

Sivan 14, 5775
June 1, 2015

To:
Ms. Tamar Efrati
Coordinator
Quality Assessment Division (QAD)
Council for Higher Education
Jerusalem

Report of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Evaluation Report of the Committee for the Evaluation of Art History Study Programs

Dear Ms. Tamar Efrati,
Enclosed please find the report of the chair of the Department of Jewish Art, Dr. Ilia Rodov, of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Evaluation Report of the Committee for the Evaluation of Art History Study Programs at Bar-Ilan University.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Recommendation 1.a

The Committee recommends that BIU appoint a senior faculty member (100%) to replace the current chair and to be responsible for developing the Subdivision, perhaps with the ultimate goal of transforming it into an independent academic unit. The Committee strongly believes that it is more important to appoint dynamic, reputed scholars than it is to “fill” pre-existing research fields.

1.a (implemented)

Dr. Ilia Rodov (Senior lecturer, 100%, tenure) was appointed Chair of the Department of Jewish Art to replace Prof. Bracha Yaniv beginning with the 2013/14 academic year for three academic years with the possibility of renewal.

Dr. Rodov has vigorously and creatively embarked on reshaping the Department's mission and is taking practical steps towards the realization of the Department's potential— estimated by the Committee as “unique”— for “studying, teaching, and applying modern theoretical paradigms to Jewish art within a religious institution”. The new Chair takes an active part in the transformation of the Subdivision of Jewish Art into the Department of Jewish Art (hereafter: DJA). The process of revisiting concepts and crafting strategies of development began with the reception of the Committee's preliminary recommendations. In the 2013/14 academic year, BIU's academic bodies approved the transformation of the Subdivision of Jewish Art into the Department. The administrative procedures for the separation of the DJA from the Interdisciplinary Division for Jewish studies are taking place during the current academic year.

The promotion of two excellent researchers and lecturers, who previously held part-time junior positions at the DJA (see below, 4.a–c), to full-time senior faculty positions allows the Department to maintain two core fields of expertise in its program.

Recommendation 1.b

Defining the areas of the appointments should be an outcome of the international conference when, as suggested below, it is convened. The conference could also generate specific proposals for a dynamic scholar who might lead the Subdivision.

1.b.1 (Implementation: September 2015)

The DJA's Chair and senior faculty, advised by the international Academic Board, are steering an international academic conference "Constructing and Deconstructing Jewish Art", planned for September 2015. The Conference, including a research workshop and round-table discussion, will bring together researchers from Austria, Brazil, Germany, Israel, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Great Britain, Ukraine, and the USA.

A project led energetically by the DJA's Chair and taken in the midst of his successful term of duty (see above, 1.a), the Conference and following planned publications are aimed at a further consolidation of the DJA as a well-established academic unit; a first-class creative team of innovative and open-minded researchers; and an international hub leading the research and teaching of Jewish art worldwide. The Conference will not deal with the appointment of the Chair and new faculty members.

1.b.2 (Implemented)

Since November 2013, concurrently to the organization of the Conference (see above, 1.b.1), the DJA's strategy and vision of its mission, development, and future new appointments have been forged through a series of academic symposia, guest lectures and events. These activities promote an intensive and broad discussion of a wide spectrum of geographic, social, ethnic, formal, semantic, structuralist, psychological, gender, religious, political, interdisciplinary and other approaches to the academic teaching and research of visual arts. The meetings also encourages deeper involvement of students and researchers at early stages of their professional career in an exciting intellectual atmosphere with free exchange of knowledge.

Recommendation 1.c

Appointed initially for five years, the new chair would have time to refashion the Subdivision's mission and begin the process of hiring new faculty members. Should BIU establish a Department of Jewish Art in the future, chairs would have to serve for at least three years and perhaps as long as five years with the possibility of renewal.

1.c (Implemented)

Dr. Ilia Rodov (see above, 1.a) has been appointed for three years with the possibility of renewal.

2. Mission and Goals

Recommendation 2.a

It is incumbent on the current faculty to develop a convincing justification for what it is, what it alone can do, what it can contribute to its Faculty, University, and the practice of art history in Israel and beyond; also why it should be a regular, independent unit in the Faculty of Jewish Studies.

2.a (Implemented)

The Department is working intensively on both theoretical concepts and practical strategies in order to consolidate its proper position in the fields of art history, Jewish studies, local higher education, international exchange of students and lecturers, and research of Jewish art in Israel and worldwide. Lectures of guest researchers from universities and academic centers abroad are delivered at seminars and at the DJA's Colloquium. The DJA faculty members widely participate in international academic conferences and deliver guest lectures at BIU and universities and research institutions in Israel and abroad.

Changes to the curriculum (see below, 2.c.1) have been implemented to define more firmly the Department's position in the teaching of art history and theory, and Jewish involvement in those spheres. The planned Conference (see above, 1.b.1) will hopefully be helpful in bringing theoretical work to further significant conclusions.

Recommendation 2.b

Toward this objective, the Committee recommends that BIU sponsor a high-level international conference focused on Jewish art and identity and involving leading scholars of Judaism and Jewish art, other fields confronting similar questions of identity (e.g. African-American art, Islamic art, women's art) and including members of the current faculty with a majority of representatives from other BIU departments within and outside the Subdivision as well as the administration.

2.b (Implemented September 2015)

See above, 1.b.1

Recommendation 2.c

Opening up the question in new ways, for example, through comparative studies of Ashkenazi and Sephardic manifestations, art of the diasporas, and Israeli art, might be more fruitful—for teaching and research—than the current organization around standard art historical periods.

2.c.1 (Implemented Tasks and Ongoing Activities)

In parallel with fundamental shifts in culture, art history, and Jewish studies during the recent decades, the DJA re-examines the approach to the history and interpretation of what is commonly and often loosely referred to as 'Jewish' art in traditionalist scholarship as well as in the practice of art making, curatorship, and connoisseurship. The DJA tends to focus upon the variety and flexibility of both individual and collective Jewish self-identification throughout the ages.

The investigation yielded a preliminary plan of teaching and research, which comprises of the following fields:

- Jewish Visual Culture in the Mediterranean and the Near East;
- Jewish Visual Culture in Muslim Surroundings;
- Art of the Hebrew Illuminated Book (manuscripts and early printed books);
- Art and Ritual (synagogue art and architecture, ritual objects, Jewish sepulchral art);

- Jewish Identities in Modern Art and Visual Culture in the 19th and 20th centuries;
- Jewish Dimensions in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture;
- Trauma and Post-Trauma in Jewish and Israeli Art;
- Local vs. Universal: Visual Arts in Israel.

Partial changes have been made in the curriculum in order to reshape it according to the reorganization mentioned above. Further especially needed development in the fields: "Trauma and Post-Trauma in Jewish and Israeli Art" and "Jewish Visual Culture in Muslim Surroundings" is dependent on necessary funds.

2.c.3 (Implementation: Summer 2015 and following year/s, depending on funding)

Following the Conference (see above, 1.b.1), work on the reorganization of teaching plans will be concluded in the new, extended curricula and study programs. The implementation of those projects depends on University funding and external competitive grants to enable the creation of additional positions and courses.

Recommendation 2.d

*In addition to helping the Subdivision define its materials and methods, the results of such a conference might constitute a valuable issue of *Ars Judaica*.*

2.d (Implementation: Since 2016)

The discussion of approaches to visual arts in Jewish religion, societies, cultures, and in scholarly thought is a most welcome subject for *Ars Judaica*. Conference papers submitted as articles to *Ars Judaica* will undergo a double anonymous peer-reviewing consideration process before being accepted for publication.

Recommendation 2.e

Regardless of how the Subdivision ultimately comes to understand itself, art therapy should not be a part of the program. Art Therapy is neither art history nor concerned specifically with Jewish art. Although it is clear that there is great student interest in such a program and an art history department at another university has made a success of it, the training of art therapists is based primarily in studio art practice and psychology rather than in art history.

2.e (Implementation: Immediately)

The Council for Higher Education approved BIU's development of a program several years ago, but the project has not been implemented, mainly for budgetary reasons. The academic models of the program are the Master Program in Art Therapy in New York University and the program in art therapy at Tel Aviv University. On a theoretical level, the planned program will be interrelated with the DJA's research into the creation of Jewish and Israeli art and the experience of and contemplation on iconic images in the local visual culture as a cathartic processing of trauma and mental healing for both artists and their audience. The preferred administrative model is the program in Therapy in Music at the Department of Music in BIU. The M. A. program in art therapy is logically based on undergraduate education and paves the way to a doctoral degree in the field. A successful model for such a dedicated undergraduate

program is the Art History department at the University of Haifa that manages an accelerated track “for students who aim for the Art Therapy graduate program” (art.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en), comprising a considerable number of courses in art history. Many of the candidates already plan their advanced academic studies when applying for undergraduate studies. Upon requests by its candidates, students and graduates, the DJS provides them with prospective explanations relating to their advanced education and future career. It seems unreasonable if the DJA will disorient its candidates and students by concealing from them any relevant information. It is reasonably and responsibly explained that graduates of the B.A. program in art history may continue their M. A. studies in art history, museology, or curatorship—as well as art therapy—in other universities and colleges in Israel and abroad. Currently, the DJA does not offer any M.A. studies.

Recommendation 2.f

Mostly for reasons of priority and economy, the Committee also recommends postponing any consideration of establishing a study program in museology.

2.f (Implementation: Immediately)

The DJA does not consider a study program in museology a priority. The discussion of selected subjects related to museology is limited to basic knowledge necessary for art historians and to extracurricular activities. Meeting collegial inquiries of curators of Israeli museums and galleries, the DJA has established a forum for curators and researchers of Jewish art.

3. Study Programs

Recommendation 3.a

All references to Art Therapy should be removed from the Subdivision's website.

3.a (Implementation: Immediately) See above, 2.e

Recommendation 3.b

It would be wise to reconsider the appropriateness of the three workshops. The students' evaluation of the workshops is that they are mediocre at best and the contribution to the curriculum is questionable. This said, the subdivision could introduce students to the materials of art (oil, watercolor, print, etc.) were it provided with one well-equipped studio.

3.b (Implemented)

The workshop syllabi for 2014/15 have been reworked to include introductions to the main techniques of painting, drawing and printed graphics, and sculpture. Following the Committee's recommendation for reconsidering the workshops, the new appointment of an expert in the material and techniques in art (Ms Inbal Nissim, assistant A, 20%) replaced two former appointments of workshop Instructors (Ms Chana Krumer, assistant A, 10% and Mr Shai Farkash, assistant A, 20%). The workshops' curricula will be further reconsidered, as suggested, in the following

academic year/s.

Regarding a studio, see below, 3.c.

Recommendation 3.c

The Committee recommends that BIU find a space, basically a large room with proper light and ventilation, and fit it out with basic studio equipment, including large tables and easels.

3.c (Implementation: Partly implemented and to be completed in the nearest future, depending on funding)

A large hall (Bld. 505 room 102), divided into two connected spaces, has been allotted for the teaching of art history and workshops. The space for the workshop is equipped with large tables and easels. Construction of built-in cabinets for storing workshop materials and equipment and installation of proper lighting devices depends on additional funds. This work will hopefully be completed during the current or coming academic years.

Recommendation 3.d

Ph.D. advisors, regardless of rank, should in some manner be credited with overseeing dissertations they supervise.

3.d (Implemented)

The junior faculty advisors are credited for their work as “academic consultants” in the dissertations they supervise and in their CV. Fortunately, the problem has become less acute as two junior faculty members were recently promoted to senior positions and we hope for one more such appointment in the near future.

Recommendation 3.e

Discussion of the definitions and implications of Jewish art as a field of study should be incorporated into all undergraduate classes in the second and third years of study, with at least one dedicated reading on this topic in each case.

3.e.1 (Implemented and ongoing)

Such discussions and reading are integrated into the syllabi of the courses in the current and coming academic years.

3.e.2 (Implementation: Immediately and within 2-3 years)

Based on the revisited mission statement and following these recommendations, essential reading in the field is integrated in the curricula. A course including a historical survey into, and a critical review of scholarly approaches to Jewish art is in preparation and will be launched within 2-3 years, depending on funding.

Recommendation 3.f

Because the long-term strength of the department is dependent on both undergraduate and post-graduate training and research, the Committee recommends that the creation of a M.A. program be re-examined within five years and that all parties commit now to this second evaluation. Before any M.A. program is introduced, however, BIU must enhance its teaching of non-Jewish and non-Western art.

3.f.1 (Implementation: As soon as possible)

Strongly committed to its long-term success and fully aware of the continuous effort for its maintenance, the DJA is concerned about the suggested delay in its academic development, which may hamper its academic and research strengths and threaten the nurturing of the next generation of researchers and university lecturers in the field of Jewish art. Currently, no university offers M.A. studies in Jewish art to an increasingly growing community of the DJA's B.A. graduates, as well as school and college teachers of this discipline, instructors in the field at the Ministry of Education and its local departments, curators of Jewish art collections in museums and galleries, art critics and the like, in Israel and abroad. For these reasons, the DJA considers applying for inclusion of the M.A. program in the five-year plan (2015-2020) of the Council for Higher Education, and strives for the launching of the M.A. program, along with expansion of the B.A. program, in the near future.

3.f.2 (Implementation: The next 2-3 years)

Both DJA's faculty and students feel and express a need for more courses in non-Jewish and non-Western art. Yet due to budgetary limitations, the Department is unable to offer additional courses during the current and next academic years. The new appointments to reinforce the B.A. program and establish an M.A. program will enable the implementation of this recommendation.

4. Human Resources / Faculty

Recommendation 4.a

As soon as is possible, the Subdivision should replace the professor who in the coming academic year (2013/14) is on sabbatical leave and will then retire the following year. The new appointment should be charged with rethinking the entire program, with particular attention to what Jewish art really is, how the study of it relates to other artistic traditions, and how research and teaching of it might best fit BIU'S mandate. Only then might additional tenure track positions be authorized. All of the new faculty members should be recruited through open, competitive searches.

4.a (Implemented)

2013/14:

- Dr Mirjam Rajner was appointed as a senior lecturer with a tenure track position. The appointment covers the fields of Jewish Art and Identity in the 19th and 20th centuries and Modern Art (see above, 2.c.1) in teaching and research.
- Dr Mor Presiado was appointed as a 20%-position assistant (B). Dr. Presiado's expertise covers the fields of priority in the DJA development plans: the Holocaust and trauma in art, gender studies in Jewish art, and contemporary art.
- Ms Inbal Nissim was appointed as a 20%-position assistant (A), and expert in art techniques and materials.

The appointment was made to meet the demand of better integration of the workshops in the curricula of art history studies (see above, 3.b).

2014/15:

- Dr Sara Offenbergs was appointed as a senior lecturer with a tenure track position. The appointment will cover the fields of Art of the Hebrew Illuminated Book (manuscripts and early printed books) (see above, 2.c.1) and Medieval Art in teaching and research. This appointment became possible by a reduction of 10% to an assistant (B) position beginning with the 2014/15 academic year.

4.c (Implementation: When funding for the expansion of Department's faculty and academic programs will be possible)

The Department's priorities are the tenure-tracked appointments in:

- Trauma and Post-Trauma in Jewish and Israeli Art;
- Jewish Art in Muslim Surroundings.

More areas of new appointments will be considered in accordance with the reshaped teaching plans.

5. Students

Recommendation 5.a

The Subdivision should increase the number of courses it offers in general art history.

5.a (Implementation: When funding for the expansion of Department's faculty and academic programs will be possible)

Because of budgetary limitations, the Department is not able to offer additional courses for the next academic year. For over a decade, an M.A. program—an integral part of the art history departments in all the other Israeli universities—has been strongly in demand by many B.A. graduates from the Department as well as numerous other candidates seeking M.A studies in Jewish art.

Recommendation 5.b

Faculty members should develop more essay examinations and, in general, more analytical writing requirements.

5.b (Implementation: Implemented and ongoing)

More essay examinations and written works have been added in the syllabi this current academic year.

Recommendation 5.c

As a unit within the Faculty of Jewish Studies, the Subdivision should develop a curriculum that allows students of Jewish art to more effectively integrate their work with other disciplines taught in the Faculty.

5.c (Implementation: Within 2-3 years)

Students majoring in Jewish art extended program will be able to take courses related to their specialization (a total of 8 credits) at other departments at the Faculty of Jewish Studies. The DJA is also working on initiating a program in "Trauma and Post-Trauma in Jewish and Israeli Arts" based on interdisciplinary research and teaching of the Faculty of Jewish Studies. In addition, clusters in Jewish art are proposed for the Faculty's planned interdisciplinary B.A. program in Jewish studies. Integration will be increasingly enhanced.

6. Research

Recommendation 6.a

Should the Floersheim family not renew funding for Ars Judaica, BIU should provide financial support to keep it going.

6.a (Implementation: The next 2-3 years)

A year ago, the Floersheim family renewed funding for *Ars Judaica* for the next two years (2016–17, volumes 12 and 13). Sharing the Committee's high estimation of *Ars Judaica* as a high-quality scholarly journal and the leading academic periodical worldwide in the field of Jewish art, BIU is seeking donations to establish a fund with annual interest income that will ensure the continuity of the *Ars Judaica* publication.

Recommendation 6.b

All faculty members, regardless of rank or status, should be eligible to compete for research funds.

6.b (Implementation: Immediately and in the next 2-3 years)

Since most of the competitive funds demand that the applicants will be senior faculty members, the solution is not the Department's prerogative.

Recommendation 6.c

*Faculty members should be urged to publish in other peer-reviewed international journals as well as in *Ars Judaica*.*

6.c (Implementation: Immediately and in the next 2-3 years)

Faculty members are actively encouraged to publish in other peer-reviewed international journals in addition to *Ars Judaica*, and they do so.

7. Infrastructure

Recommendation 7.a

The Committee strongly recommends that BIU evaluate the potential of the present location with the aim of developing spaces conducive to the Subdivision's essential teaching, research, and publication activities. For development [sic]. Adequate infrastructure is a prerequisite for the Subdivision's becoming a Department of Jewish art.

7.a (Implementation: Immediately)

A large hall (Bldg. 505, room 102) divided into two connected spaces has been allotted for the teaching of art history and workshops. The lecture space is equipped with a computer and multimedia station, a high-quality powerful projector, and a large screen.

Due to the lack of appropriate space on campus, immediate allocation of more offices for the DJA and its faculty is not currently possible.

Recommendation 7.b

Ars Judaica should be provided with a suitably equipped office and its funding assured.

7.b *Ars Judaica's* office, properly equipped, occupies bldg. 410, room 48.

In summary, we thank the CHE Committee for helpful recommendations and hope to continue to improve the quality of the Department of Jewish Art.

Sincerely,


Prof. Amnon Albeck
Vice Rector

In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:
Prof. Miriam Faust, Rector
Prof. Elie Assis, Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies
Dr. Ilia Rodov, Chair, Department of Jewish Art