



Harry Birkholz

'Bransk Project'

Exhibition of paintings at the l'Atelier Marcel Hastir - May 2014

The Bransk Project came about after the meeting of two kind and sensitive men, Chaim Shapiro and Harry Birkholz. Both born after the second World War, the second generation so to speak, each carrying within them the unbearable legacy of the Holocaust, often not able to use words to express their feelings.

Their friendship was based on their natural affinities: an acute awareness of their past, both had been hippies, drawn even further together by their musical and spiritual backgrounds.

The strength of their friendship was also borne of their differences.

Chaim Shapiro was born in 1946 in a Jewish refugee camp in Austria. His parents Minnie and Leo survived the war, thanks to the help of a Polish pharmacist and a farmer who hid them in a barn for two years. The Shapiro family lived in Bransk, a village in Poland where the town's 2,500 Jews were deported to Treblinka in November 1942 to be executed in the gas chambers. Their "shtetl" or community died with them.

Chaim immigrated to the United States in 1949 with his parents, his Aunt Bluma and Uncle Faivl.

Harry Birkholz was born in 1950 in Germany. As many German artists of his generation, he suffered all his life from the shameful past of his country, without being able to express this suffering in words. However, I deeply believe that the whole pictorial work of my husband has always reflected his suffering, while at the same time moving towards light and happiness.

As a child, Harry believed he was born in America. In 1989 he made his first trip to Manhattan with his son Patrick. From then on Harry dreamed of living in New York City, the symbol of Liberty. Harry always showed a deep interest in immigration – an escape from the pain of Germany's Nazi past.

Through our encounter and mutual love, Belgium became Harry's adopted country where he felt welcome, blossoming for twenty years.

During the summer of 2009, we visited Fiona and Chaim Shapiro in Washington DC. On August 2nd, we all visited the Holocaust Museum together.

Later that evening, Chaim showed Harry the charred Torah he had received on a visit to Bransk in the 1990s. The two friends unrolled the delicate parchment so that Harry could take pictures.

They talked the whole night long.

On the way back from NYC, Harry created the 'Bransk Project'. In a short period of time, from September to October 2009, feeling very inspired, Harry painted the five series of seven paintings. These paintings form the heart of the exhibition which Harry dreamt of realizing, before his sudden death in May 2011.

The meeting and subsequent friendship of these two men shed light on the past and this in turn became a spark liberating Harry's artistic expression.

Harry's artistic legacy represents a message of inner reassurance to me which I am eager to transmit aided by Fiona and Chaim Shapiro. We have set up this multi-faceted project with the help of many friends, who are very active on the art, cultural and philosophical scene, such as Jean-Claude Bodson, Alain Merzer and Damien Ferré.

My wish is to create a privileged moment of awakening concerning this period of our history and its continued impact on our lives today. We have chosen a venue which is dedicated to the memory of courageous acts and crimes against humanity during the second World War by bringing the first exhibition of the 'Bransk Project' to Marcel Hastir's Studio.

I invite you to accompany us on this path by participating in one or several of the proposed evenings linked together by a red thread: the courage to remember, the right to speak, and the courage to go beyond.....

On Saturday, May 3, 2014, during the presentation and opening of the exhibition of Harry Birkholz's paintings you will discover: portraits of Jewish immigrants from South-East Manhattan, seven paintings describing Harry's feelings after his visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, and four series of paintings illustrating in an abstract manner 'The Song of Songs', which in the Bible is the supreme chant of Love.

A segment of the Torah parchment, saved from the fire of the Bransk synagogue, will be exhibited, along with photos taken by Harry in August 2009. We will also show two original creations: the genealogical tree of the Shapiro family and a tribute to the 2,500 victims of the holocaust in Bransk.

The evening of Saturday, May 10, 2014 will be dedicated to the story of Bransk, the village and the family of Chaim Shapiro. The suffering generated by Nazism and the atrocious crimes perpetrated during the second World War are symbolized by the charred Torah from Bransk.

On Saturday May 17 2014, Marie-Thérèse Kastl, psychoanalyst will lead a round table together with Jacqueline Adam, artist and Gestalt-therapist and Claudine Kantor, psychotherapist on the theme of 'How love and friendship can help liberate creativity and lead to artistic expression transcending inner suffering'. This particular evening may be of interest to the participants who followed Harry's teachings over the course of twenty years during the various drawing and paintings workshops held at the Ligue de l'Enseignement et de l'Education Permanente, in the Province of Namur and at ASBL USHA.

Finally, on Saturday May 24 2014, the exceptional poem 'The Song of Songs' or 'The Song of Solomon', will be presented and recited by Sabina Bhawani.

I will speak of the pictorial signs in the work of Harry Birkholz.

I would like to share the hope that friendship and love may cast light on one of mankind's worst nightmares. Love, the essential link between human beings, may lead us towards a state of inner transformation, where, freed from the shackles of violence and hatred, we can become creators of peace.

Marianne Birkholz Obozinski – Mars 2014

Visit the website: www.harrybirkholz.net

The 'Bransk Project' is an exhibition composed of 4 evenings. These take place on the 1st floor of Marcel Hastir's Studio – rue du Commerce, 51, 1000 Brussels.

The exhibition will be open from May 3rd until May 25th 2014, every Saturday and Sunday from 2pm to 19pm. Entry to the exhibition and evenings is free.

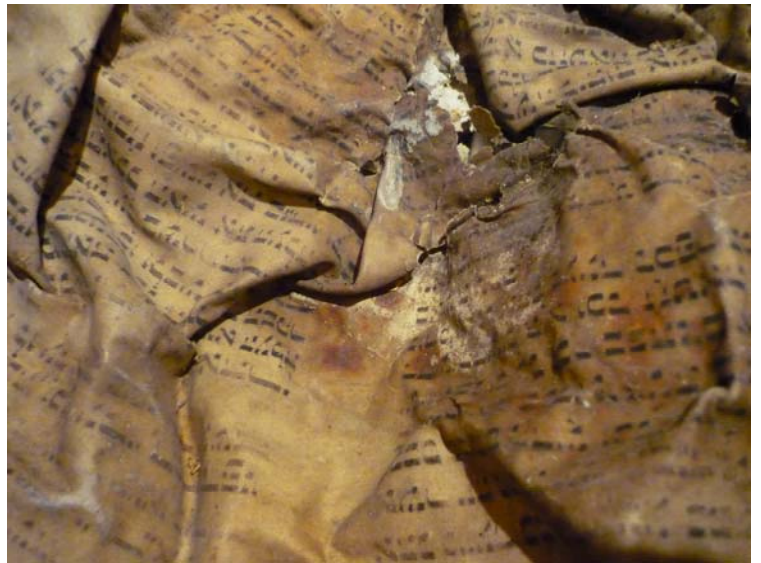
(About a hundred seats are available)

Saturday, May 3 2014 at 6.00pm: Private viewing of the exhibition of paintings by Harry Birkholz.

Around 8.00 pm: Presentation and opening of the 'Bransk Project' by Fiona and Chaim Shapiro (from Baltimore, USA), in the presence of Mr. Simon Gronowski.

Saturday, May 10 2014 from 8.00 pm to 10.30 pm: History of the village of Bransk and of the Shapiro family in the presence of Fiona and Chaim Shapiro and many friends.

Saturday, May 17 2014 from 8.00 pm to 10.30 pm: Round-table led by Marie-Thérèse Kastl (from Berlin) together with Jacqueline Adam (from Vienna) and Claude Kantor (from Paris) on the theme: 'How love and friendship can help liberate creativity and lead to artistic expression transcending inner suffering'



Saturday, May 24 2014 from 8.00 pm to 10.30 pm: 'The Song of Songs' or 'The Song of Solomon'. This evening is dedicated to the discovery of this exceptional poem in relation to Harry Birkholz' artwork. The text is presented and recited by Sabina Bhawani.

The room allows for a hundred persons to sit. Should you wish to participate in this path of consciousness, pencil the dates in your diaries!

Go to the website <http://www.harrybirkholz.net>