

This poem, written 20 years ago, was inspired by pictures in the Ben Uri exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy on the occasion of the launch of DAVAR, the Jewish Cultural and Educational Institute in Bristol and the South West. Clive Lawton, then of Jewish Continuity, gave the inaugural address.

The self-portrait of Lily Delissa Joseph is currently on display at the **Ben Uri: 100 Years in London** exhibition, “**Out Of Chaos**”, at Somerset House, London (till 13 Dec. 2015)

Here, Oh Israel – Hear!

"Talk to each other"

Clive said.

We did.

And, powerfully, *they* spoke

To us too: Solomon Solomon,

his sister Lily Delissa Joseph.

And Abraham, Rebecca

and Simeon Solomon, David Bomberg,

Mark Gertler, Jacob Kramer,

Jacob Epstein *et al.* Powerfully

with their strong physical statements

of mass and form

excluding all irrelevancies. Only

the basics, to sway, move

and inform.

Reminding us who we are.

Giving us their legacy.

The spirit of Lily Delissa Joseph
gently recalling her fight for Rights,
liberty and freedom.

Denied the right to be present
at her own exhibition Preview, being
"Detained at His Majesty's Pleasure".

The candlesticks shine
Remind us of our heritage,
of her, of our Enlightenment,
This self-same portrait assuming her presence
then as it does now.

I am in awe.

I shiver at the thought
that *she* fought
for my privilege to be
here, to see
her graceful contribution.
She was not thus free.
Her portrait
no indication here of
her privations, personal courage,
the indomitable spirit of
the imprisoned suffragette.

Freeing herself
and those to follow
from constraints.
Freeing herself in middle years
by driving to the Promised Land
in the emancipating early era of
the automobile.

Liberating spirit, here
in this place, now,
the message clear:
Spirit frees.
Free spirits, Hear!



Lily Delissa Joseph
Self-Portrait with Candles

David Bomberg's *Ghetto Theatre*

Impressive.

The theatre an integral part
of the envisaged Art Society
"to enrich and ennoble".¹

The rich ensemble
wanting all for many
to give, participate, share.

Ethos of Bundist socialists
emanating from these figures.

Solid citizens, worthy
earthy, earnest
passing on their intense enthusiasm
Active, as the actors on-stage below
in this ghetto theatre.²

Powerful statements here.

The mass, en masse,
giving through being.

We hear their statements now.



David Bomberg
Ghetto Theatre

¹ Judah Beach, Ben Uri Catalogue, 1930

² Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel, London



Mark Gertler's solid *Nude* reclines.
The heavy, flesh-pink sculptured figure
casts no hint, no tinge
of his inner complex feelings,
conveys no unsatisfactory love triangle
or tempestuous liaison
with Carrington,
drawing him within the Bloomsbury fringe.
In 'Thirty-eight', brings no forewarning doom,
no gloomy premonition of his
unresolved sad end, untimely, soon
in the ominous 'Thirty-nine'.

Mark Gertier
Nude (1938)

Jacob Kramer's *Day of Atonement* etched clear,
 concise,
 his recollection sharply sketched, pared,
 giving *us* the space
 to Atone
 to offer statements shared
 For Bomberg to add
 For us to hear,
 Here.

This tribute to centuries of suppressed
 artistic leanings, talents, gifts.
 The least of the constraints
 transfixed in our multi-faceted history,
 Restraints within: "Thou shalt not make
 any graven image"
 Eternal oppression without;
 "This is Degenerative Art"³. *Streng
 Verboten*
 Compounded by limitations of time and space
 And of our checkered fortunes.



Jacob Kramer
The Day of Atonement

Lionel Walter, second Lord Rothschild,
 serenely present
 overseeing all. Austere.
 His portrait here a further tribute to
 the splendid gift of Jacob Kramer.
 Magic pastel shades
 understating the dynasty.
 This Darwinian peer
 Fellow of the Royal Society,
 recipient of the famed Balfour letter
 proclaiming the "Magna Carta of Jewish
 Liberties"⁴,
 preferred to remain immersed
 in the notation of butterflies and birds
 at length,
 his calm mien
 now masking this strength:
 the same application
 whereby his progenitor won
 the right for his successors to take their seat
 in the House of Lords. Some feat. Now the son
 Walter, through this portrait
 skillfully portrayed by Kramer, speaks –
 encapsulates it all.

I here record my debt
 to all the unwitting weavers of the intricate tapestry
 enmeshing our history
 set on these walls.

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 Bristol, March 1995



Jacob Kramer
Portrait of Lord Rothschild

³ Art works condemned by the Nazis as
 being 'Degenerative Art'

⁴ Chaim Weizmann