

Timeline

1913* Born in Kamyanets in Southern Russia near the border of Romania. (*according to the artist)

1924 Yonia and his family escape the Bolshevik Revolution by moving to Vilnius (Vilna), Poland, where his father is a professor of mathematics and physics at the University of Vilnius.

1936 Yonia earns a bachelor's degree from the University of Vilnius, Poland.

1937 Yonia earns a Master of Fine Arts from the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Vilnius, Poland.

1939 Yonia flees from Warsaw due to occupation by the Nazis.

1940 Yonia escapes the Nazis, but is captured by Soviet troops and imprisoned. He and his wife, Nuta, are released into Russia where they obtain Japanese transit visas. They flee the country, traveling through Siberia and on to Japan.

1941 Yonia is forced to relocate to Shanghai, China, in the fall and lives in the International Settlement. The bombing of Pearl Harbor traps him in Shanghai. He spends the war there and earns a living painting portraits of soldiers; he has a number of exhibitions during this period.

1942 May 31-June 15: *Exhibition of Paintings: Yonia Fain*. Jewish Club, Shanghai. Solo exhibit.

1943 A Jewish Ghetto is established in Shanghai in May, and Yonia Fain relocates there along with 18,000 other Jews.

1946 Yonia moves to Mexico City.

1947 *A tliye unter di shtern (A Gallow Under the Stars)*. Published by Di shtime.

1947-1953 Teaches at the University of Mexico.

1948 *Exposicion de Yonia Fain*. Solo exhibition at the Palacio de Las Bellas Artes, Salon Verde, Mexico City, Mexico, in January. Catalog text for exhibition written by Diego Rivera.

1948 November 29-December 18: *Exhibition of Paintings: Yonia Fain*. Demotte Gallery, NYC. Solo exhibit.

1949 Paints 600-square-foot mural in Mexico City's Pantheon Dolores. Diego Rivera delivers a series of three lectures on the significance of this work in the history of Mexican mural painting.

1950 Galeria Arte Moderno de Caracalla. Solo exhibit.

1952 October 16-December 14: Exhibits in Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting. Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute. Represents Mexico.

1953 Galerie Arte Mexicana de Inez Amor. Solo exhibit.

1953 Yonia moves to New York City.

1954-1970 Instructor at the Brooklyn Museum Art School.

1956-1957 November 15-January 25: *Brooklyn Museum Art School Annual Faculty Christmas Show*. The Brooklyn Museum, New York. Group exhibit.

1957 October 21-November 2: *Yonia Fain*. Bodley Gallery, NYC. Solo exhibit.

1957-1958 December 9-January 15: *Brooklyn Museum Art School Annual Faculty Christmas Show*. The Brooklyn Museum, New York. Group exhibit.

1959 March 2-14: *Yonia Fain*. Krasner Gallery, Madison Avenue, NYC, with catalogue. Solo exhibit.

1959 June 28-August 30: *24th Annual Midyear Show*. The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio. Group exhibit.

1960 Krasner Gallery, NYC. Solo exhibit.

1961 Krasner Gallery, NYC. Solo exhibit.

1964 June: Yonia is featured in a French magazine publication, *La Revue Moderne des Arts et de la Vie*, for his work as an artist and a teacher.

1964-1965 November 28-January 4: *Brooklyn Museum Art School Faculty sales-exhibition*. The Brooklyn Museum, New York. Group exhibit.

1964-1970 Teaches at New York University.

1971-1985 Yonia joins the faculty of the Department of Fine Art and Humanities at Hofstra University, teaching art history and the philosophy of art.

1973 *Faculty Show*. Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University. Group exhibit.

1975 Sean Desmond Gallery, Armonk, New York. Solo exhibit.

1977 *Faculty Show*. Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University. Group exhibit.

1978 *Faculty Show*. Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University. Group exhibit.

1980 *Fain and Gordon: Recent Works*. Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University. Two-person exhibit.

1983 *Beloved Strangers*. Printed in Israel, Israel-Book Publishing House.

1995 *Nyu-Yorker adresn: Dertseylungen* (Yiddish edition). Published by Farlag "Dray shvester."

1995 British WIZO and Oxford Institute for Yiddish Studies. Solo exhibit.

1999 July: Retrospective exhibition of Fain's work at Magdalen College, Oxford University.

2000-2001 *Flight and Rescue*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. Group exhibit.

2003 *Shards Across Time: An Exhibition in Memorial of Kristallnacht*. Brooklyn Jewish Arts Gallery, New York. Two-person exhibit.

2007 October 8-November 9: *Paintings and Drawings by Yonia Fain*. London Jewish Cultural Centre, England.

2007 *Der Finfter zman: lider (The Fifth Season: Poems)*, (Yiddish Edition). Published by CYCO Bikher Farlag.

2008 *A Painter's Witness to History: Recent Work by Yonia Fain*. Rochelle and Irwin A. Lowenfeld Conference and Exhibition Hall, Hofstra University.

2008 Yonia's poetry is included in *Voices From Shanghai: Jewish exiles in wartime China*. Published by University of Chicago Press, edited by Irene Eber.

2009 Yonia's poetry is included in *Yiddish Literature in America 1870-2000*. Published by KTAV Publishing House, edited by Emanuel Goldsmith.

Yonia Fain's early life was spent in Russia and in Poland where he was educated at the Academy of Fine Art in Wilna. In 1939 he escaped Nazi occupation and for the following eight years he lived in Russia, Japan and China.

In 1947 he immigrated to Mexico where the Mexican Government sponsored a retrospective show of his work at the National Museum of Bellas Artes in Mexico City. There he held

numerous exhibitions and was commissioned to do a large mural painting.

The paintings of Yonia Fain have been exhibited in Europe, Asia and Latin America. In this country his work has been represented at the Carnegie International and at the Whitney Museum. He is now a resident of New York and is a member of the staff of the Brooklyn Museum.

YONIA FAIN



artists reach an emotional intensity or achieve a high degree of quality.

Yonia Fain is among these rare exceptions. The shaking-up he experienced did not level off his talent, but rather brought it to an equilibrium.

He has given great and profound plastic expression to his reactions as an artist to the events of which he was a part. His paintings have the swift force of their themes. And just as life attacked and shook him, so he seems with his brush to attack the canvas.

Each tone and color that he applies is an emotional vibration. His drawings seem to be made up of the aching void of suffering, of the sharp stabs of pain and hunger. Fain's paintings and drawings express both the actual and the sublime of the state of mind in which they were conceived.

Everything experienced by the artist in the days of suffering and flight which took him more than half way around the world is contained in the paintings and drawings of Fain. From this very fact results their high esthetic quality, along with their complete sincerity and spontaneity.

The Mexican public is fortunate that this artist, with his baggage, has by force of circumstances arrived here. We should all extend to him — as I do now — the warmest welcome.

DIEGO RIVERA

[Preface to catalogue of paintings by Yonia Fain exhibited at the "Palacio de las Bellas Artes" in Mexico City, January 1948]

TRIBUTE TO YONIA FAIN

THE WAR PRODUCED A great variety of effects upon those artists who were caught up in the maelstrom, suffered and survived it.

We know of only a very few artists who have been able to express with emotional intensity and sensitivity the tragedy they experienced. The greater number of artists who experienced the war content themselves with merely reporting the events. Others attempt to interpret dispassionately the abstract esthetic of the war and what it meant objectively and subjectively to those who suffered it. Only very exceptionally does the work of the latter category of



EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY J. FEIN

CATALOGUE

YONIA FAIN

APRIL 20 TO MAY 8



john heller gallery

1942

31.V.-15.VI.

Jewish



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