the incorporation of various artworks over the years. This book focuses on these works of art, which were purchased or donated, and have graced the university spaces for the past one hundred years. Out of more than 2,500 works kept in the university’s art collection, about eighty were chosen to be featured in this book, designed to honor the donors and supporters of the university in Israel and worldwide. The selection of the works in the book was made in collaboration with the university’s Artifact Committee, with the aim of giving expression to as many styles and disciplines on the various campuses, with representation to both Israeli and international art.

The commentaries that accompany the artworks in the book were written in two voices, inspired by Plato’s notion of “dialogue”: the practice of observing, contemplating, and exchanging opinions, which lies at the basis of the university. In the spirit of this tradition, I asked members of the faculty, administrative staff, and students to explore the university, choose an artwork that speaks to them, and write about it without any prior knowledge. The writers embraced this task with relish, and sometimes, we can also find in their words compelling stories and personal perspectives. Each of these texts follow my introduction to each piece. I wish to express my gratitude to all the writers for their willingness, conversations, deliberations, candidness, and choice of words.

The evolution of the Hebrew University is entwined with the different ways in which visual culture was incorporated in it; it is reflected in the architecture, the landscape architecture, and the placement of the art objects that are the focus of this book. The history of enriching the Hebrew University in Jerusalem with works of art began even before its inauguration. In 1924, several art aficionados – the Zionist Commission treasurer Siegfried van Vriesland, architect Richard Kaufman, writer Yehoshua Radler-Feldman, the director of the National Library Prof. Hugo Bergmann, and the sculptor Avraham Melnikov – wanted to adorn the walls of the university with Reuven Rubin's painting **First Fruits** (1923), which at the time was displayed in one of the exhibitions at the Tower of David in Jerusalem. While this piece, which expresses a Zionist message in an avant-garde style, was not purchased in the end, this initiative marks the nascence of the vision to create an art collection for the university.

The first artworks documented in the university were featured in exhibitions that were championed by the institution's administration and held in the Student Club in 1938 – about a year after it opened. These exhibitions were apparently arranged at the initiative of Dr. David Werner Senator, who at the time served as the administrative director of the Hebrew University, and the ethnographer Dr. Erich Brauer. At the opening reception of the inaugural exhibition, Dr. Senator stated that the purpose of the exhibitions at the club is to enrich the students' cultural world and to encourage them to take an active part in the cultural events that the university administration wishes to hold. He expressed hope that such exhibitions would become a permanent feature at the university, which would serve as a prolific cultural hub that would influence people in the university and beyond it. However, this hope would have to wait before it could be realized, due to the War of Independence and the move from Mount Scopus to a temporary residence in Jerusalem city center.

It was not until the early 1950s, after the decision to establish a new campus on Givat Ram (known today as the Edmond J. Safra Campus), that the visual domain received a prominent place and a significant boost. The Campus Development Committee planned the new grounds as a garden city, with low buildings surrounded by open green areas, based on a hierarchy of spaces: an expansive public plaza at the center, flanked by perpendicular rows of buildings on either side that envelop the open space. This was the golden era of the collaboration between institutions for higher education and

architects. In addition to architectural and landscape design, the university administration made a point of including artworks in the planning, dedicating one percent of the campus' foundation budget to this objective. In 1956, the architects approached renowned artists to submit proposals for decorating the buildings. This reflected the cultural trend that prevailed in Israel in those years, which positioned the artistic decoration of public buildings as an architectural-artistic style in its own right.

A committee of prominent architects and art professionals was established to review the submitted proposals. The diverse outlooks of the committee members reflected the desire to encourage intellectual pluralism and a productive discussion on the aesthetic space that was taking shape on campus. According to the protocol of the discussions, the selection criteria of the works were based on artistic merit and suitability to the architectural structure and its contents, with a preference to works of distinctive universal and modern artistic principles.

The first pieces fall under the category of wall art: stone and ceramic reliefs tailored to the buildings. In keeping with the dominant artistic trend in Israel at that time, most of these works were created by the young and irreverent New Horizons (*Ofakim Hadashim*) artists, characterized by colorful and formal abstraction. The outcome turned the university into a prolific cultural hub, and with the inauguration of the new complex in 1958, non-student visitors would also come to see the artworks displayed throughout the university.

In the following decades, there were two factors that revitalized and enriched the university's art collection. The first, chronologically, was the return to Mount Scopus after the Six-Day War. The landscape architects initiated the incorporation of artworks throughout the restored Mount Scopus Campus. They wished to foster the environmental development of the campus by planning paved plazas and "green lungs." The design of the plazas unifies the different parts of the campus through the use of local vegetation, rockeries, and granolithic paving. Once the landscape architects' work was completed, the university administration could turn its attention to the installation of public artworks. For this purpose, attempts were made to formulate a master plan for the aesthetic design of the campus, and in the early 1970s, the university created a curatorial position and appointed the academic Artifact Committee. In the minutes of their discussions during the 1970s and 1980s, we can find deliberations on the criteria that should be established for accepting, acquiring, and placing artworks, issues concerning the artistic quality of the

artists and the works, dialogues with donors, and so forth. Another objective set for the curatorial activity was to reinstate the display of exhibitions, and the first to do so was the curator Ahuva Passow-Whitman. In 1985, together with Bernard Cherrick, head of the Organization and Information Department (today's Division for Advancement and External Relations), she organized an exhibition of artworks in the hallways of the Mount Scopus Campus, as part of the celebrations of the university's sixtieth anniversary. This exhibition featured prominent active Israeli artists from all over the country, who presented works of high artistic value, in a range of styles, themes, and materials. Titled *Art Promenade*, the exhibition comprised sculptures, drawings, murals, and paintings displayed throughout the campus, and their placement corresponded with the space in which they were exhibited.

The university administration encouraged the continuation of this valuable activity, and recognized the contribution of the artworks to those who attend and visit the university. The artistic and curatorial activities were also expanded for the benefit of teaching, research, and marketing projects. One example is the display of the natural history collections – which until then were not accessible to the public – or of research in the exact sciences, throughout the university. The outcome was a world of knowledge and culture that unfolded before the university community and the wider community, beckoning everyone to explore, learn, and enjoy.

The artistic activity in the university has since expanded from placing items across its campuses, to setting up thematic exhibitions, both permanent and temporary. In 2000, the vision of the heads of the art history department led to the inauguration of a dedicated gallery on the Mount Scopus Campus – a new home for creativity and culture. The establishment of the art gallery was made possible thanks to the Max and Iris Stern Foundation, and in 2003 the gallery was named after Max and Iris Stern – art dealers who owned galleries in Europe and the United States, whose collection was donated to universities and museums worldwide. Another initiative aimed at fostering the connection between science and art was led by researchers at the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Sciences, with the opening of the Martine De Souza-Dassault Brain Art Gallery.

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Since its foundation, the design of the space has been a priority and an integral part of the university. The academic and spatial transformation of

the institution has always involved discussions about its physical and artistic design. The university administration is dedicated to creating an inviting academic environment that regularly showcases its art collection to the public. With that, it strives to benefit its students, faculty, and administrative staff, and to acknowledge the generosity of its benefactors. The works that enhance the spaces of the university in its various sites reflect the art of the time, and it is my hope that in the future much thought will be dedicated to the selection of the works as well as to their placement in a harmonious and inviting manner.¹

This book would not have been published if it were not for the encouragement of the president of the Hebrew University, Prof. Asher Cohen, who saw artistic value in its publication on the occasion of the university's centenary celebrations. I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to my partners on this journey: to the researchers, administrative staff, and students who elucidated the artworks; to the members of the Artifact Committee – Prof. Moshe Sluhovsky, Prof. Gal Ventura, and Dr. Noam Gal – who accompany the decisions concerning the acceptance of artworks, and support my work as the university curator; to Magnes Press: the director Jonathan Nadav, the production manager Ram Goldberg, and the editor Benny Mer, who honed and refined the texts; to the designers of the book, Magen Halutz and Adam Halutz; to the keen-eyed photographer Elad Sarig; to Maya Shimony for the beautiful English translation; and to my colleagues who have read, commented, and illuminated my way, Maya Tsemach and Hila Mor Zehavi. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Dr. Michal Mor

Curator of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Further reading:

Michal Mor, "The Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a Display Space (1918–2000)," doctoral dissertation, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2022 (in Hebrew).

Dalia Manor, *Art in Zion: The Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine*, London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005.

David Kroyanker, *Planning and Architecture 1953–2000: The Edmond J. Safra campus Givat Ram*, Jerusalem: Academ Press, 2002 (in Hebrew).

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More information about the artistic and curatorial activities across the various campuses can be found on the Hebrew University's curatorship website at art.huji.ac.il.