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Alexej von JAWLENSKY

REDISCOVERY

The painting

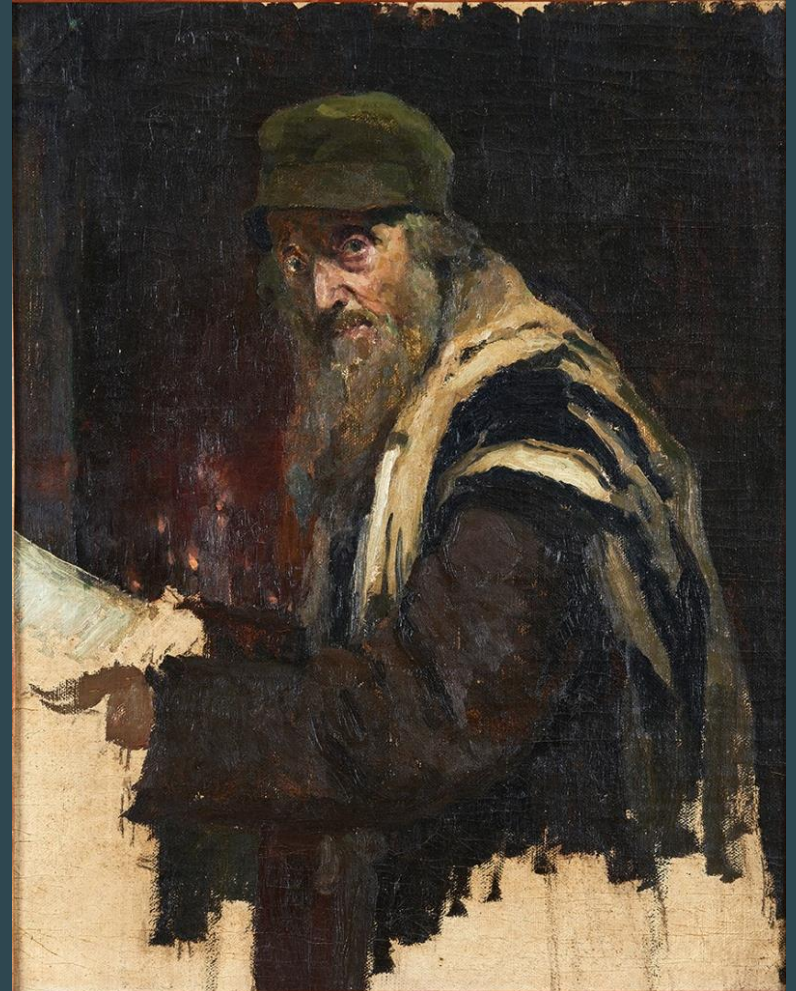
Alexej von JAWLENSKY (1864-1941)

Jew praying

Oil on canvas,

With inscriptions, signature and
writtings on the back.

87 x 68 cm



Archive pictures



Lost for more than a hundred years, this work by Alexej von Jawlensky remains known thanks to two archive pictures widely published in reference books.

On these photographs, we can see Alexej von Jawlensky sitting in a workshop and working on the canvas. With his friend the benevolent Marianne Werefkin standing by his side, he is the main interest of the scene.

Our painting is easily recognizable and these photographs are dated in the archives around 1893.

Rediscovery, 130 years later

- The painting was unknown and not located. This discovery is an important event, as this work constitutes and symbolizes a link between the great Russian painting of the end of the 19th century and the European Avant-Garde of the very beginning of the 20th century.
- The young years of Jawlensky are deeply influenced by the Russian master, Ilya Repin.
The discovery of this painting kept in a Bayonne's private collection for nearly 80 years highlights the European journey of an artist who will lead the color revolution.

A youth artwork

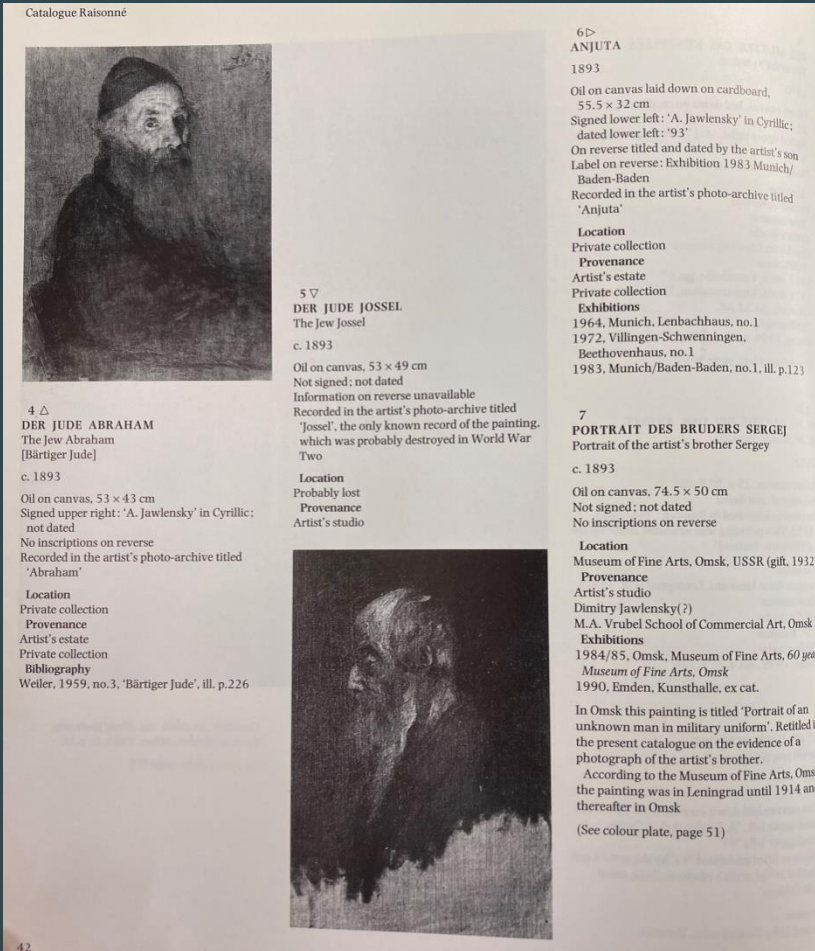
Coming from a family of the Russian military aristocracy, Jawlensky is naturally oriented to this career. He works his way up successfully, but he has a deep passion inside. The desire to paint grew stronger as he gained independence.

Jawlensky pushes the open doors of exhibitions, workshops and various artistic circles in Saint Petersburg. He joined the studio of Ilya Repin, a prestigious master of Russian painting at the end of the 19th century. His enthusiasm for creation and his talent was quickly noticed.

Repin introduced him to Marianne Werefkin. Young woman of character, a few years older, Marianne Werefkin is the favorite pupil of the great master. Young Jawlensky shows an overwhelming desire for Art. A deep bond is born between the two young artists.



Werefkin influence



Marianne Werefkin encourages him painting , every time, everywhere.

Marianne Werefkin, who has an wealthy family condition, takes the young Alexej with her, in her lessons, in her workshop, but also in the countryside to practice.

In summer 1893, during a stay in the "dacha" of Werefkin, the two young artists took an interest in a nearby Jewish village. Jawlensky produced there a series of portraits of these residents and old rabbis.

Our painting fits into this series.

Maria Jawlensky, Lucia Pieroni-Jawlensky et Angelica Jawlensky-Bianconi, *ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY. Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings – vol. 1: 1890 – 1914*, p. 42, Sotheby's Publications, 1991.

Pride and complicity



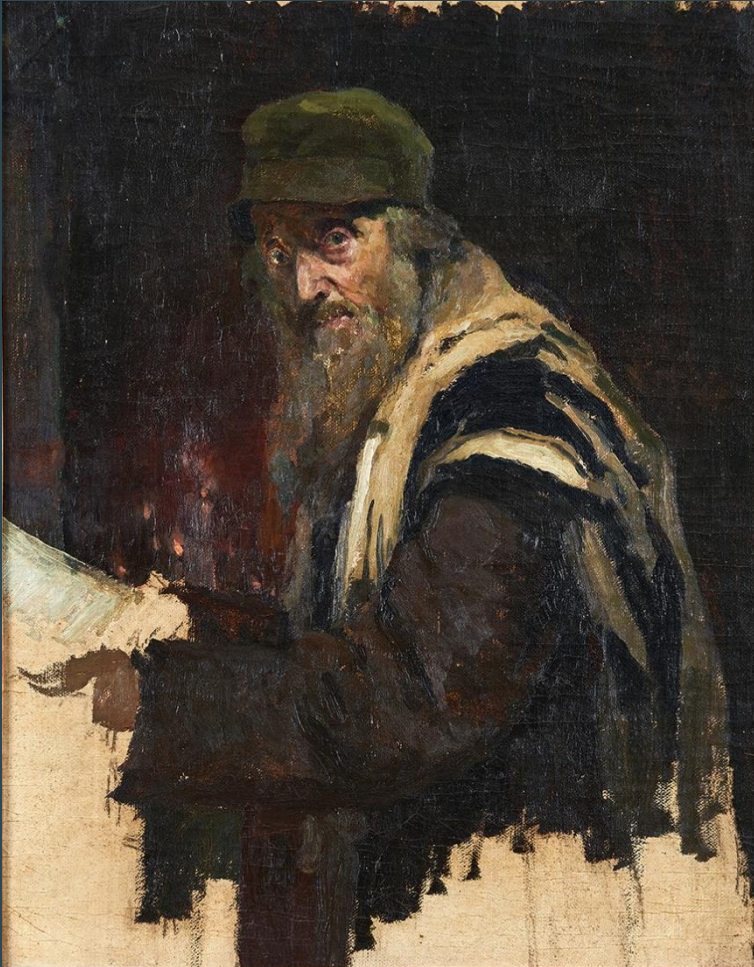
At this time, the portrait is probably one of the most fashionable genres. But to express the greatness of the soul, the artist has to go beyond academicism. Repin's influence is very present over these two young artists.

Werefkin wants to break free from the 19th century standards. She wants to take young Jawlensky with her. She doesn't know yet what artistic and cultural revolution they will lead to.

But we can already feel the consciousness of the artist and the project for both of them. On the archive photos, we can see the high society admiring the artist Jawlensky, seated, brush in hand, in front of our unfinished work. As his alter ego, Werefkin is standing proudly beside, her self-portrait behind.

We are in 1893.

Format, touch and colors

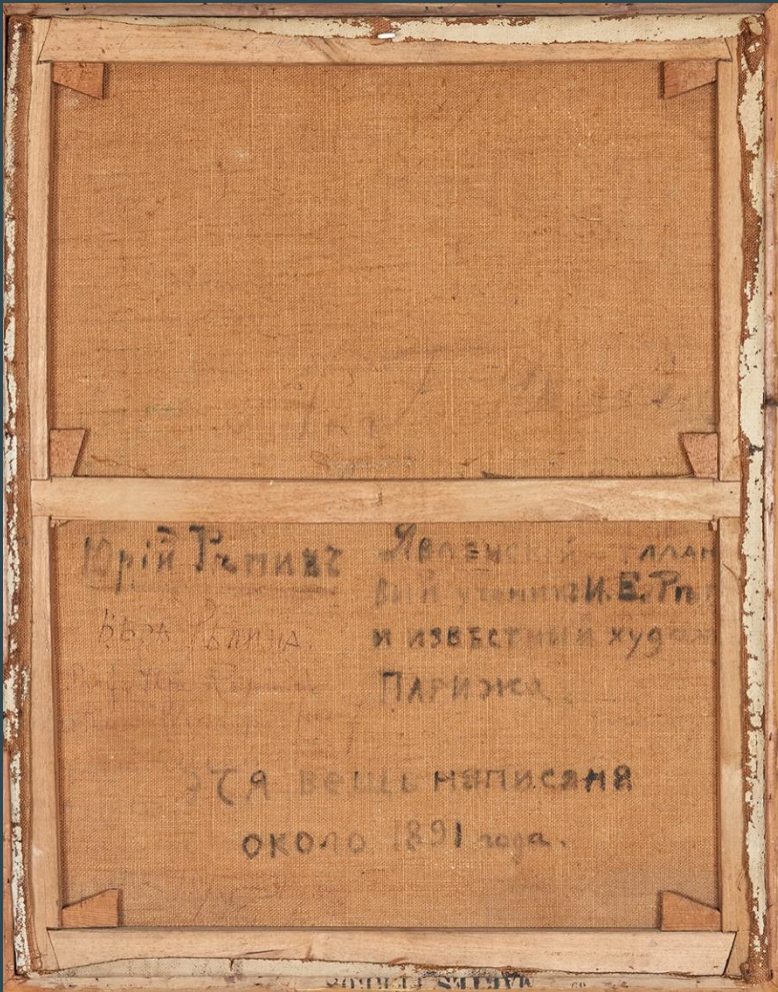


With the initial format of the canvas we can imagine a full-length portrait. It remained partially unfinished, like most of Jawlensky's works at this time. Our canvas was cut in the lower part without removing any power. This format is therefore easier to carry. The framing perfectly respects the rules of portrait.

This painting is one of the series of portraits of Jews. The long beard, the *tallit* on his shoulders and the book in his hands confirms the identity of this character. A few repaints hide in particular the flame of the candle but the captivating gaze of the old Jew in prayer remains powerful. He is surprised in a moment of introspection and we can feel the liveliness of a spirit. This luminous look contrasts with the weight of the years and the thickness of the jacket. The heavy prayer shawl weights on the shoulders of an old man, perhaps a rabbi. It reminds the history of the Jews, living in a harsh climate and suffering persecutions. With a few touches of color, green and mauve on shades of brown, this look awakens the portrait and echoes the flame of the candle.

There is still a long way to reach the revolutionary expressionism that Werefkin and Jawlensky will develop in Munich and Murnau in the 1900s. The liveliness of the touch is certainly the legacy of his teacher Repin and Werefkin. The break through color has yet to be found.

What origins ?



On the back, the horizontal bar of the frame divides the canvas into two parts. The upper part still shows the trace of a large signature by Alexej von Jawlensky. The lower part reveals a lot of information in Cyrillic. Repin's legacy is underscored by words that are probably those of his son Yuri Repin. Repin's fame was then far greater than the one of Jawlensky, who had not yet produced the Expressionist revolution.

Whether from Ilia's studio by his son Yuri, or directly by Jawlensky and Werefkin, the canvas probably arrived in Western Europe and France around 1900.

This painting was acquired by a Polish Jewish doctor, who arrived in France penniless in the 1920s. His grandchildren could attest the presence of the painting at least before 1950.

In the 1930s, this doctor notably treats the painter Emile Schuffenecker in Paris. During the war, he took refuge around Agen, then later settled in Bayonne. This painting was an ignored treasure among a few others of his collection, rediscovered two generations later.

Rediscovery and actuality



Marianne von Werefkin (1864-1941)

Self portrait in blue blouse, 1893

Fondation Marianne Werefkin, Modern Art Museum, Ascona.

The discovery of this striking work of art is a source of great pride. The canvas is one of the very first and very rare early works of Alexej von Jawlensky. It can be classified between the 3rd and 7th place in the Catalogue Raisonné, in the series of portraits of Jews produced in 1893, among a set of more than 1000 painted works already listed.

The subject, the genre and the technique are the main qualities of this work. It is also necessary to put into perspective another major interests of this painting. Archive photos show us how close Jawlensky and Werefkin have been. The *Lebensmenschen* catalog published for the 2019-2021 exhibition in museums of Wiesbaden, Munich and Ascona, highlights the extraordinary strength of the artistic and human bond that united these two artists.

This artistic couple gave birth to a color revolution that have an immense place in the world history of art.

A counterpart to Werefkin's self-portrait was missing to former this gathering.

The painting has been found!

Certificate of authenticity

After examining the canvas, the JAWLENSKY-Archiv S.A. foundation in Muralto, Switzerland, under the direction of Madame Angelica Jawlensky Bianconi, issued a certificate of authenticity of the work dated May 20, 2021.

The work will be listed in the artist's Catalogue Raisonné.

Bibliographie

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Auction

Exhibition:

- Paris:

From Monday 2nd to Friday 5th of November
On appointment

- Saint-Jean-de-Luz:

Wednesday 17th of November
from 2.00 p.m to 6.00 p.m

Thursday 18th of November
From 10.00 a.m to 12.30 a.m
and from 2.00 p.m to 6.00 p.m

Friday 19th of November
From 9.30 a.m to 11.00 am

Auction :

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