

Jewish Artists in Pittsburgh

By H. NORMAN SHOOP

That the last fifty years has seen centuries of progress in the art of painting among Jewish students, and that the latent ability of the Jew in that branch of the fine arts is rapidly forcing itself to the surface, despite traditional racial opposition, is the conclusion reached after a hurried survey in this sadly-neglected field.

In every other branch of the fine arts the Jew has shown his strength and skill. He has demonstrated beyond a doubt that the heart of the Jew appreciates and loves the finer things in life. Music has found its greatest exponent in the Jew. The world's music masters were Jews. The masterpieces in music were of Jewish origin.

And yet we cannot find a Rembrandt or a Rubens in Jewish history. One wonders why the Jew missed the lure of the palette and canvass. His keen, artistic sense of charm and beauty found no outlet, apparently, in painting or sculpture.

It is not particularly well known that the religion of the Jews prohibited painting, sculpture and the like. There were a few artists, but their work was not distinctively Jewish, de-

ciated Artists of Pittsburgh in Carnegie Institute.

These other Jewish artists were represented at the exhibition:

William Wolfson, son of the well-known restaurant proprietor; A. H. Gorson, one of the leading landscape painters in the United States; William Shulgold, who recently moved to New York, and Charles Rosen, of New York, who submitted one of the most valuable paintings in the exhibition.

Mr. Gorson, who also recently moved to New York, submitted his "Down the Monongahela," a Pittsburgh river scene, which critics declared one of his best efforts, if not his masterpiece. All of the paintings of Shulgold, Gorson, Wolfson and Rosen received favorable mention from the critics. Mr. Gorson had another portrait study on exhibition. His head of "Yetta" was declared "notable" by one of the press men.

These are some of the latest achievements of Jewish artists in Pittsburgh. Hundreds have won fame and fortune throughout the country and in Europe. A New York boy recently won the Prix de Rome through the Academy of Science there. Many Jewish artists who studied under the late Prof. Sparks, of the fine arts department, Carnegie Institute of Technology, have established enviable reputations throughout the land. Wolfson, Shulgold, Rosen and Gorson were students of Prof. Sparks, who also taught some of the leading non-Jewish artists of today.

To obtain an idea of the important events in the career of Mr. Rosenberg, it would be well to begin with his school days.

He was just donning long trousers when Mr. Rosenberg first showed his natural ability for the artistic. Following his graduation from high school, Mr. Rosenberg entered the fine arts department at Carnegie Institute, and graduated in 1915. In 1916 he entered the Academy of Design in New York, and studied there for one year. Upon his return he submitted a portrait study of one of his schoolmates, and won second honor in the Associated Artists' exhibition of that year. Since that time he has continually proven his individuality in portrait studies, and at the present time is considered by fellow artists as one of the ablest American portrait painters.

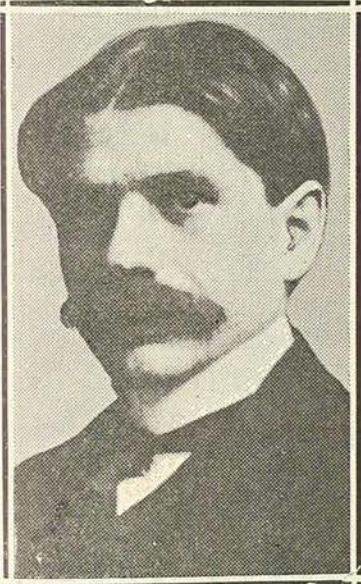
One of his best portrait studies was submitted to the international jury of twelve men during the 1919 International Art Exhibition in Pittsburgh and was accepted. Mr. Rosenberg realizing his life's ambition. For it is indeed an honor for an artist to have his painting accepted at the International Exhibition. Half of the jury must come from Europe, according to laws of the International Exhibition. Only three Pittsburghers, including Mr. Rosenberg, were permitted to hang their work in the galleries during the 1919 exhibit. His work received favorable comment from art critics.

In 1917, Mr. Rosenberg submitted a painting to the annual art exhibit of the Associated Artists. This is just what one critic had to say: "The second prize was awarded to Samuel Rosenberg for a portrait executed with vigor and spontaneity, which, besides the technical dash and bravura, shows much keen character delineation. The young painter has a group of five paintings, any one of which would put him in the class of master craftsmen."

In the 1920 exhibit of the Associated Artists Mr. Rosenberg won first honor for his "P. J. and Myself." One of the newspapermen wrote at that time:

"Mr. Rosenberg has had all his art training in Pittsburgh with the exception of a year spent in New York, where he attended the National Academy of Design classes, and haunted the museums. At the Metropolitan and Hispanic museums he discovered Spanish Art. Here he found intensity of life, finding vital expression on canvass by means of a few colors, skillfully handled the power conveyed with such economy of means influenced the young painter. He began experimenting, not with invariable success, as even 'P. J. and Myself,' in this exhibition demonstrates, but always acquiring knowledge.

"In fact, these experiments determine his more successful paintings because they prepare him technically for such excellent canvases as the 'Portrait,' awarded first honor. Mr. Rosenberg likes the violin almost as much as painting, and this picture is indeed pervaded by a sense of tone. The Spanish influence is frankly evi-



A. H. Gorson

pending wholly upon the customs and characteristics of their adopted land. And so one looks with keep gratification upon the revival of painting among modern Jews. Thousands of Jewish students are studying fine arts in colleges and universities throughout the country. The Academy of Design in New York has scores of Jewish students.

The names of Jewish artists are among the prize-winners in art exhibits all over the country. They have not only shown noteworthy talent, but in many cases, unusual originality. They have proven themselves adept in figure, landscape and other subjects. The world of art has really realized and recognized the ability of the Jewish artist as a sculptor and painter.

Is it necessary to state that Pittsburgh Jews were visibly gratified to read last week that Samuel Rosenberg, well-known Pittsburgh artist, had achieved the highest honor that any Jewish artist has won in this city?

His portrait study of Christ Walter, the Pittsburgh artist, was awarded a "Friend of Pittsburgh Art" prize, the highest award for the most meritorious figure picture in the twelfth annual exhibition of the Asso-



Samuel Rosenberg

dent in the restrained intensity. Doubtless he has been drawn to Spanish painting because of his admiration for austerity. He tells of visiting the monastery in Loretto, and delighting in the simplicity of the life there. Mr. Rosenberg is only 24 years old, and his sane vision promises a future, if accidents outside his painting do not force him to sacrifice his integrity."

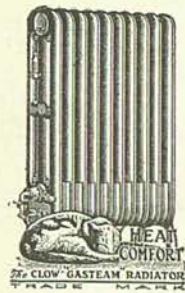
Another paper said:

"The first prize painting by Mr. Rosenberg represents a young man in artist's smock, head bent in deep thought and an expression of intense concentration on the face. The whole thing carries with it an air of aloof sadness, and the face shines out from the dull background with a vividness that is startling."

In 1918 Mr. Rosenberg painted a picture of Miss Hilda Horne, victim of the film exchange fire in Penn Avenue, and called it "For a Boy in France." According to those who knew Miss Horne, the picture afforded a splendid resemblance and local art critics say that the composition and color in the picture were wonderful. The picture at present is in the hands of the Public Board of Educa-

(Continued on page 36)

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JEWISH ARTISTS IN PITTSBURGH

(Continued from page 33)

tion, to whom it was presented by Mr. Rosenberg through John W. Beatty, director of fine arts.

One of the most important accomplishments of Mr. Rosenberg was the organization of the art class of the Irene Kaufmann Settlement, which today has 75 students, most of them Jewish. The class was organized nearly four years ago. A small group of boys and girls were brought together, and provided with a room, a few easels, a model and other bare necessities with which to work. Today the class meets several times a week, and is producing work that has met with wide acclamation. Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Spear gave \$2,500 for the maintenance of the art class. It is at present one of the foremost activities of the Settlement.

Mr. Rosenberg, who is still head of the class, received his first instruction more than 13 years ago in the old Columbia Council Settlement, which was later enlarged and became the present Irene Kaufmann Settlement.

"The purpose of the art class," said Mr. Rosenberg, "is to stimulate interest in the fine arts among the children of the hill district, and to encourage and develop the talents of the children who would otherwise have no opportunity for the expression of art."

Charcoal and pencil sketching, pastel work and clay modeling are all offered and a child who tires of one kind of work tries something else, returning again to the other work when he cares to. Talks on art and artists are given occasionally by Mr. Rosenberg and his assistant.

At present three of his former students are studying art at Carnegie Tech. Two received scholarships to the technical school through the Settlement. Another student, Ida Zwillling, has been studying art for over a year at the Academy of Design in New York. Mr. Rosenberg said that there are many students in his class who show promising ability, and as soon as their parents can afford, they will be prepared for entrance to a fine arts school.

An art critic has this to say concerning the art class:

"It may not be generally known that first honors in a recent art competition in drawing where schools of the East met schools of the Middle West were won by the pupils of the drawing class of the Irene Kaufmann Settlement School. The schools referred to except the Pittsburgh one have been long established.

"Determined to put the Pittsburgh school on the map, young Samuel Rosenberg, trained in and associated

with the Carnegie Institute and the Academy Schools of New York, set to work to train his class for a high-grade output. The success in taking the first honors, just won by the Pittsburgh school, is due to the ambition aroused in the pupils by Art Instructor Rosenberg.

"Besides he is making a name for himself, as he has won second and first prizes in local art exhibits for portrait painting. Some late portraits by him, notably that of Secretary Alexander Lappe, of the Associated Artists, are receiving unstinted praise from art critics. Mr. Rosenberg has an individual method and is considered by his cult as one of the ablest of American portrait painters."

Mr. Rosenberg has painted portraits of Judge Wasson, Judge Miller, the Rev. W. J. McMillen and other prominent Pittsburghers.

Mr. Gorson maintained a studio in Pittsburgh for 18 years, achieving fame throughout art circles of the United States and abroad through his painting of typical Pittsburgh scenes. His pictures have been shown in the most exclusive exhibitions in New York, Philadelphia and Boston and always were the center of interest at the International Exhibit at the Carnegie Institute in this city. He became known as the Pittsburgh artist and a number of wealthy and prominent art collectors had him paint for them views of Pittsburgh steel mills. His studio here was a mecca for foreign artists who visited this city during exhibitions at Carnegie Institute.

In addition to the painting he has presented to the Pittsburgh Press Club, Mr. Gorson has arranged through Dr. William M. Davidson, Superintendent of Schools, to present to the public schools of Pittsburgh a large painting showing the Smithfield street bridge and the hills on the south side of the Monongahela river.

The rise of Mr. Gorson in the art world is considered remarkable by artists and others who know him. Starting work in a "sweat shop" in Philadelphia, he showed talent at sketching and drawing. He attended an art school at night and his ability was such a number of wealthy Philadelphia art lovers sent Mr. Gorson to Paris, where he studied under teachers there. Returning to the United States, he became intensely interested in Pittsburgh industrial scenes, with the result he probably has painted more these views than any other artist.

Desiring to leave with Pittsburgh newspapermen a painting typical of his work, A. H. Gorson, nationally known artist and famed throughout the country as a painter of Pittsburgh industrial scenes, recently presented to the Pittsburgh Press Club a large painting showing a mill scene along the Allegheny river. Mr. Gorson completed the canvass recently and it never has been exhibited, so the first public view of the work will be that when the painting is hung in the rooms of the Press Club, 542 Fourth Avenue.

Mr. Gorson left Pittsburgh last week for New York, where he will place on exhibition in the art gallery of John Levy, in Fifth Avenue, a large number of paintings typical of the industrial life of Pittsburgh. Scenes showing steel mills and blast furnaces along the rivers, night views of the plants with the converters in operation and other paintings symbolic of the industrial activities of this district are included in the several hundred canvasses Mr. Gorson will show in New York. He has chartered a special car to take the paintings East.