

Mishkan Art Museum, Ein Harod

Established	1937
Location	Kibbutz Ein Harod , Jezreel Valley
Founder	Haim Atar
Chief Curator	Galia Bar Or
Website	museumeinharod.org.il

The [Ein Harod Museum of Art](#) is one of the largest and most important museums in Israel's periphery. It is one of the first three art museums to be established in Palestine, and is distinctive for its extensive collections, the character of its exhibitions, and its architectural structure with its excellent natural lighting. The museum's activities include temporary exhibitions accompanied by publications of books and catalogues as well as by events, symposiums and colloquium days with the participation of leading Israeli and international figures from the worlds of art and academia.

The Ein Harod Museum of Art began its activities in a wooden hut in [Kibbutz Ein Harod](#) in January 1938, on the initiative of the local artist [Haim Atar](#) (1902–1953). The first section of its permanent building was inaugurated in 1948. The building, planned by the architect [Samuel Bickels](#) (1909–1975), is known for its marvelous simplicity and quality, characterized by the proportions of its galleries and its unique and original exploitation of natural lighting. The moving spirit in establishing the museum was [Aharon Zisling](#), a member of Kibbutz Ein Harod.

Fourteen galleries, as well as open air sculpture patios, a library, and a workshop/studio were gradually built in the spacious building.

At the height of the construction process the [split in the Kibbutz Meuhad](#) movement occurred, in the course of which Ein Harod split into two kibbutzim: [Ein Harod Ihud](#) and [Ein Harod Meuhad](#). In an exceptional way, the museum was kept as a joint institute of both kibbutzim, and the museum area became a place where members of both kibbutzim meet and share experiences together.

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The Museum's name [\[edit\]](#)

Since its founding, the museum's biblically inspired name in Hebrew has been משכן לאמנות עין חרוד, *Mishkan LeOmanut Ein Harod*. *Mishkan*, literally 'abode', or 'place of [in]dwelling', was a name of the moveable shrine (generally called 'the Tabernacle' in English) that according to Exodus (25.8 ff.) accompanied the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. To convey something of this spirit, the museum's name in English has been recently (May 2014) changed to Mishkan Art Museum, Ein Harod, replacing the name "Museum of Art, Ein Harod" (sometimes written without the comma) that appears in books and articles published before today.

Collections and Exhibitions [\[edit\]](#)

The museum's collections include items of Judaica from Jewish communities throughout the world and art works (painting, sculpture, graphic art and photography) dating from the 19th century to the present.

Major temporary exhibitions at the museum have engaged with a number of fields: forms of media that in Israel during various periods were not considered as art, such as fiber art or photography. In this category, during the 1980s and 1990s the museum held biennials, which made important contributions to the recognition of photography as an art. In another category, the museum produced interactive events like "Gracelands Palace" (a restaurant and a performance of [Elvis Presley](#) impersonators) or the "Critical Utopia" (exhibitions and activities in the museum's precincts). The museum regularly holds exhibitions of young artists, and organizes projects that offer innovative and exceptional experiences. Another important category is the production of exhibitions, books and events that engage with the story of Israeli art. A major line of thought in the museum's activities is to deal with aspects that have not been covered in the official history of Israeli art. In this category the museum has held solo exhibitions of artists of quality who over the years have created significant bodies of works oeuvre outside the mainstream. The museum also holds exhibitions dedicated to artists of the "lost generation" whose work was forgotten or lost during World War II and the Holocaust.

Exhibitions of contemporary works are shown in conjunction with a permanent exhibition of selections from the museum's collection, which includes works by Palestinian artists.

The collection includes the estates of [Miron Sima](#), [Raffi Lavie](#), [Meira Shemesh](#) and [Meir Agassi](#), and of other artists who are significant in Jewish and in Israeli art. "Sites of Memory" in which the artist's works are installed have been built in the museum as parts of its permanent exhibition, and serve as places for activities, study and research: the "Meir Agassi Archive, Library, Museum"; the "Bickels' Workroom", where works by the museum's architect Samuel Bickels are on show and which serves as a center for research and documentation of kibbutz architecture; and the "Dudu Geva Memorial Studio" which contains the artist's work area, personal library, collection of images and clippings, and also serves as a space for educational workshops.

Jewish art [\[edit\]](#)

A major focus in the museum founders' vision was the preservation of works by Jewish artists throughout the world, especially in light of the annihilation of much of European Jewry in the course of the Holocaust. Haim Atar established important contacts with Jewish artists of the School of Paris ([Chaim Soutine](#), [Marc Chagall](#), [Michel Kikoïne](#), [Jules Pascin](#), [Moïse Kisling](#) and others). A Chagall exhibition held at the museum in 1949 attracted a thousand visitors. The museum's collection includes works by [Josef Izraëls](#), [Lesser Ury](#), [Chana Orloff](#), [Jacques \(Jacob\) Loutchansky](#) and others. Atar engaged in collecting the diverse forms of Jewish art from the past and the present, and this project was continued by the next museum director, [Zusia Efron](#). The Mishkan Museum thus marked out an independent approach that differed from the orientations of the Tel Aviv Museum and the Israel Museum, which later adopted an approach that saw a contradiction between high art and Jewish art. That approach, which was expressed in the exhibitions and collections policies of the major museums in Israel, reflected the local spirit of the time from the 1940s on, which was characterized by its repression of diasporic Jewish contexts. These art institutions chose to emphasize a modernist identity and an ostensibly autonomous perception of art, and were not inclined to confront matters of private and collective identity that connected art with Jewishness, refugeehood, or the Holocaust. As against this, and in the spirit of the vision that motivated the Mishkan Museum's founders, [Aharon Zisling](#) activated a countrywide and international network of supporters and friends that assisted in obtaining information and acquiring works. Vigorous activity to expand the collection was conducted during those years (the '40s and '50s), and in the course of time it became one of the most important collections of Jewish art.

Shortly before the inauguration of the museum's new building, when the collection was still kept in a hut, a new museum bulletin was published, in which it was stated that the museum already held works by "most of the Jewish painters dispersed throughout the countries of the world". At that time (1948), the long list of artists whose works had been received into the Museum's collection contained the names of 115 painters and sculptors, all of them known Jewish artists, from Holland, Germany, Russia, Eastern Europe, England, France, Australia, the USA and Israel – in addition to an extensive collection of folk art from all the Jewish diasporas. A representative selection of the museum's collection was shown at the exhibition held to inaugurate the new building. Important artists whose works form part of the collection include: from Russia – [Isaac Levitan](#), [Leonid](#)

[Pasternak](#); from Holland – [Josef Izraëls](#); from Poland: [Maurycy Gottlieb](#); from Germany: [Lesser Ury](#), [Max Liebermann](#).

Judaica [\[edit\]](#)

Jewish religious articles from various diasporas, are on show in the museum's permanent exhibition of Judaica, which includes Torah scrolls, Passover Haggadahs, Hanukkah candelabra, Torah ark curtains. Some of these are antiques, and some are contemporary works by young artists. The first items in this collection were religious articles that kibbutz members had brought from their parents' homes in Eastern Europe. Later, such articles were redeemed from Jews in displaced persons' camps in Europe and were brought back by kibbutz members who served in the Jewish Brigade. In recent years efforts have been made to incorporate contemporary works and installations into the traditional collection and to turn the Judaica wing into a tool for topical discussion on subjects of Jewish identity, gender and nationhood. An example is the "Matronita: Jewish Feminist Art" exhibition held there in 2012.

Israeli art [\[edit\]](#)

The museum's collection includes a broad range of works by Israeli artists, from the early 20th century, the days of the Bezalel school, through to the present. It also holds estates of artists (Haim Atar, Menachem Shemi), and donations by artists, such as Pinhas Cohen Gan and others). The collecting of Israeli art is an inseparable part of the museum's project of research and documentation, and the museum makes special efforts to cast light on aspects such as the work of women artists, and to accompany the collecting with the publication of information and with analyses of procedures that shape the collective memory and consciousness. Trailblazing exhibitions held during the 1980s ("Meta-Sex", "Hebrew Work") became milestones in establishing the institution as a museum that marks out new territories and directs a searchlight towards an alternative social narrative.

Catalogues [\[edit\]](#)

In its commitment to in-depth research into the sources of artists' oeuvres, the museum publishes a comprehensive catalogue/book for almost every exhibition it holds.

Library [\[edit\]](#)

The museum's library contains thousands of books on diverse art subjects. It is open to the public for study and research. A special wing has been built inside it for the collection of the deceased artist [Meir Agassi](#).

The museum building [\[edit\]](#)

The museum's first location was an "Art Corner" that was opened in the studio of the local artist Haim Atar, who was in Paris at the time collecting art works for the fledgling museum. When Atar returned to the kibbutz the museum was opened in a spacious wooden hut, and the planning of its permanent building was initiated. The architect [Samuel Bickels](#), a member of the adjacent kibbutz, [Tel Yosef](#), was a planner in the Kibbutz Meuhad's "Technical Bureau" which was based in Ein Harod at the time, and took on the task of planning the building. The museum's site was determined according to the master plan proposed for the kibbutz by the architect [Richard Kauffmann](#) in 1926, in

which the cultural institutions were to be built on the slopes of Kumi Hill. The first portion of the building was [opened](#) in October 1948, *Simhat Torah* 5709, at the height of the War of Independence. At the inauguration, Aharon Zisling, who had played a major role in the programmatic and organizational thinking for the museum, said: "He who thirsts for spirit will find meaning in his work". The library hall, the mosaic courtyard, and a large gallery were added later. The larger part of the museum was built in 1957, when the entrance was moved from its southern to its western side, and the hall of columns, a sculpture yard and the northern galleries were added. Bickels' continued drawing plans for the extension of the museum until his death in 1975, but these were not implemented. Among other things, his vision included the construction of a studio for artists, a school for theatre décor, an additional gallery for sculpture, and an auditorium. In 1992 extensions planned by the architect [Ada Carmi](#) were carried out, with the construction of storerooms for the collection, an educational studio (today the "Dudu Geva Studio") and a renovation of the entrance. In 2004 the Meir Agassi Archive/Library/Museum, planned by the architect Yon Nano, was added, and in 2013 the Miron Sima Auditorium, planned by the same architect, was built on the museum's northern side, and is used for lectures, film screenings and concerts.

Natural Lighting in the Museum [\[edit\]](#)

The Ein Harod Museum of Art is today internationally known as an architectural masterpiece of a museum based on natural lighting. All the museum's spaces are pervaded by a unique atmosphere that stems from the diverse appearances of light that penetrates into the building through a complex system of ceilings and skylights. Visitors wishing to understand Bickels' original architectural ideas have to raise their eyes to the ceiling to discover the way the concrete arches reflect the light that falls on them from the concealed windows. The building displays a consistent route of improvements of natural lighting solutions, and has more than eight different kinds of upper windows that relate to the directions from which the light enters and control the quantity of light that enters and the way it penetrates into each space.

The Bickels Center [\[edit\]](#)

In 2007, Samuel Bickels' family donated his architectural estate to the museum. This included a collection of his architectural drawings, his professional library, his work desk, and his drawing implements. All these were placed in a "work room" dedicated to his life work. The drawings have been catalogued and documented and are accessible to visitors and researchers. A considerable portion of his work was represented in the "Kibbutz: Architecture without Precedents" exhibition at the Israeli Pavilion, Venice Architecture Biennial 2010.

Exhibitions [\[edit\]](#)

A chronological list of selected major exhibitions held at the museum, most of them accompanied by catalogues:

- 2014 "[David Perlov](#): Drawings, Photographs, Films" curator: Dr. [Galia Bar Or](#)
- 2013 "A Gift for Our Children: Culture for Children in Kibbutzim"
- 2012 "Moshe Kupferman"
- 2012 "*Matronita*: Jewish Feminist Art"
- 2011 "Kibbutz: Architecture without Precedents", the display shown at the Israeli Pavilion, *Venice Architecture Biennial 2010* curators: Dr. Galia Bar Or and Dr. [Yuval Yasky](#)

- 2009 “A Selection of Israeli Art from the Collection of Gaby and Ami Brown” curator: Dr. Galia Bar Or
- 2008 “The First Decade, A Hegemony and a Plurality *curators*: Dr. [Gideon Ofrat](#) and Dr. Galia Bar Or
- 2007 “[Michael Druks](#): Travels in Druksland”
- 2006 “Ruth Schloss”
- 2005 “[Henry Shelesnyak](#)”
- 2004 “The [Meir Agassi](#) Museum” curator: Yaniv Shapira
- 2002 “[Aviva Uri](#): A Retrospective” curator: Galia Bar Or
- 1998 “Gracelands Palace” curator: Andreas Schlaegel
- 1998 Hebrew Work: The Disregarded Gaze in the Canon of Israeli Art”
- 1997 “Miron Sima
- 1996 “Noa Eshkol”
- 1995 “Tamar Getter”
- 1994 “Meta-Sex: Identity, Body & Sexuality” curators: Tami Katz-Freiman, Tamar Elijor
- 1994 “Shalom Sebba”
- 1990 “Towards the 90s”
- 1988 “Ori Reisman”
- 1988 “Avraham Ofek”
- 1991, 1988, 1986 Photography Biennials
- 1963 “New Horizons”
- 1958 “Israeli Sculpture”
- 1951 “Marc Chagall”

Directors [\[edit\]](#)

- Haim Atar (1938–1953)
- Zusia Efron (1943–1977)
- Werner Schumm (1977–1985)
- Galia Bar Or (since 1985)

External links
