



THE MAGNES COLLECTION OF JEWISH ART AND LIFE

ANNUAL FUND REPORT 2020

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Lazar Krestin (1868–1938)
[Birth of] Jewish Resistance
Vienna, Austria; 1905
The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life



Dear Friends,

As I write this, hoping that you and your family have managed to stay healthy, I look back on a year in the position of interim director at The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life. We have endured a pandemic-induced shutdown for most of that time, but that has not slowed the pace of our work. It certainly altered our workflow: While our doors had to be closed to the public, our staff continued to care for, document, and catalog the many thousands of items that have been collected over the decades. They also are planning future exhibitions and arranging loans of items from The Magnes for display elsewhere. Above all, we have used this time to deepen our understanding of the many stories that live within the collection.



Thanks to extensive digitization of the collection prior to the shutdown, we have been able to continue our work and make much of the collection available online. We have also taken advantage of the Zoom platform to present talks and discussions about precious items in The Magnes Collection, and to meet with our friends and donors.

In Fall 2020, Curator Francesco Spagnolo and Assistant Curator Shir Gal Kochavi presented the weekly series, *Zooming In*, with invited special guests. We also met with some of you in smaller groups to talk about The Magnes' history of collecting art and artifacts, and to discuss the museum's future. If you are interested in joining a small group virtual tour, please let us know by contacting Rana Burroughs (burroughsr@berkeley.edu).

We have exciting plans for the future. Upcoming offerings include a retrospective of exhibitions since The Magnes joined UC Berkeley, Jewish art from Islamic lands, and photographs from the vast Roman Vishniac archive. But before any of those are mounted, you will have the opportunity to visit or revisit the fascinating exhibition, *In Real Times, Arthur Szyk: Art & Human Rights (1926-1951)*, when we open our doors again. We are hoping that will be possible in Fall 2021. In the meantime, many elements of current and past exhibitions are accessible online on our website, which will soon sport a completely updated look thanks to generous donor support.

What follows is an overview of our primary activities in 2020 supported by generous gifts to The Magnes Annual Fund. I hope it offers a view onto our work during the pandemic, which has never stopped, always keeping an eye to the day when we could open our doors again.

In closing, I offer a hearty thank you to our generous donors for enabling us to continue our work and keep our virtual doors open.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Brinner
Esther and Jacques Reutlinger Director
The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life
Professor, Department of Music



THE MAGNES COLLECTION

2020 EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMS

In Real Times. Arthur Szyk: Art & Human Rights (1926-1951)



Arthur Szyk (1894-1951)

Madness

New York, 1941

Taube Family Arthur Szyk Collection,
The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, 2017.5.1.70

In late January 2020, The Magnes presented the exhibition, *In Real Times: Arthur Szyk and Human Rights*. The opening events were quickly followed by shelter-in-place orders, and, since then, the exhibition has been perfectly preserved to reopen as soon as in-person visits are allowed.

Born into a middle-class Polish Jewish family, Arthur Szyk (Łódź, Poland, 1894 – New Canaan, Connecticut, 1951) lived a life framed by two world wars, the collapse of European democracies, and the rise of totalitarianism. A refugee, he ultimately settled in the United States in 1940. Throughout his work as a miniature artist and political caricaturist, he used motifs drawn from religion, history, politics, and culture, pairing extraordinary craftsmanship with searing commentary on a diverse range of subjects including Judaism, the American Revolution, the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the founding of the State of Israel.

This exhibition showcases over 50 original works from the Taube Family Arthur Szyk Collection, acquired by The Magnes in 2017. It also includes two interactive

workstations. Visitors can explore Szyk's miniatures in high resolution, reconstructing the artist's gaze through a "digital magnifying glass," able to remix and repurpose individual elements, characters, and motifs drawn from the Collection to create new cartoons. This work is projected onto large wall surfaces within the gallery, and can be instantly published online, giving the contemporary exploration and reinterpretation of Szyk's art a broad audience "in real time."



Taube Family Arthur Szyk Collection

Since March 2020, The Magnes has continued to consolidate digital assets relating to both the collection and the *In Real Times* exhibition, sharing them online via our Flickr.com account and the online database. During this period, the curatorial staff completed the cataloging of all original artwork in the collection, along with all of the archival collections of Arthur Szyk and the Szyk family. To date, the online catalog of The Magnes (magnesalm.org) lists 438 items from the Szyk collection, complete with descriptions and digital images. Our staff also worked at a steady pace to catalogue additional archival materials (primarily the Arthur Szyk Society and Historicana collections), ephemera, and books in the collection.



Opening Reception, February, 2020

Invisible in Plain Sight

Invisible in Plain Sight is an exciting new project supported by the Walter & Elise Haas Fund to research and document the Islamic art in The Magnes' holdings. Several Magnes Annual Fund donors have also supported this work. Following the completion of this work, an exhibition, *Invisible in Plain Sight: Islamic Art in Jewish Museum Collections*, will be organized and mounted. The ultimate goal of the project is to explore the intersections of Jewish and Islamic art, and to make relevant pieces in The Magnes' collection available to scholars and public audiences across the globe.

In Fall 2020, a team of curators and UC Berkeley students, led by Francesco Spagnolo, met weekly via Zoom to work on issues related to collection research, data management, and exhibition. These projects were carried out successfully, despite the challenge of not being able to work in person with collection objects.

The curatorial team managed an inventory of over 1,350 collection items from which significant examples are being selected and researched in depth, ahead of their online display. Curatorial work aimed at identifying overarching exhibition themes proved particularly fruitful. This planning work



Maurice Bismouth (1891-1965)
[*Old Man with Prayer Book*]

Djerba, Tunisia, ca. 1920

Max Eis Collection,
The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life

highlighted several themes, including social, cultural and religious dynamics that characterize the development of Jewish material culture in the lands of Islam. Among these themes is the manifestation of “rootedness” (and belonging) of Jewish culture in predominately Muslim societies, the sharing of visual cultures, practices in adorning sacred texts, and responses to colonial and post-colonial cultural dynamics.

We are planning to present an exhibition based on this project in Spring 2022. Let us hope that conditions will permit that!



Hanukkah Lamp

Morocco, 19th-20th centuries

Purchase with funds provided by Seymour Fromer, honoring 40th wedding anniversary of Fay and Sol Friedman, The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, UC Berkeley, 75.250



Zooming In: Weekly Curatorial Conversations from The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life



After shelter-in-place orders went into effect in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, curators Francesco Spagnolo and Shir Kochavi began offering weekly presentations by Zoom to share insights and connections emerging from The Magnes Collection. Throughout the series, guests joined in to explore Jewish art and life, one object at a time. Begun in August 2020, this half-hour program covered a wide and fascinating range of subjects, including:

- Hebrew Amulets: Practical Magic (and Health Insurance) in Early-Modern Times
- Ethnic Diversity at the University of Padua (Italy, 17th century)
- Nature in the Song of Songs: An Early 20th Century Carpet from Jerusalem
- Postcards in the Global Jewish Diaspora
- Theresa Ehrman and the Stein Family from San Francisco to Paris
- Historian Koppel Pinson in Europe (1945-1946)
- Pushing Buttons, Old and New, with artist Nicki Green
- Female Representations in Synagogue Textiles
- Birth Certificates in Cloth: Ritual Textiles for the Jewish Life Cycle
- Gourmet Ghettos: Modern Food Rituals (Fall 2014 Exhibition)
- The Inventory Project (Fall 2012 Exhibition)

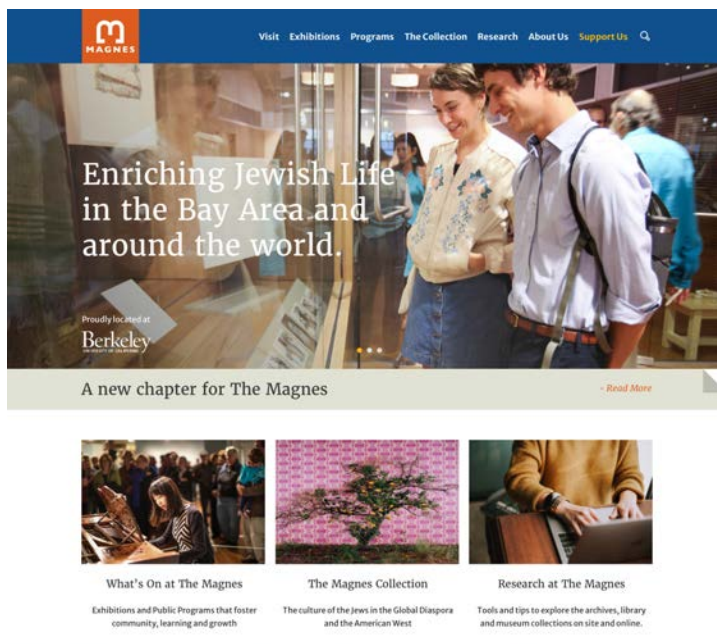


“Zooming In” resumed in Spring 2021 on a bi-weekly schedule from March to early May. The curators presented highlights from past exhibitions at The Magnes, offering a ‘sneak peek’ at “Time Capsules. The Magnes: 10 Years at UC Berkeley,” our next exhibition, which is tentatively scheduled to open in Fall 2021.

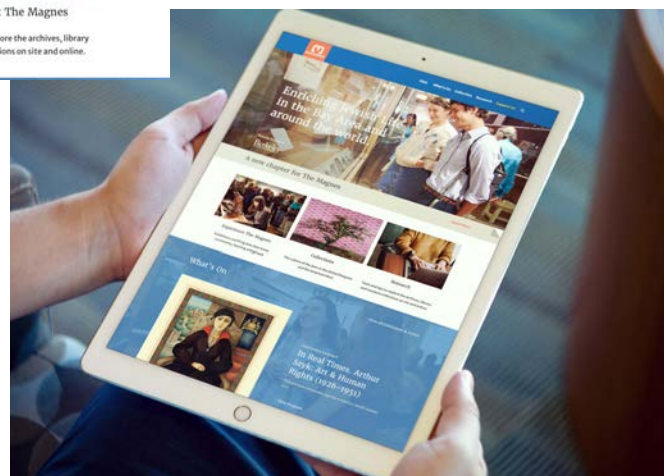
THE MAGNES WEBSITE

Redesign and Launch

The Magnes is undertaking a complete redesign of its website, with the generous support of Taube Philanthropies and matching gifts from the Helzel family, Barry Cohn, and the Fred Isaac Foundation. Given the expansion of our audience and community to more countries around the world, along with an increased reliance on virtual engagement during the pandemic, this is a timely and crucial project. An improved website will serve all of our stakeholders, including members of the public, students and faculty at UC Berkeley, and many educational institutions across the globe. We look forward to announcing the launch of the renewed website this summer.



Preview of magnes.berkeley.edu redesign



BUDGET

July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

Beginning Balance **\$1,332,685**

REVENUES AND OPERATING TRANSFERS

Private Gifts for Current Use. \$579,975

Sales and Services \$147,254

Total Revenue **\$727,229**

Campus Support. \$8,805

External Transfers. (\$6,371)

To / From Other Divisions \$22,597

Total Operating Transfers **\$25,032**

TOTAL REVENUE AND TRANSFERS **\$752,261**

EXPENSES

Academic Salaries & Wages. \$30,059

Staff Salaries & Wages \$408,090

Employee Benefits \$178,169

Total Compensation **\$616,318**

Supplies, Materials and Equipment \$11,793

Scholarships and Fellowships \$5,097

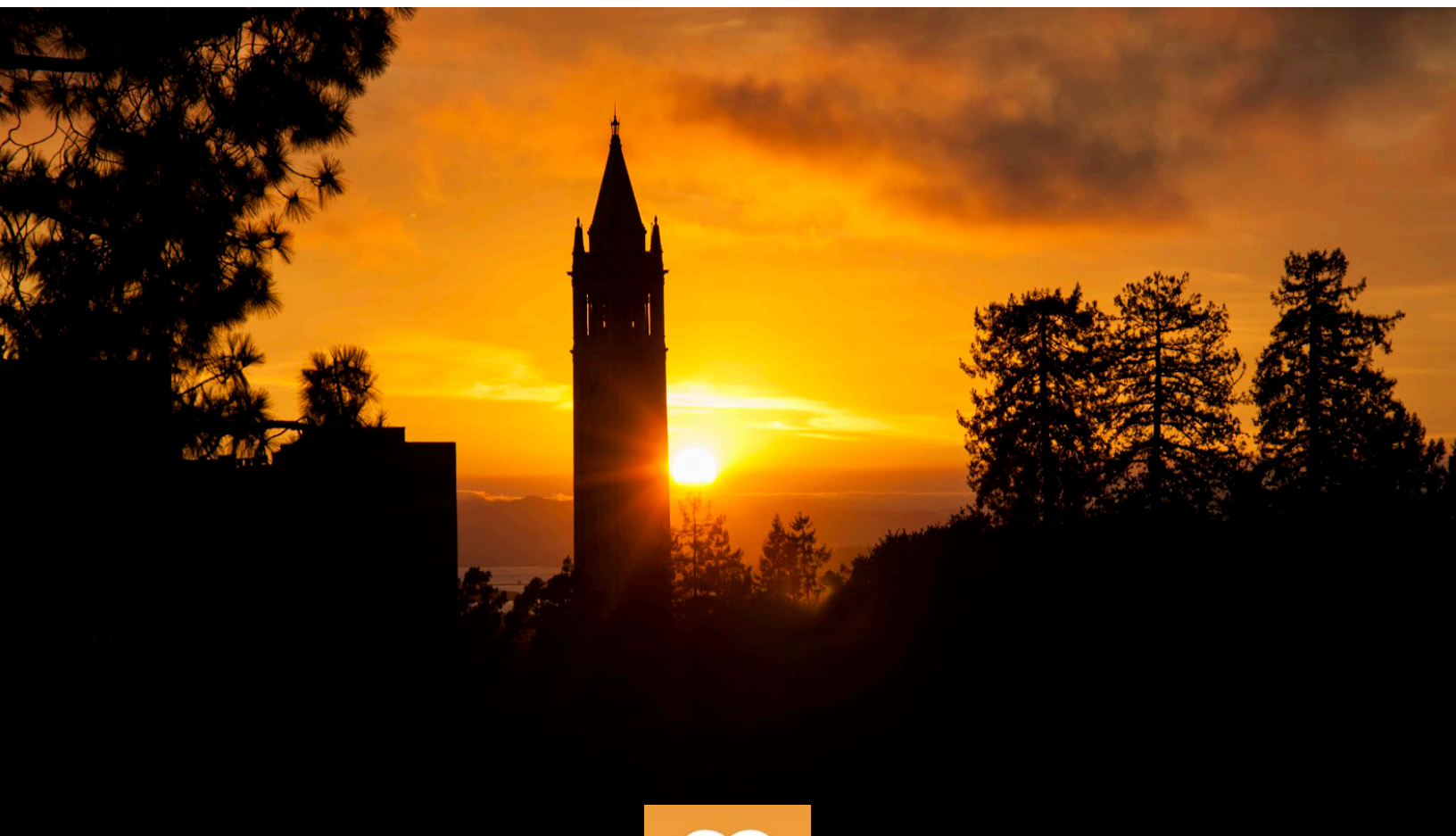
Other Operating Expenses \$367,741

Total Non-Compensation **\$384,632**

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$1,000,950**

Net Operating Surplus / Deficit (\$253,566)

Changes in Net Assets **(\$4,877)**



THE MAGNES COLLECTION OF JEWISH ART AND LIFE

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