



The Nation without Art : Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art

Margaret Olin



Looking through the history of art, a reader might conclude that Jews could not create art - and such an assumption would be no accident. The discipline of art history - even the first scholarly studies of Jewish works of art - encourages the idea of the nonartistic Jew, as we see with disturbing clarity in this book. Using telling case studies ranging over two centuries, *The Nation without Art* illuminates the rise of the paradigm of the nonartistic Jew, as well as the ways in which theorists, critics, and artists have sought to subvert, overcome, or work within it. Cases that Margaret Olin examines include that of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem, whose efforts to use art to create a Jewish nationality in Palestine raise important issues of national identity, and the third-century Synagogue of Dura Europos, whose discovery in 1932 served a symbolic function for scholars struggling against the Third Reich. Among thinkers who supported or challenged concepts of Jewish art, Olin considers the philosopher Martin Buber, the critic Clement Greenberg, the nineteenth-century rabbinical scholar David Kaufmann, and the filmmaker Chantal Akerman. Her work broadens our understanding of the relation of Jews to the visual image, critiques the nationalist, ethnocentric paradigms of current disciplines, and offers insight into the tenacious art historical discourses that thinkers must inhabit uncomfortably or escape with considerable difficulty. Margaret Olin is an associate professor of art history and theory at the Art Institute of Chicago. She is the author of *Forms and Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art*.

- [Nat Geo Traveler New York City](#)
- [Naturalistische Novellen in Italien Und Osterreich](#)
- [Naturally Saponified](#)
- [National Gallery Technical Bulletin: v. 14](#)
- [A Nation Born in a Day : How God` Land Grant to Abraham Affects World Affairs and the End Times, and How You Can Partner with God in This Coming Event](#)