



Prof. Moshe Barasch (1920-2004), Israel prize winner (1996):

From the Israel Prize book (1996):

Moshe Barasch was born in Czernowitz (then in Romania), a major city with a large Jewish population, an international hub of culture, religion and languages. His family had lived there for three generations, more than a hundred years.

Moshe was born in the “Jewish Street” to his father Menahem and his mother Gusta. His father, a Hebrew intellectual and an ardent Zionist who taught Hebrew Literature and Yiddish, and his grandfather, a devout Hassid, provided him both with the Hassidic tradition and with knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish literature. Because of a heart defect Moshe was sickly as a child and was tutored by private teachers at home instead of in school. His talent as an artist and his being a “child prodigy” were discovered at an early age, even though painting was not accepted by the Jewish society of his time. Exhibitions of his paintings were displayed in Czernowitz, Prague and Boston when he was only 12 years old, but he already displayed a tendency to study and explore the history and philosophy of art. With the help and support of Rabbi Stephen Wise of New York Barasch traveled through Europe, visiting art museums and libraries, and studied with specialists in the field whom he met by his own endeavors rather than through academic institutions. The outbreak of World War II cut short his studies, and at age 19 he returned to Czernowitz, a large part of whose Jewish population still remained there. In the ghetto he was one of the first operatives in the Hagana and the Bricha (the illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine). He used his artistic talent to create hundreds of seals and permits that helped many Jews to flee Romania and be saved. His documents were so well-known to the border police that someone with a real passport was arrested as holding a forged document. When the truth came out, after the investigation, his “documents” were no longer able to be used. Detectives who came to arrest him did not know his name, but only his nickname, and he managed to escape in 1945 to Italy, where he directed the Haganah’s publicity efforts among Italian and German refugees under Commander Shaul Avigur. In 1945 he found a way to send his parents and sister who had survived to Palestine.

At the beginning of 1948, Moshe immigrated to Israel on Aliya Gimmel, using a “kosher” Palestinian passport, one of many that were smuggled from Palestine to Europe.

Barasch joined the Palmah as a foreign recruit, and was sent to deal with foreign recruits in Mahal due to his fluency in Hebrew, Romanian and German and because of his experience in dealing with refugees from Europe to Palestine. After he enlisted, he met his parents and sister. His wife, whom he had married in the Czernowitz ghetto, immigrated as well. She went to Kibbutz Ein Harod, and he to the Harel Brigade of the Palmah. When he was released from service in 1949, he joined his wife in Ein Harod and began to teach History and Cultural and Art History in the school there. Afterwards he began to teach Art History and Cultural History in the Kibbutz Teachers’ Seminary at Oranim.

Barasch became known through the important articles he published in periodicals dedicated to history and art history and through his regular meetings from 1952 with a group of philosophers in Jerusalem, as well as for the lectures he gave and published on aesthetics. His deep friendship with Prof. Samuel Hugo Bergmann with whom he studied philosophical texts and his studies with Prof. Erwin Panofsky of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, all led the Hebrew University to call on him in 1956 to teach a course in Art History. In 1958 he was asked to establish Art History as an academic discipline, a first attempt in Israel to academize this field. He had to begin from the basics: a program of studies, an art library, special

teaching devices, while keeping in mind the special needs of the Israeli student. Due to his pioneering, today departments of art history are found in all the Israeli universities (in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Beersheva). He also wrote a wide variety of art historical publications in Hebrew, mostly published by the Bialik Institute (Mossad Bialik).

Prof. Barasch maintains close ties with other universities and research institutions throughout the world: the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, New York University, Cornell and Yale Universities, etc. In some of them he also taught for many years as a visiting professor, but never severed his ties with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He thought of his close participation with researchers from abroad as an important element in the academic and spiritual life of an Israeli researcher, and energetically convinces his students to follow in his path.

There are several important focal points to his academic work: understanding the work of visual art in its relation to religion is expressed in his book, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York, 1991), while the problem of expression in a work of art and the means to construct it were explored in his book *Light and Color in Italian Renaissance Theory of Art* (New York, 1978).

Other problems that he constantly explores concern the connection between religious painting and the artistic means of expression, as well as the special features and development of art theory. Prof. Barasch has also dedicated his efforts to the art of Eretz Yisrael, from the end of ancient times through the Middle Ages (e.g., his works on the mosaic of King David from Gaza, and Crusader sculpture from Acre).

Prof. Barasch is married to Berta, née Gandelman. They were married in the Czernowitz ghetto in 1942, and have been together for 54 years. Their three children were born in Israel: Ilana, a senior lecturer in Cognitive Psychology; Shabtai, who was named for Berta's father and is a neuropsychologist at the Weitzmann Institute, and Emmanuela, named for Barasch's father, who is a doctoral candidate in Comparative Religion. Berta and Moshe Barasch have seven grandchildren.

The judges' decision (Prof. Zvi Yavetz, chair, Prof. Yaron Ezrahi, Prof. Yohanan Glucker, Prof. Jacob Metzger, Prof. Mordecai Omer, Prof. Saul Friedländer):

Prof. Moshe Barasch is a researcher in general Art History of the highest standard on an international level. Aside from his great influence on research throughout the world, Prof. Barasch contributed a great deal to the development of culture in general in Israel and to the consciousness and knowledge of the history of the plastic arts in particular. His fields of interest are broad and his research has contributed to the knowledge and understanding of art from the end of the Classical Period and Early Christianity, through Medieval Art, and especially to the research of the art of the Renaissance. His essays and books on the meaning of light and color in Italian Renaissance Art created new standards of research, and they are constantly quoted in academic literature. His pioneering research in the fields of gesture and expression place his academic research in the forefront of scientific research in this area of Art History.

Prof. Barasch has contributed greatly to the establishment of the knowledge of the theory and language of Renaissance and Baroque Art on the one hand, and of Art Theory in the modern period on the other hand. His research achievements have given both researchers and intellectuals a deeper knowledge and understanding of the relationships between the making of art and the aesthetic theories of different periods, as well as an understanding of the stages in the developmental of the writing of Art History. His research has also deepened our interdisciplinary knowledge, and contributed greatly to the understanding of the relationship between the written word and the visual image – an area of research that has recently aroused special interest.

Prof. Barasch has also contributed another important element through his ability to study a subject in a wide-ranging and broad manner in the perspective of the "Cross-section subject", for instance in the analysis of the figure of King David in all of art history, but especially worthy of mention is his much quoted research and important analysis of the different developments of the image of man both as idea and form, from ancient times to our own day.

Prof. Barasch is an extraordinarily prolific researcher. By now he has written 17 books, of which 10 are in English, 6 in Hebrew and 1 in German. This last book, *Das Gottesbild*, will soon be published in Germany. Prof. Barasch has also published more than 70 articles in different languages (English, Hebrew, German and French) which have been highly evaluated and given excellent reviews internationally. He has also written

introductions to major books and various encyclopedia articles.

His scientific work is remarkable for its interdisciplinary approach. His broad and unique knowledge in many areas of culture allows him to write outstanding works that blend fields such as Religion, Philosophy, History, Aesthetics and the Visual Arts.

His articles and books in Hebrew are particularly worthy of praise. These publications are written with a pedagogical approach that takes into account the Hebrew reader who may not be cognizant of the subject under discussion, has a different cultural background and cannot read research literature or masterpieces that were originally written in German, French, Italian, Latin and other languages. These books excel in great acuteness and scholarship, but the style of writing does not turn only to experts in the field; on the contrary, the author tries to reach out to the student, to someone interested in the subject in general and to the reader who has no preliminary knowledge in the field. For example, *The Culture of the Renaissance in Florence* (Tel Aviv, 1971) was written as a textbook for high school students. His books laid the groundwork for the study of visual art in Israel: *Michelangelo* (Mossad Bialik, 1961), *The Image of Man in Art* (Yad la'moreh, 1966), and recently the enlarged new edition of his Introduction to the Art of the Renaissance that had come out in several editions, and his methodological book on theories of the history of art, *The Theory of Art in Recent Times, 1750-1950* (Mossad Bialik, 1968 and 1992). All these books, like the rest of his writings in Hebrew are excellent studies of the subjects they examine. They reveal his critical approach and his own research contributions to the subject and are written in a clear manner which knows how to highlight the artistic subject but at the same time to set it within a wide range of fields and ideas. Prof. Barasch has also contributed to the development of research and teaching of Jewish Art in various periods, from ancient synagogue mosaics to his catalogue article "The Quest for Roots" for the exhibition *Artists of Israel: 1920-1980* at the Jewish Museum in New York, as well as to research on Crusader Art in the Holy Land.

His creative work continues with full vigor in the critical and innovative approaches that are characteristic of him. In Germany, his book *Das Gottesbild* is about to be published. It deals with different aspects of the image of God in art and raises the question as to whether and how one can depict a god in art, and explains what intellectuals thought on this subject at the end of the Classical period and during the Renaissance. Another important book in 3 volumes (of which 2 have already been published, while the third will soon be published), is *Theories of Art*. This is the first attempt anywhere to survey how the theory of visual art developed from the 18th century on from a philosophic and a practical standpoint. It examines the relationship between art theory and the forms created in works of art, and examines how theory actually influenced artists. In the near future his books on *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation* and *The Dream – Its Conception and Representation in Art History and in Western Culture* will be published, as well as other works which promise to be greeted with international appreciation and acclaim.

For all these reasons, the judges have decided to grant the Israel Prize for General Art History to Prof. Moshe Barash for the year 1996.