Ulrich Knufinke

Wall Paintings in Synagogues of Displaced Persons in Germany (1945–1950)

The decoration of synagogues with decorative paintings or mosaics and pictorial representations following an iconographic program has a tradition going back to antiquity, which also left traces in the synagogues and prayer rooms of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in the immediate post-war period.[1]

Since time immemorial, certain symbols, but also images of religiously significant places and, rarely, biblical scenes, have been used in different ways in the various epochs and regions to decorate the prayer rooms and endow them with a meaning that transcends place and time. With the so-called "Jewish Renaissance" and the growing interest in traditional forms of expression of a "specifically Jewish" art and architecture, iconographic programs occasionally found their way into modern synagogue construction in Germany, for example in Görlitz (inaugurated in 1911), Essen (1913), Augsburg (1917) or Plauen (1930).[2] In parallel, synagogue painting continued or revived in Eastern Europe, where examples of fully painted synagogues were also studied by modern artists and architects such as Marc Chagall or El Lissitzky.

Only a few illustrations and material traces testify to the fact that this modern tradition of decorative and iconographic painting was also used for a few years, from 1945 to about 1950, in some synagogue rooms, which Jewish survivors of the Shoah in Germany furnished and decorated under difficult conditions.[3] While the existence of synagogues and other Jewish religious institutions in the DP communities has attracted attention in historical research as an expression of group-specific consciousness-raising, it is difficult, also due to the poor availability of visual sources, to define the institutions themselves more precisely, to describe them, and possibly to

1 On the furnishing and design of early post-war synagogues in Germany, see Ulrich Knufinke, "Synagogenräume der Displaced Persons und ihre Gestaltung," in *Lager – Repatriierung – Integration. Beiträge zur Displaced Persons-Forschung*, ed. Christian Pletzing, and Marcus Velke (Frankfurt am Main, 2016), 71–100. The present article examines the thoughts discussed there and focuses on the paintings of such rooms.

2 On paintings in German synagogues of the Weimar Republic period, see Harold Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen in Deutschland. Geschichte einer Baugattung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (1780–1933)* (Hamburg, 1981), 524–528.

3 On the early self-organisation of Jewish survivors, see, for example, Andrea Sinn, "'Ungewöhnliche Schwierigkeiten und Situationen.' Über die Anfänge einer organisierten jüdischen Nachkriegsgemeinschaft in Deutschland," in *Überlebende des Holocaust im Bayern der Nachkriegszeit*, ed. Sybille Steinbacher (Göttingen, 2013), 166–182.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110750812-003

classify them in terms of architectural or art history.[4] Only a few plans, photos and descriptions survived in collections all over the world, archival material is rare and often fragmentary. Luckily some of the former DP prayer rooms survived, thus we can examine a small number of wall paintings in situ. However, the fact that the religious DPs made such great efforts to design their prayer rooms at all may testify to the great importance they also attached to them as places of identification.[5]

Art and architectural historians dealing with post-war Jewish buildings and their furnishings usually focus on the new synagogues and community centers – after all well over 100 structures were built from 1945 till the present.[6] The temporary prayer rooms established shortly after liberation have come into the view of historians and conservators in recent years, only.[7] Thus, it is only a hypothesis that in the design of post-war synagogues in Germany erected in the 1950s and 1960s we can find continuities with the brief period of the DP prayer rooms, although most of the DPs left Germany at the latest around 1950. Some DPs joined the communities that had developed outside the DP camps, mostly under the leadership of German

4 See Jim G. Tobias, "'Vertraut Gott auf ewig – schüttet ihm eure Herzen aus!' Die Wiedergeburt der jüdischen Orthodoxie in den DP-Camps," in *Religiöse Praxis in Konzentrationslagern und anderen NS-Haftstätten*, ed. Insa Eschebach, Gabriele Hammermann, and Thomas Rahe (Göttingen, 2021), 133–149; Jim G. Tobias, "'Mindestens eine Synagoge befand sich in allen Lagern.' Religiöser Neuanfang in den DP-Camps in Deutschland," *Zeitgeschichte* 47.2 (2020): 212–229; see also the projects of the Nürnberger Institut für NS-Forschung und jüdische Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts e.V. "Talmud Thora Schulen in Deutschland 1945–1950," www.talmud-thora.de (accessed October 18, 2021), and "Jüdische DP Lager und Gemeinden in der US Zone," www.after-the-shoah.org (accessed October 18, 2021) with lots of information about the DP camps and their religious institutions.

5 On the role of Jewish chaplains of the US Army, see Alex Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame. American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944–1948* (Detroit, 1993).

6 See, for example, Alexandra Klei, *Jüdisches Bauen in Nachkriegsdeutschland. Der Architekt Hermann Zvi Guttmann* (Berlin, 2017); Ulrich Knufinke, "Architektur des Sakralen zwischen Aufbruch und Erinnerung. Zeitgenössische Synagogen im Bild deutscher Städte," in *Der sakrale Ort im Wandel*, ed. Albert Gerhards, and Kim de Wildt (Würzburg, 2015), 223–230; "Architektur und Erinnerung: Synagogenbau in Deutschland nach der Shoah," in *Geschichtsbilder und Erinnerungskultur in der Architektur des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Kai Kappel, and Matthias Müller (Regensburg, 2014), 93–108.

7 On life, culture and the history of Jewish survivors a lot of research has been carried out during the last decades. See, for example, Michael Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust. Juden in Deutschland 1945–1950* (München, 1995); Jacqueline Giere, and Rachel Salamander, ed., *Ein Leben aufs Neu. Das Robinson-Album. DP-Lager: Juden auf deutschem Boden 1945–1948* (Wien, 1995); Jim G. Tobias, *Vorübergehende Heimat im Land der Täter. Jüdische DP-Camps in Franken 1945–1949* (Nürnberg, 2002); Angelika Königseder, and Juliane Wetzel, *Lebensmut im Wartesaal. Die jüdischen DPs (displaced persons) im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004); Nicola Schlichting, *"Öffnet die Tore von Erez Israel." Das jüdische DP-Camp Belsen 1945–1948* (Nürnberg, 2005); Peter Fassl, Markwart Herzog, and Jim G. Tobias, ed., *Nach der Shoa. Jüdische Displaced Persons in Bayerisch-Schwaben 1945–1951*, (Konstanz, 2012); Sybille Steinbacher, ed., *Überlebende des Holocaust im Bayern der Nachkriegszeit* (Göttingen, 2013).

Jewish survivors or remigrants. But, despite of the question of a "survival" of artistic traditions of the DP synagogues, for a deeper understanding of the short period of DP life and culture it may be important to shed light on the places where the religious renaissance of Jewish survivors took place. What did they look like? Who was responsible for them? What were their artistic sources? And where did the artists come from?

International Jewish aid organizations provided considerable support in establishing a religious life. Certainly, the completely destitute DPs could not establish the synagogues and prayer rooms on their own, but were dependent on help from the Allies and the aid organizations – sometimes also in dealing with hostile or delaying German authorities and the population, which had not been freed from anti-Semitism.

Different locations are documented for the synagogue rooms, depending on where and how the DPs lived and organized themselves. It can be assumed that the locations changed frequently and that it did not happen everywhere to design the rooms beyond the necessary basic equipment. DPs' synagogues existed both in camps where they were housed after liberation and where they lived in barracks and military settlements. They were not accessible to the German population. In addition, examples are known where DPs celebrated religious services in synagogues that had survived the Nazi period more or less unscathed. Here, an interaction between the population and the DPs took place, in which the role of the survivors as reminders and witnesses of the Shoah was addressed for the first time.[8]

One example of such a DP synagogue in a historic synagogue building from the British zone is the synagogue of Diepholz (Lower Saxony).[9] After the liberation of the camps the British military administration had to solve the immense problem of taking care of thousands of survivors, especially from the Bergen-Belsen camp-complex. Throughout the British zone, Jewish DP camps were established mostly in small towns not damaged by the war. One DP camp was opened in a former military airport near Diepholz in early 1946.[10] In the town, a Jewish community existed until the NS-period. Its synagogue was a tiny half-timbered building, where a prayer room was added in the nineteenth century. On Kristallnacht, the synagogue's furnishings were destroyed, but the building was not. NS-organizations used it as a workshop. As in other places, the Jewish DP community of Diepholz, organized in a "Jewish

8 See Tobias, *Vorübergehende Heimat im Land der Täter*, see note 7.

9 On Jews in Lower Saxony after 1945, see Herbert Obenaus, *Im Schatten des Holocaust. Jüdisches Leben in Niedersachsen nach 1945* (Hannover, 1997); Anke Quast, *Nach der Befreiung. Jüdische Gemeinden in Niedersachsen seit 1945. Das Beispiel Hannover* (Göttingen, 2001); on Diepholz, see Knufinke, "Synagogenräume der Displaced Persons und ihre Gestaltung," see note 1.

10 See www.after-the-shoah.org/diepholz-juedisches-dp-lager-und-gemeinde-jewish-dp-camp-and-community, accessed October 3, 2021.

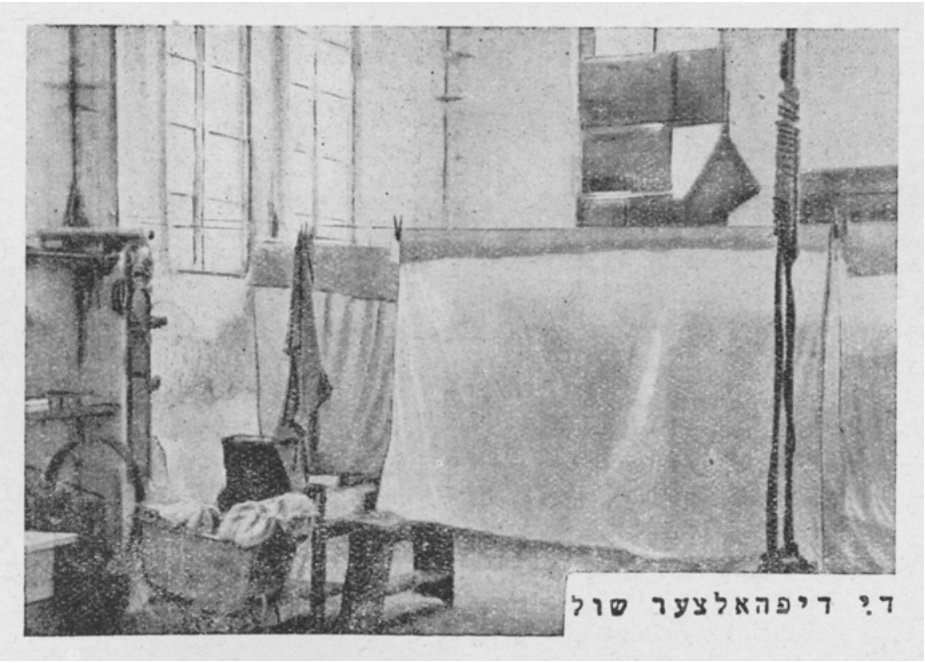


Fig. 1: Diepholz, interior of the former synagogue, around 1946 (*Unzer Sztyme* 7 [February 20, 1946]).

committee," reclaimed the former synagogue to have services there.[11] An article in *Unzer Sztyme*, the Yiddish DP newspaper of the British zone from February 20, 1946, relates the difficulties of retrieving the building: (Fig. 1)

> In one corner of the Diepholz synagogue is a locksmith's shop, in another corner the washing is drying. This is not only blasphemy, but it is a shame for our English providers [...]. The rabbinate asked the headquarters of Diepholz to leave the place to the Jews in town. But Major Fines returned [the letter] to the rabbinate without reading it!!! [sic!] And the German washing goes on drying. And the German locksmith is satisfied, humming ‚Heil, Sieg Kameraden'[12]

The article's sarcastic tone reveals the intentions of the DPs. They were not only in search of a place for prayer – obviously, it would have been easier to furnish a room in the barracks of their camp far outside the town. They intended to create a symbol of justice for all of the Jewish victims. The Jewish survivors in Diepholz, most of them born in Eastern Europe and, as far as we know, no one from the town,

11 See Nancy Kratochwill-Gertich, and Antje C. Naujocks, "Diepholz," in *Historisches Handbuch der jüdischen Gemeinden in Niedersachsen und Bremen*, ed. Herbert Obenaus (Göttingen, 2005), 468–478; Falk Liebezeit, and Herbert Major, *Spuren jüdischer Geschichte in Diepholz* (Diepholz, 1999).

12 Hildegard Harck, *Unzer Sztyme. Jiddische Quellen zur Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinden in der Britischen Zone 1945–1947* (Kiel, 2004), 31 (according to *Unzer Sztyme* 7 [February 20, 1946]: 15–16).

saw themselves as the legal successors of all destroyed communities.[13] Thus, the opening of the synagogue was also a symbol of post-war German society: Jews are still alive, and they will demand the return of property robbed from the Jewish people.

The Diepholz Jewish committee succeeded finally in reclaiming the synagogue for its services. The re-inauguration took place on October 22, 1946. Chaim Aronowitz reports on it in *Unzer Sztyme* from November 2:

> On October 22nd the Jews of Diepholz celebrated the opening of the reconstructed synagogue, destroyed by the murderous hands of the Nazis in 1938. Although there are only a few Jews in Diepholz, they succeeded to furbish the splendid synagogue under the leadership of the president of the local Jewish committee, Mordechai Freudenreich.[14]

The city of Diepholz had to pay for the reconstruction of the prayer room. Thus, some plans are preserved in the city archive (Fig. 2). A local craftsman designed a new furnishing, consisting of a Torah ark, a bimah and benches. This plan obviously was not executed, otherwise the Torah ark would have had its place in front of the south wall.[15] Some other drawings in the city archive of Diepholz show colored designs for a furnishing and for wall paintings. In these plans, the Torah ark is situated correctly in front of the east wall. The papers are not dated and not signed, but it is very likely that they were drawn by a Jewish DP.

In the drawings, the ark has a vaulted top and stands in an apse-like niche. Two columns or pilasters frame the niche, two lions, holding the Tablets of the Law with Hebrew letters, and a golden crown are on the top. A red curtain, painted on the wall surrounds the ark. Right and left of it, Hebrew inscriptions are written. The lower part of the walls obviously is covered with wooden panels, while a colored frieze runs under the ceiling. We can imagine that the square fields of the frieze should be filled with figurative images. As far as is known, the Diepholz synagogue wall paintings would have been the most elaborate decor of a DP synagogue in the British zone. Whether it was carried out is as yet unknown. The post-war Diepholz Jewish community ended around 1948.

Also, in the American zone, old synagogue buildings which survived were restored as synagogues for DP communities. In most cases, the synagogues were not furnished and painted as elaborately as planned in Diepholz. The framing of the Torah ark is quite similar to a painting in a prayer room on a photo from 1948, presumably taken in Wetzlar.[16] The camp was established in the Sillhöfer Au-barracks

13 See Kratochwill-Gertich, and Naujoks, "Diepholz," see note 11, 476.

14 Harck, *Unzer Sztyme*, see note 12, 53 (according to *Unzer Sztyme* 14 [November 2, 1946]: 27).

15 See Kratochwill-Gertich, and Naujoks, "Diepholz," see note 11, 476. On the following, see Stadtarchiv Diepholz, Bauakte Mühlenstraße 5; the author thanks Mr. Liebezeit, Stadtarchiv Diepholz, for his support.

16 US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Nr. 82912, http://digitalassetushmm.org/photoarchives/detail.aspx?id=12549, accessed October 18, 2021. On the history of the DP camp, see Jim G. Tobias, "Eine

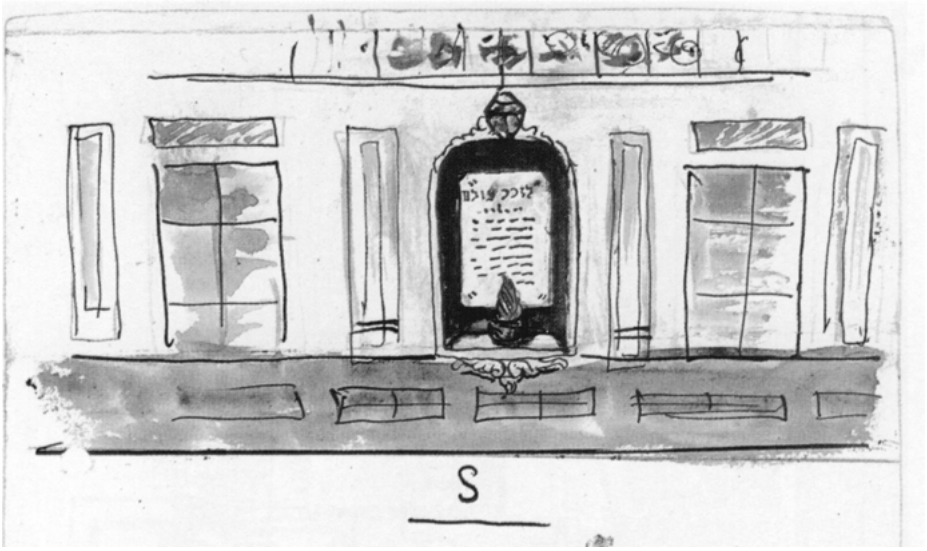


Fig. 2: Diepholz, design for the renewal of the synagogue of Diepholz, around 1946 (Stadtarchiv Diepholz).

in 1946 and closed in 1949. It is unclear whether the prayer room was established in the barracks or in another house of the Jewish DP community situated in Nauborner Straße 51 near the city center of Wetzlar. The room looks like a classroom with windows on one side and doors on the other and a flat ceiling (Fig. 3). A square wooden bimah stood in the center of the room and a modest cupboard-like Torah ark was situated in front of one of the walls. The ceiling was painted with ornaments. The wall around the ark was designed in a remarkable way: the neo-classical architectural framing of columns and an entablature with a curtain and a crown was for sure painted after 1945 – there was no tradition for such paintings in Germany before 1933.

In another Hessian DP camp, today the village of Trutzhain, a painted synagogue-room is still preserved. The camp was erected for prisoners of war during World War II. In 1946, the US-military government opened a camp for Jewish DPs here. In one of the barracks a prayer room was installed and painted:[17] Columns with channelings, depicted in a geometrical, abstract matter are painted between the windows. In a way they are similar with late-expressionistic or art deco-paintings of the 1920s or 1930s. On the ceiling, a Star of David is painted in different shades of blue (Fig. 4). As far as the paintings are documented, there are no other symbolic images

jüdische Stadt in Wetzlar," http://www.hagalil.com/2014/01/wetzlar, accessed October 18, 2021. Wetzlar's former community synagogue was also restored for the DPs; see Thea Altaras, *Synagogen und jüdische Rituelle Tauchbäder in Hessen. Was geschah seit 1945?* (Königstein i. T, 2007), 223.

17 See Altaras, *Synagogen und jüdische Rituelle Tauchbäder in Hessen*, see note 16, 71, and 172–173.

Fig. 3: Wetzlar, interior of the DP synagogue (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, call no. 82912).

in the room. The barrack is private property today and not accessible for further documentation.

The region of Upper Bavaria had the most DP camps of the US zone. By chance, the paintings of a DP prayer-room in Ampfing were rediscovered during a restauration. The synagogue was established in a former catholic parochial house. This house became the center for a DP community of survivors of Dachau. In 1946, about 85 Jews lived in Ampfing. In 1947, a hall in the house was turned into a synagogue and inaugurated on December 7, 1947.[18] Since the renovation of 2010, the painted frame of the Torah ark is visible again; a red, sweeping curtain with golden braids. The vault of the hall was painted with floral ornaments and stars on a dark ground. Stylistically the paintings remind baroque traditions. On the one hand, this is typical for churches in the region, on the other hand the DPs, mostly from Poland, may be reminded the traditions of Polish synagogue paintings.[19] In the south

18 See Michael Schmidt, "Nach der Shoah: Die ehemalige Synagoge des Jüdischen Komitees Ampfing," in *das münster* 63 (2010): 135–140, here 137. According to Schmidt, this prayer hall was decorated by local painters with a "picture cycle with scenes of the emigration to Erez Israel" (139). This decoration has not been preserved.

19 Schmidt's thesis that a local painter and a church painter, who demonstrably had already done the design of the temporary prayer room in an Ampfingen inn, could have done the painting is

Fig. 4: Trutzhain, paintings in the DP prayer room in a barrack of the DP camp (Thea Altaras, *Synagogen und jüdische Rituelle Tauchbäder in Hessen. Was geschah seit 1945?*. Königstein i. T. 2007).

wall, an oriental building is depicted: in a cartouche we see a domed building in a desert landscape, in front of it a traditionally dressed praying Jew (Fig. 5). Obviously, this represents Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem. Since the late nineteenth century, this motif from Erez Israel became popular for wall paintings in East European synagogues. Postcards with photos or etchings of Jewish places of worship in the land were distributed in European Jewish communities. Regarding the Ampfing DP community, this may give two hints for interpretation: On the one hand, it is a symbol for a longing for Erez Israel usual in Orthodox communities even without a Zionistic background. But for the DPs, it could have an additional political meaning in the sense of Zionism, too – most of them prepared for immigration to Israel, and the traditional places were witnesses to the legitimacy of settling there.[20] The Ampfing

plausible, but templates for both Rachel's grave and the Hebrew lettering must have been supplied by the Jewish community; Schmidt, "Nach der Shoah," see note 18, 139.

20 The "Eastern Jewish" tradition of symbolic-motif synagogue painting had already found resonance in Germany during the Weimar Republic. In 1928, the prayer hall of an "Eastern Jewish" Orthodox community in Remscheid was painted with corresponding motifs by the painter Heinrich Mandelbaum, himself a member of the community. However, this found resonance in the Jewish press rather as a curiosity (see *Israelitisches Familienblatt* 15.11 [1928]: 47).

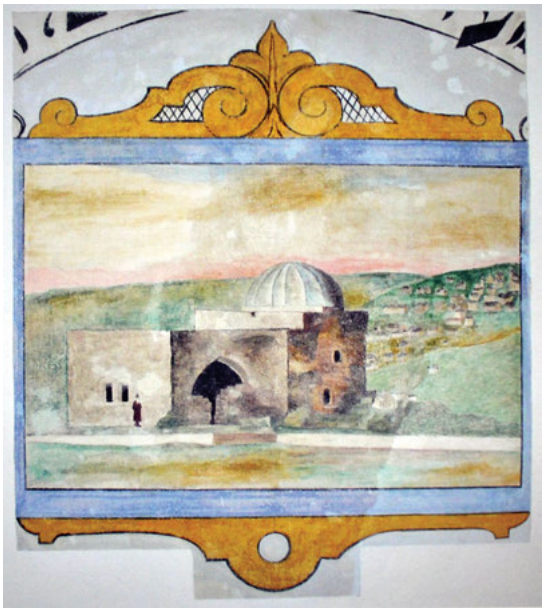


Fig. 5: Ampfing, paintings in the DP prayer room, 1947 (Michael Schmidt, "Nach der Shoah: Die ehemalige Synagoge des Jüdischen Komitees Ampfing." *das münster* 63 (2010), 135–140).

Fig. 6: Gabersee, painting in the DP prayer room, late 1940s, undated photo (nurinst-archive, Nuremberg).

Fig. 7: Weiden, paintings in the synagogue by Julian Pfeiffer, 1948/49 (Photograph: Mirko Przystawik, Bet Tfila – Research Unit for Jewish Architecture, Braunschweig, 2019).

prayer room served only for a short period as a synagogue; today the building is a parochial house again.[21]

Another motif from Israel, reproduced perhaps from a postcard, was depicted in a Jewish DP prayer room in Gabersee, Bavaria (Fig. 6). It opened in a hospital for DPs. Here we see a painting of the Western Wall with prayers as a similar motif of religious and perhaps political longing for Erez Israel.[22] Clearly the motif was taken from a photo postcard or an etching.

A more comprehensive iconographic program is preserved in the synagogue of Weiden in Upper Palatinate from 1948/49. The building is still in use by the Jewish community that dates back to the DP period.[23] A painted architecture of ionic columns

21 Schmidt, "Nach der Shoah," see note 18, 138.

22 See Jim G. Tobias, and Nicole Grom, *Gabersee und Attel. Wartesäle zur Emigration. Die jüdischen Displaced Persons Camps in Wasserburg 1946–50* (Nürnberg, 2016), 59–73.

23 See Angela Hager, and Cornelia Berger-Dittscheid, "Weiden," in *Mehr als Steine … Synagogen-Gedenkband Bayern vol. 1*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus, Berndt Hamm, and Meier Schwarz (Lindenberg i. A. 2007), 310–319.

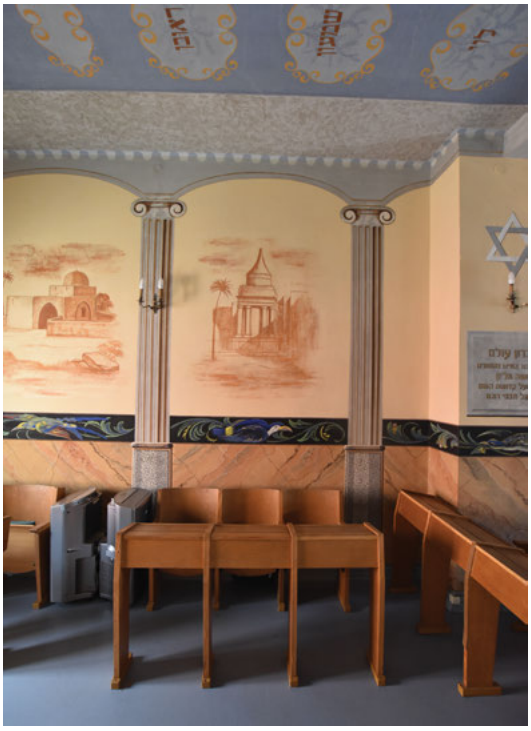


Fig. 8: Weiden, paintings in the synagogue by Julian Pfeiffer, 1948/49 (Photograph: Mirko Przystawik, Bet Tfila – Research Unit for Jewish Architecture, Braunschweig, 2019).

frames several fields, some of them filled with motifs from Erez Israel (Figs. 7 and 8). Only in Weiden can we name the painter, who was Julian Pfeiffer from Będzin near Kattowice. In 1949 he immigrated to Israel.[24]

Perhaps Pfeiffer was also the painter of the wall paintings in the synagogue in Neuberghauser Straße in Munich (Fig. 9). The city had the largest Jewish population in post-war Bavaria.[25] Thus the "Central Committee of the Liberated Jews" ("Zentralkomitee der befreiten Juden") and the "Rabbinical Council of the American zone" had its domiciles here since 1945. In the former villa of an artist, Jewish services were held from autumn 1946. Here a center of religious and cultural DP institutions developed. The hall with a balcony had room for 350 persons. On the east side, the Torah ark stood in a niche. On top of it, a griffin holds the Torah scroll. Floral ornaments surrounded the ark. Other parts of the walls show musical instruments, remembering the

24 See Hager, and Berger-Dittscheid, "Weiden," see note 23, 316.

25 See Tobias Weger, "Die ehemalige orthodoxe Synagoge in der Neuberghauser Straße 11," in *Beth ha-Knesseth. Ort der Zusammenkunft. Zur Geschichte der Münchner Synagogen, ihrer Rabbiner und Kantoren*, ed. Stadtarchiv München (München, 1999), 201–209.

instruments of the Temple of Solomon. Perhaps painted by Pfeiffer or by another artist, the painter must have studied seriously the East European tradition of synagogue painting and its renaissance in the first third of the twentieth century.

Along with the emigration of the most of the DPs their synagogues were abandoned. DPs who decided to stay in Germany mostly became members of the German-Jewish communities. A mixture of German and East European Jewish traditions developed – here more "German" – Liberal, there more "Polish" – Orthodox. Of course, this was not without cultural, religious and social conflicts.[26] Only a few Jewish communities saw themselves explicitly continuing with the DP traditions, like in Weiden or the minyan in Possartstraße in Munich.[27]

In most cases, the synagogues built in the 1950s and 1960s respected Orthodox traditions, giving up the Liberal synagogue layout prevalent in German synagogues from the nineteenth century until 1933. Stylistically, they were designed in "modern" styles. A reflection of Eastern European traditions may be indicated by the stained-glass windows with Jewish symbols in Düsseldorf (Fig. 10). The weekday-prayer-room was designed by Hermann Zvi Guttmann.[28] He was the architect of the whole Jewish center, inaugurated in 1958. Guttmann grew up with East European Jewish traditions and became one of the most influential synagogue architects in West Germany. The warm, dark and colorful weekday-synagogue, presumably mostly used by former DPs, contrasts with the light, white main hall for the entire community. But Guttmann used modern and abstract forms to transform the traditional Jewish symbols.

As spaces of self-identification and of shaping cultural and religious self-awareness, the synagogues of the DPs and their furnishing and paintings are of high significance. It has to be stressed that all the costly work was done for, and perhaps by, persons who intended to leave the place as soon as possible. Eastern Europe Orthodox traditions and the actual political struggle for the immigration to Israel were mingled in the iconographic programs.

Nevertheless, the DP synagogues were also meant as symbols for the survival of the Jewish people and culture. Especially in the land of the persecutors it was a political signal to reconstruct and re-open synagogues that were destroyed only seven or eight years before. The visible presence of Jews and their religious and cultural

26 See Michael Brenner, and Norbert Frei, "Konsolidierung," in *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart. Politik, Kultur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Michael Brenner (München, 2012), 153–294, especially 163–175.

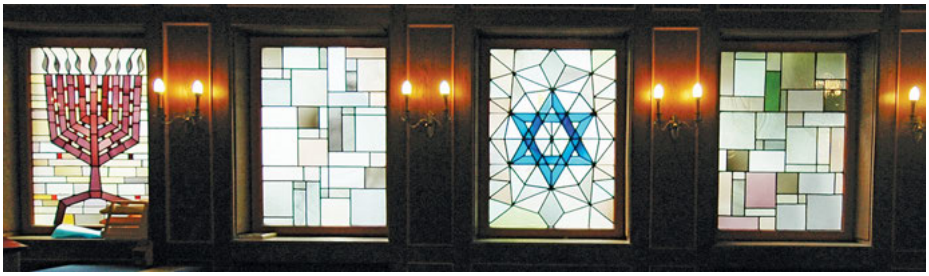
27 The Munich DP community lost many members through emigration, but it did not dissolve completely. Those who remained joined the Jewish Community in 1951. However, the group remained as a minyan, so that regular services continued to be celebrated in Neuberghauser Straße. A renovation of the synagogue hall still took place in 1961/62. In 1966, the community received a new domicile at Possartstraße 15, where the religious traditions of the DP community continue to this day; see Weger, "Die ehemalige orthodoxe Synagoge in der Neuberghauser Straße 11," see note 25, a photo is published on page 203.

28 On Guttmann, see Klei: *Jüdisches Bauen in Nachkriegsdeutschland*, see note 6.

Fig. 9: Munich, paintings in the prayer room in Neuberghauser Straße, around 1946 (Tobias Weger, "Die ehemalige orthodoxe Synagoge in der Neuberghauser Straße 11," in: *Beth ha-Knesseth. Ort der Zusammenkunft. Zur Geschichte der Münchner Synagogen, ihrer Rabbiner und Kantoren,* ed. Stadtarchiv München [München, 1999]).

institutions was part of the re-education program of the German population, especially in the US zone: In a speech held during the re-inauguration of the synagogue of Dieburg (Hesse) in the summer of 1947 the director of the military government, Dr. Newman, pointed out, that "the mission of the Americans in Germany will be fulfilled, when all men have learned to be tolerant."[29] The synagogue of Dieburg was the fourth synagogue to be re-opened in Hesse after the war. The subsequent fate of the Dieburg synagogue is comparable to that of some other synagogues from the time before 1933, which were used for Jewish services for a short time after 1945. After the

29 www.hstad-online.de/ausstellungen/online/juedisches_leben_in_suedhessen, accessed October 18, 2021; thereafter *Darmstädter Echo*, [August 2, 1947]). See also Dietrich Kohlmannslehner, and Thomas Lange, ed. *„ … wohnen auf der verfluchten deutschen Erde". Jüdisches Leben in Südhessen nach 1945. Die DP-Lager in Lampertheim, Lindenfels, Bensheim, Dieburg und Babenhausen sowie die Anfänge der Jüdischen Gemeinde Darmstadt* (Darmstadt, 1998), 44.



dissolution of the Dieburg DP community, it was sold, rebuilt several times and finally demolished in 1965.[30] The synagogue in Diepholz was sold to a Christian and torn down in the 1950s, also without leaving any documentation. Elsewhere, the historical decorations disappeared under younger layers: The paintings in Wetzlar, Munich, and Gabersee have only been documented by historical photos.

Although only a few examples of murals in prayer rooms of Jewish DPs have been identified so far, these material testimonies of the survivors are of considerable significance for the religious and artistic ideas of the communities for which they were created. They provide evidence of an interest on the part of the DPs in designing their spaces specifically – and in doing so, drawing on traditions that can be traced far back in the history of synagogues. Iconographic sources and artistic models can so far only be described in outline, and the designing artists or the executing painters remain largely in the dark. The indications of cooperation with local craftsmen, who also produced the other furnishings of the reconstructed synagogues, should be pursued further, since a hitherto little noticed field of exchange between the Jewish survivors, the local population, the local authorities and the occupying forces is emerging here.

The DP synagogues may also be seen as places of transit of synagogue art – from East Europe to Germany, from there to Israel, the US, and to other destinations of the former DPs. The traces of transfers and the ways and ideas of transformation still have to be researched. A systematic documentation and comprehensive research of the DP synagogues and their artistic programs should bring to life this interesting period of Jewish material culture in Germany and in other countries after World War II. Such research would also help to preserve the rare remnants of these now nearly forgotten objects.

30 See Ulrich Knufinke, "Dieburg. Synagoge Am Markt," in *Synagogenarchitektur in Deutschland*, ed. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, and Harmen H. Thies (Petersberg, 2008), 255–257.

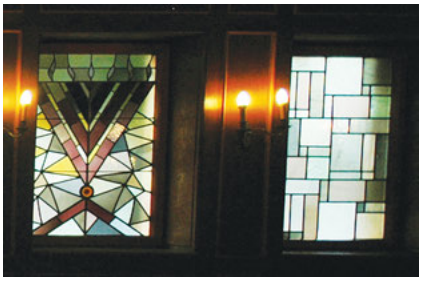


Fig. 10: Düsseldorf, stained-glass windows of the weekdays prayer room of the Jewish community center, architect: Hermann Zvi Guttmann, 1958 (Photograph: Ulrich Knufinke, Bet Tfila – Research Unit for Jewish Architecture, Braunschweig).