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The Light of the Revival: Stained-Glass Designs for Restituted Synagogues in Ukraine

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The Light of the Revival

**STAINED GLASS DESIGN
FOR RESTITUTED
SYNAGOGUES OF UKRAINE
BY EUGENY KOTLYAR**

The Light of the Revival

**STAINED GLASS DESIGN
FOR RESTITUTED
SYNAGOGUES OF UKRAINE
BY EUGENY KOTLYAR**

Catalog of the Exhibition
at the Walsh Family Library
at Fordham University

September 10 – December 10, 2023



 CENTER OF
JEWISH
STUDIES
FORDHAM

New York 2023



JEWISH ART AT FORDHAM EXHIBITING EUGENY KOTLYAR'S STAINED-GLASS DESIGNS

In October 2022, the Henry S. Miller Judaica Research Room opened in the Walsh Family Library at Fordham. The room provides a unique space to present Jewish art and material culture alongside our more traditional Judaica collection that includes books, prints, and ephemera and serves as both a source and inspiration for student research.

When Russia started the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Fordham's Center for Jewish Studies partnered with the American Academy for Jewish Research and the New York Public Library to offer a remote fellowship program for Ukrainian scholars in Jewish studies affected by the war. We supported twelve scholars. Eugeny Kotlyar, an artist, designer, curator, and scholar, with an impressive artistic and scholarly portfolio, was among them.

When I saw Eugeny's vibrant and evocative stained-glass designs, I immediately wanted our Fordham community to see them. The opening of the Henry S. Miller Judaica Research Room made it possible. Eugeny generously agreed to select the artwork, share it as files we could print, and write introductory texts and captions. We hoped he was going to be able to join us in New York, but the current war made it impossible.

I am grateful to Eugeny for his willingness to have this exhibit, curated from afar, at Fordham. We share here the impressive — though unfortunately never implemented — designs for stained-glass windows for the Kharkiv Choral Synagogue (1995). They focus on the theme of *Jewish Holidays*. As the exhibit opens just before the High Holidays of 2023 and will stay open until Hanukkah, we made them a centerpiece of our display. The second project shown here is an ensemble of stained-glass windows for the Kyiv synagogue in Podil (2002). It focuses *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* and the *Tribes of Israel*. Finally, the third work *Jerusalem and the Tribes of Israel* is a part of the original design of the Torah Ark itself in the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv (2005). In Kotlyar's artistic vision, the stained-glass window projects the light, turns the metaphysical into the physical, materializes the speculative image, and, ultimately, fills the prayer with color and light.

Since the Henry S. Miller Judaica Research Room seeks to connect student research with our collection, I shared Eugeny's powerful images with Mia Moody FCLC '25, who was a summer research intern in the library. Mia, who had taken my class on east European Jewish history, is also an art history major. She chose images from medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and placed them in conversation with Eugeny Kotlyar's artwork.

When we started this project, I did not realize what turning an idea of an art exhibit into a reality — especially with a war raging — would require. I am therefore grateful to so many people who made it possible. We are especially grateful to Linda Loschiavo, the Director of Fordham Libraries, who has been supportive of the idea of having a Judaica Research Room and made it a reality. She has marshaled library resources to help us prepare the room for the exhibit. Gabriella DiMeglio and Vivian Shen at the O'Hare Special Collection helped with various logistic items and supported student research. Marjorie Coyne, Seth Knight, and Nicole Zeidan shepherded us through the mounting of the exhibit. This exhibition is made possible thanks to the generosity of Fordham Trustee Henry S. Miller, Mr. Bruce Beal, Mr. Eugene Shvidler GBA' 92, and anonymous donors to the Center for Jewish Studies at Fordham. Through the generosity of Dr. James Leach Fordham is home to one of the most comprehensive collections of medieval manuscript facsimiles. The power of the illuminated Hebrew manuscripts is now on display together with Eugeny Kotlyar's designs.

Eugeny Kotlyar's exhibit is titled "The Light of the Revival." His designs illuminate synagogues that were once neglected and left in sorrowful disrepair, providing light and inspiration. In this difficult moment of war and destruction, they provide hope for a renewal of life and a return of brilliant light after this dark war ends.

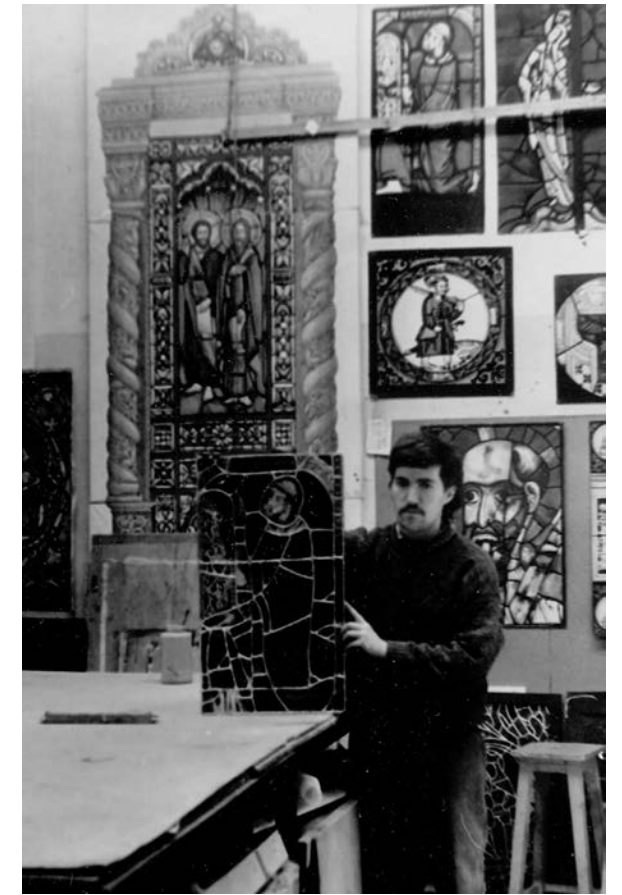
Magda Teter

*Professor of History and The Shvidler Chair
in Judaic Studies*



THE LIGHT OF THE REVIVAL: STAINED GLASS DESIGN FOR RESTITUTED SYNAGOGUES

*To the blessed memory
of my teacher and mentor,
Professor Olexander Pronin (1934–2002),
the founder of the stained glass school
in Eastern Ukraine, who taught me
the art of stained glass
and supported my creative
and scientific interest
in the Jewish theme all the years*



Eugeny Kotlyar, student of the Kharkiv Art and Industry Institute. 1994

It all started thirty years ago. In 1993, I was a student at the Department of Monumental and Decorative Art of the Kharkiv Art and Industrial Institute and was looking for an architectural structure for my course project. Quite consciously, I chose the building of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue, because even then I participated in the Jewish youth movement and began to study the Jewish tradition. The synagogue was recently returned to the Jewish community and was undergoing renovations. When inside, I raised my head up toward where the dome was rising, and seeing the crumbling plaster, I said to myself: “Oh, I would create something like the Sistine Chapel by great Michelangelo here.” ... I think that then I was driven not only by ambition but also by a rather poor understanding of the task at hand.

Only many years later did I realize the abyss that lay between me — as well as the previous generations of post-World War II Jewry — and that great Jewish culture from which the Soviet regime had cut us off. The chasm was even more palpable regarding the architectural and artistic tradition.

< The author in Kyiv Podil synagogue, twenty years after the stained-glass windows were installed. 2022

The 1990s saw a boom in the restitution and restoration of historic synagogue buildings. Difficulties with their return were combined with the problems of the revival of Jewish religious life, the economic crisis, and the absolute unfamiliarity with what a “kosher” synagogue should look like: what is prescribed, what is forbidden, where and to what extent creativity can be shown. We were still behind the Iron Curtain. The reconstruction of each local synagogue was a complex process, which in the early days entailed choosing a strategy, making compromises, and fighting with the authorities, the community, and donors. Only later, at the turn of the new millennium, when cultural and foreign exchanges intensified, books and specialists from abroad appeared, did the architectural and artistic aspects of the reconstruction come on the agenda. In the first decade of the 21st century, the era of the revitalization of synagogues began in earnest.

The happy coincidence of place and time gave me every opportunity to prove myself in this and other areas of Jewish object design. But it was the stained-glass windows, with their light and emotional power, that illuminated my further path in Judaica art.

Beginning in the 1990s, as spiritual life was reviving in Ukraine and it became necessary to return the houses



Olexander Pronin and Galyna Tischenko teachers of the Kharkiv Art and Industry Institute. 1996



Eugeny Kotlyar. *The Coat of Arms of Kharkiv*, 1887. Stained glass window for the Kharkiv Institute of Municipal Construction Engineers. 1994



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Tribe of Naphtali*. Stained glass window of the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. Detail. 2002

of worship to a full life, all denominations needed specialists. Like me, other artists and designers, taking the same course in which I designed the stained glass windows for the Choral Synagogue in Kharkiv, defended their graduation projects focusing on designing stained-glass windows for Orthodox and Catholic churches and other synagogues. Our work represented a real renaissance of sacred art. We were all brought together, taught, and inspired by the head of our department, the famous master of stained glass, Professor Olexander Pronin (1934–2002), who, starting in the 1960s, himself recovered, and in fact, rediscovered the art and technology of stained glass in the region. As a student, under his guidance, I made my first stained glass window for a university in Kharkiv, which became the prologue to my “synagogue” chapter.

The ability of a stained-glass window not only to decorate a sacred space, but also, in a certain sense, to physically materialize the divine light in symbols, images, meanings, and most importantly, in vivid emotions, has been adopted by the Catholic Church since the Middle Ages. This tradition entered the space of the synagogue with the advent of the Reform movement in the nineteenth century when synagogues began to seek aesthetic parity with churches. During Kristallnacht, thousands of windows in synagogues were shattered across Europe, with them, destroyed were in Europe not only countless beautiful stained-glass windows but also the very memory of this recent tradition. The new aesthetic tradition survived

in Jewish communities across the ocean, especially in the United States, and was later revived in post-war Europe, but not in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. They were rediscovered only in the 1990s, and the exhibition captures that moment.

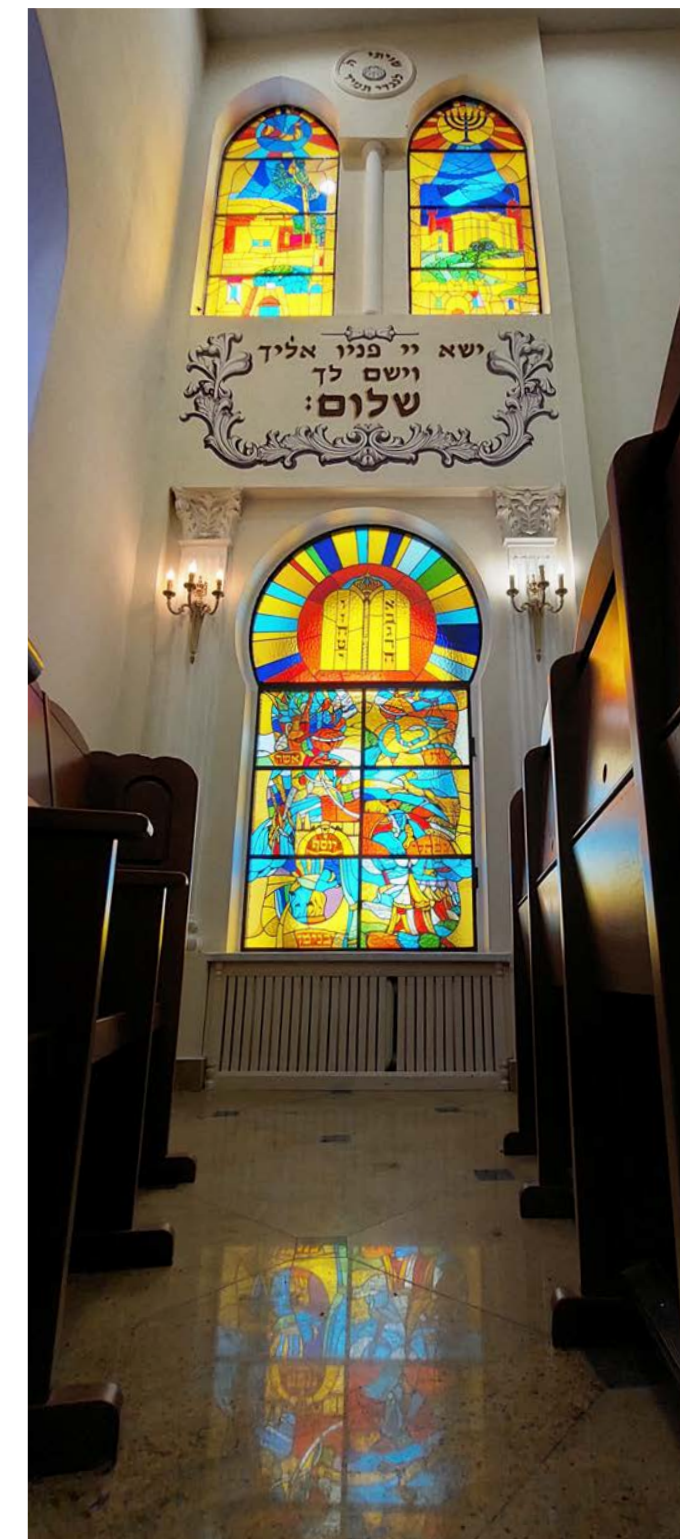
Displayed here are historical photos and designs of synagogues, sketches of stained-glass windows, as well as photographs of completed works. Together, the artistic images in connection with the larger historical context unfold a broad perspective of how Ukrainian synagogues were reborn. Two early works shown here were the first samples of stained glass designs for modern Ukrainian synagogues, and they set a new trend.

The exhibition is based on three sets of stained-glass windows, which were designed and partially implemented in Ukrainian synagogues in the period from 1995 to 2005. The first of them — the stained-glass windows for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue (1995) on the theme of *Jewish Holidays* — was intended for the windows of the side façades and used wide decorative glazing of the prayer hall. The second project — an ensemble of stained-glass windows for the Kyiv Podil synagogue (2002) — focuses *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* and the *Tribes of Israel*. They now adorn the east wall, creating a rich color and light frame of the old and restored Torah Ark. Finally, the third work *Jerusalem* and the *Tribes of Israel*, a part of the original design of the Torah Ark itself, including its pediment and side wings, was realized in the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv (2005).

These three projects offer different approaches to the use of stained glass in synagogue interior design and three different strategies for the sacralization of the prayer space by means of stained-glass art. What is created as a result is a new perception of sacred space and a new experience of self-perception. In my artistic vision, the stained-glass window projects the light, turns the metaphysical into the physical, materializes the speculative image, and, ultimately, fills the prayer with color and light.

As an artist and as a Jew, I have experienced this in full just recently. The full-scale Russian invasion forced me and my family to hastily evacuate from my native Kharkiv at the beginning of March 2022, first to Lviv, and then to Kyiv. That year, I experienced the High Holidays in the Kyiv synagogue in Podil, the synagogue for which I created the stained-glass windows exactly two decades earlier. For the first time in all these years, I looked at the stained-glass windows precisely in the same as the members of the community see them in prayerful union with the Almighty. The natural course of the day changed the light, which revived and renewed the images, creating a special mystical fullness of the space. I looked at my work and was infinitely delighted with and grateful for my participation in this world.

Eugeny Kotlyar
August 7, 2023



Stained glass window of the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. The left side of the eastern wall. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023



KHARKIV CHORAL SYNAGOGUE

The history of Kharkiv Jews dates to the end of the 18th century. During the Russian Empire, Kharkiv was not in the Pale of Settlement, a territory in which Jews could legally live, and hence the right of Jews to settle in the city was highly restricted and regulated but not entirely prohibited. By 1897 more than 11,000 Jews lived in Kharkiv, amounting to around 3% of the total population, and on the eve of the October Revolution in 1917, there were five synagogues and more than twenty prayer houses. One of those synagogues was The Kharkiv Choral synagogue in the city center. It was built in 1913 on the site of an old merchant synagogue founded in the 1860s. Its architectural design was the *Jewish Letter* by the renowned St. Petersburg architect Yakov Gevirts (1879–1942) chosen from seventeen entries in a competition commissioned by the Kharkiv Jewish community in 1909 and organized by the Imperial Society of Architects in St. Petersburg. The style was romantic modern with elements of Romano-Gothic, Near Eastern, and Moorish styles. It was implemented four years later by Kharkiv architects Mykhailo Piskunov and Valentyn Feldman.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the policy of militant atheism in the early Soviet epoch led to the nationalization of places of worship. Synagogues were thus transformed into Jewish workers' clubs. In 1923, the Choral synagogue was closed and became, successively, the *3rd International Jewish Workers' Club*, a children's cinema, and after WWII, a sports association. The inside of the building was redesigned as a gymnasium.

In 1990, at the end of the Soviet era, the building was handed over to the Jewish community of the city and the long process of its restoration began. The building was designated an architectural landmark and was restored



Yakov Gevirts (1879–1942),
the architect of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue.
Photo 1907



Yakov Gevirts. *Jewish Letter*. Competitive project of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1st Prize. *Journal Architect (Zodchiy)*. St. Petersburg, 1909

< The main façade of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue (now the *Beit Menachem* synagogue) after reconstruction (2003). Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2010



The 3-d International Jewish Workers' Club, the former Choral synagogue after nationalization. Photo 1933



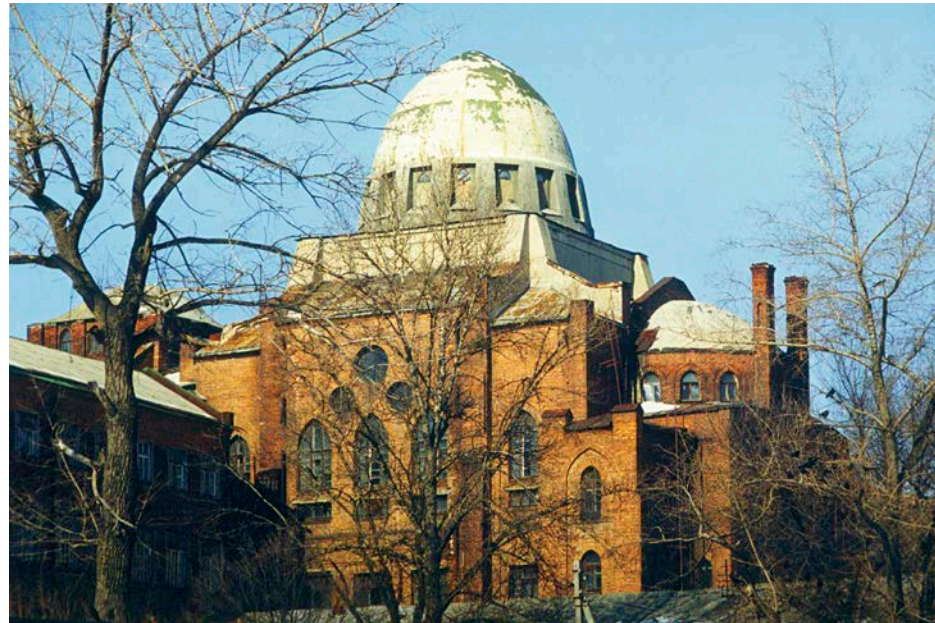
Mezuzah on the doorpost of the synagogue, the state after returning to the Jewish community. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 1994



The prayer hall of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue (now the Beit Menachem synagogue) after reconstruction (2003). Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2008



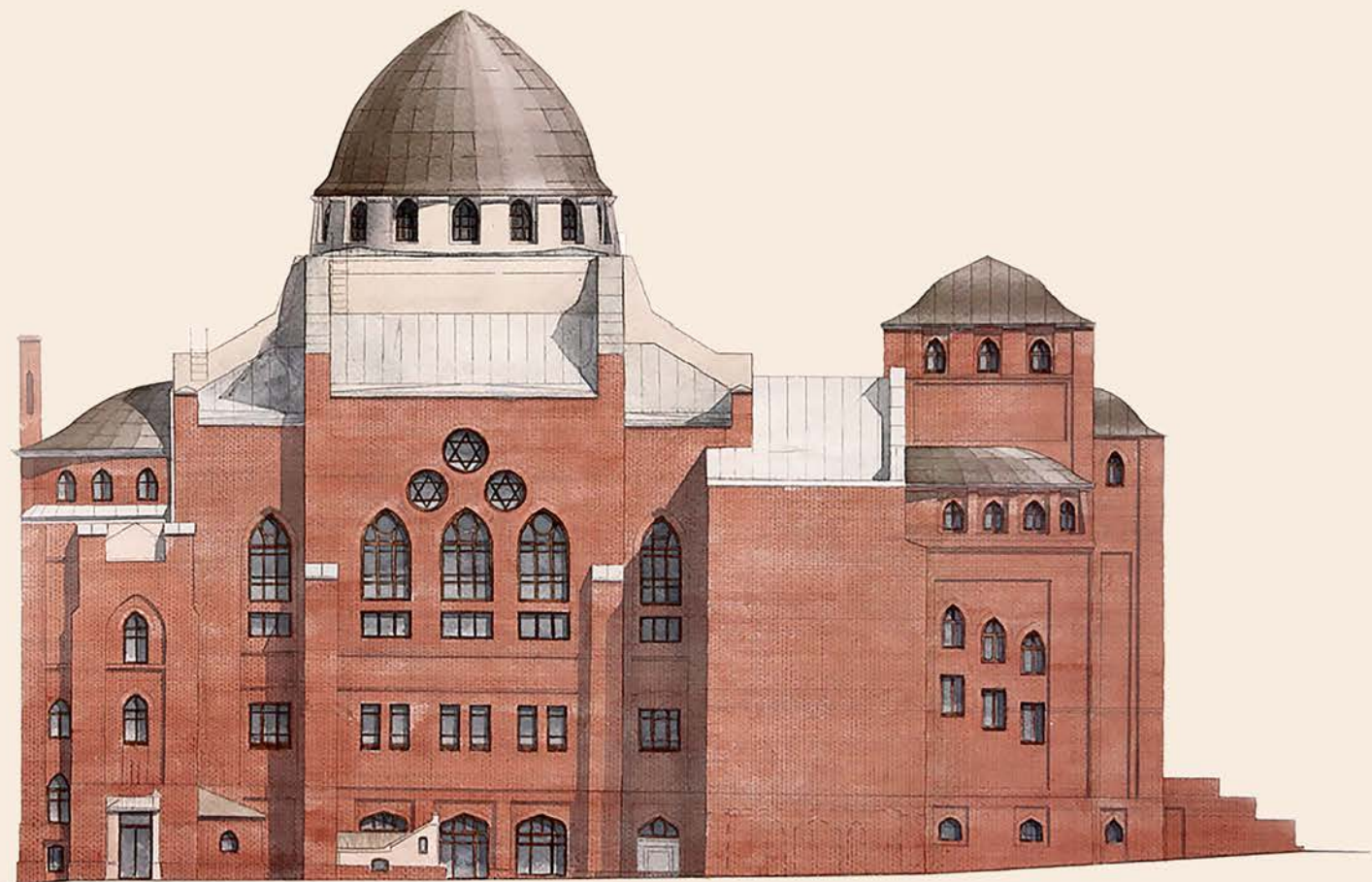
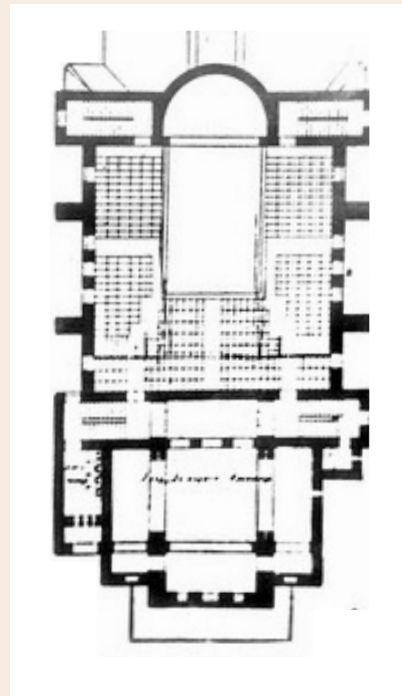
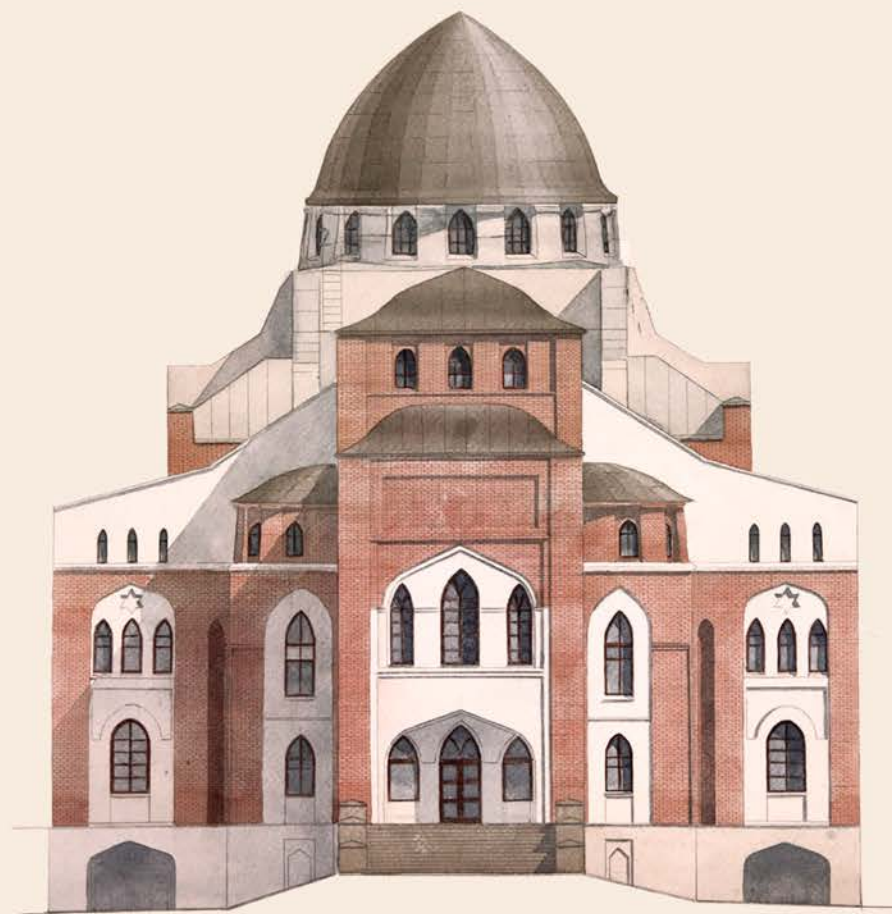
Kharkiv Choral synagogue, the state after returning to the Jewish community. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 1996



The prayer hall of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue (now the Beit Menachem synagogue) after reconstruction (2003). Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2008



Panorama of Kharkiv with a view of the Choral synagogue and the old Jewish quarter (right). Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2002



The Prayer hall of the synagogue under reconstruction. The end 1990s and early 2000s. Photo by E. Kotlyar

by the Kharkiv branch of the Ukrainian Institute of Restoration (reconstruction project by Volodymyr Novgorodov). The interior of the prayer hall was designed by an Israeli architect Aaron Ostreicher, who played an important role in the reconstruction of many other synagogues in Ukraine. The restored Choral Synagogue in Kharkiv was inaugurated in 2003.

Today, the synagogue serves followers of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement under the leadership of Rabbi Moshe Moskovitz, Chief Rabbi of Kharkiv and the region. It is one of the largest synagogues in Ukraine and bears the name *Beit Menachem* in memory of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Stained-Glass Design for the Prayer Hall

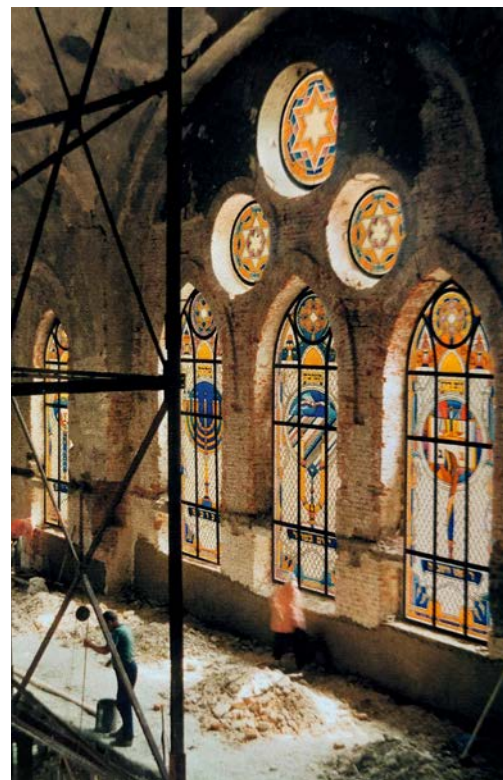
The *Jewish Holidays*, a stained-glass project for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue, was developed in 1995 as BA Diploma Project at the Department of Monumental and Decorative Painting of the Kharkiv Art and Industrial Institute. I had begun his work on this topic two years earlier with the first sketches trying to get acquainted with the Jewish artistic tradition in the almost complete absence of information and competent professionals in Ukraine. With synagogues being returned to the communities and reconstructed after decades of communist rule, everyone had the same questions. I thus studied the rules and traditions of synagogue decorations, and my research won the Grand Prix at the All-Ukrainian Competition of student works (1995).

My focus was always on the light source, both physical and spiritual. The placement of windows, their size, and their shape determine not only the illumination but also

< Galyna Stalinska. The drawings of the main and side façades of Kharkiv Choral synagogue after restoration. 2009



Eugeny Kotlyar preparing sketches of stained-glass windows for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. Kharkiv Art and Industry Institute. 1995



Visualization of the project of stained-glass windows in the interior of the reconstructed synagogue. Digital graphic. Made by the author in the late 1990s



The author, Eugeny Kotlyar, near his B.A. Project: *Jewish Holidays*. Stained-glass windows for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. Kharkiv Art and Industry Institute. 1995

the emotional impact of the space, which stained glass is able to transform. Connecting the spiritual with the material works like this. Passing through the visual images, the light stream fills the prayer space with symbols and expression, thus spiritualizing it. The binding of these images to the cardinal points and architecture sacralizes the space as the place of the descent of the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence) during prayer, which enhances the *kavanah* – the prayerful intention, “the mood of the heart.” Studying the monuments of traditional Jewish art, I also deduced for myself its general visual formula, in which three components are combined: the ornament, plot, and font, as they link texts and meanings in a single decorative field.

The project itself included the development of stained-glass windows for the side façades of the prayer hall. Above, at the level of the women’s gallery, thematic stained-glass windows were offered — five on each side, and below, at the level of the men’s parterre, they were

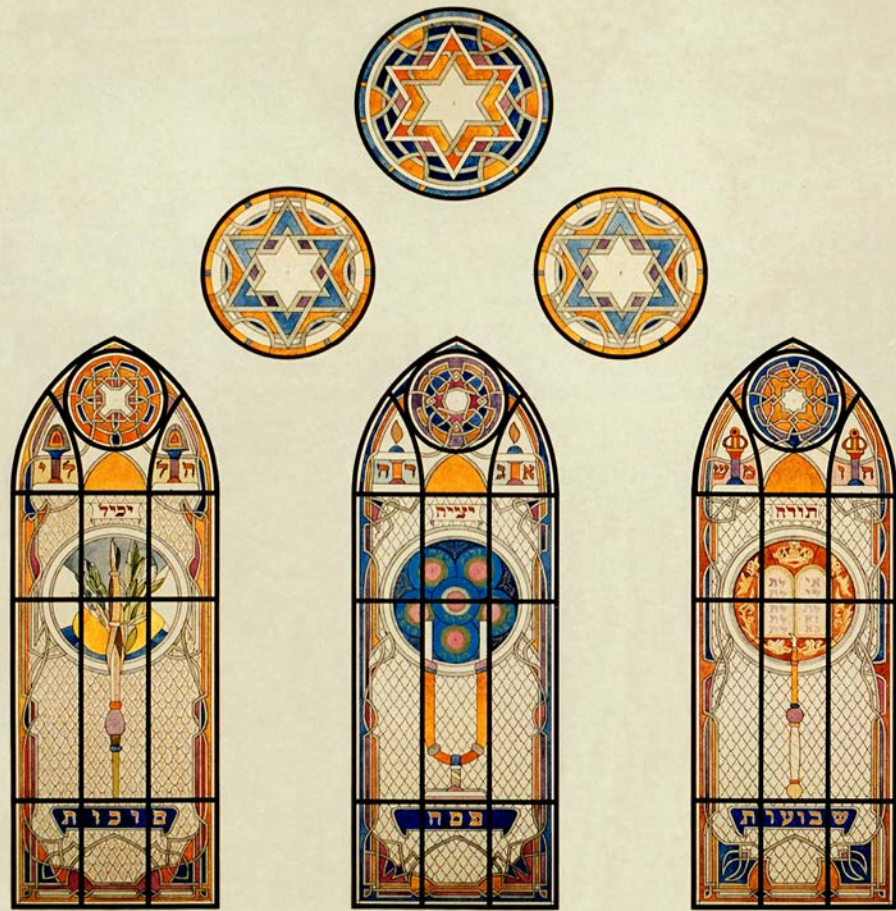
stylistically supported by small decorative stained-glass windows. The program of stained-glass design, the choice of symbols and inscriptions corresponding to the spiritual tradition of Judaism, was developed in collaboration with the Israeli rabbi Dani Lapan. With his assistance, Rabbi Shapiro from Jerusalem, a well-known expert on the Torah, compiled the arrangement of holidays, inscriptions, and quotes from the Torah, which united the entire stained-glass ensemble.

According to this order, on the right hand of the Torah Ark were compositions of five holidays in the order in which they are mentioned in the Torah (from right to left): *Shabbat* (Saturday), *Rosh Chodesh* (New Moon), *Pesach* (Exodus of the Jews from Egypt), *Shavuot* (Day of the Giving of the Torah) and *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles). The last three make up the complex of *shalosh regalim* – festivals during which pilgrimages to the Jerusalem Temple were made. The first wall of stained-glass windows

corresponded to the saying from the Torah that passed through all five windows, saying that these holidays were established by the Almighty: “Those are the set times of the LORD that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions” (Leviticus 23:37).

For the left side of the Ark was to be adorned with stained-glass windows depicting the main holidays mentioned in the Tanakh, as well as those established by the Sanhedrin, the great rabbinic assembly, in the calendar sequence: *Tisha B’Av* (Day of mourning, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple), *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, (New Year), *Yom Kippur* (Judgment Day), *Hanukkah* (the liberation of the Jews from the Greek conquerors in a symbolic victory of monotheism over paganism), *Purim* (the miraculous salvation of the Jews from destruction). These stained-glass windows appear under a verse from the Torah: “So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of LORD.” (Leviticus 23:44).

The structure of the inscriptions and plots corresponds to different levels of Torah comprehension. The simplest is the names and symbols of the holidays in a circle, reflecting their history, attributes, and spiritual aspects. More complex are the inscriptions above the circles with symbols reflecting concepts of Judaism, which reveal through the corresponding holiday the relationship of the Almighty with the world and the Jewish people. The most complex and integral level are the quotes from the Torah, woven into the structure of the stained-glass windows: the letters between the handles of the scrolls and the lancet arch at the top, reminiscent of the silhouette of the dome of this synagogue. They correspond to the essence of the Torah itself, where the meanings are hidden not only in the content of the text, but also in various combinations of letters, words, and expressions that reveal its code structure and deep, secret meanings. These verses summarize the spiritual meaning and origin of the holidays.



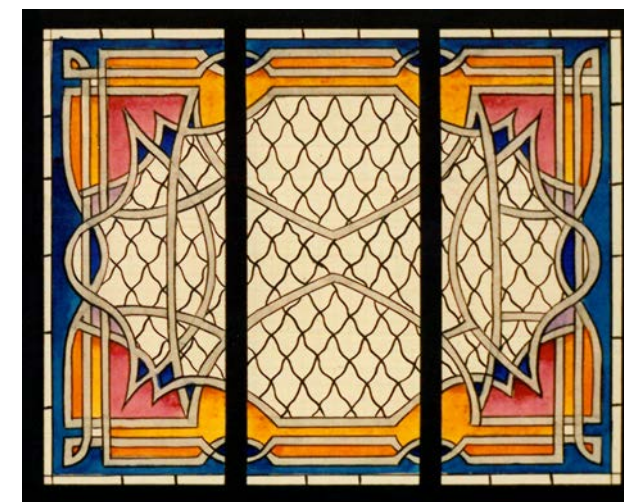
Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Holidays*.
 Sketches of stained-glass windows for
 the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1994.
 Paper, ink, watercolor



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Holidays*.
 Sketches of stained-glass windows for
 the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1994.
 Paper, ink, watercolor, gouache



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Holidays*. Stained-glass window project for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1995.
 Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor, gouache



Sketches of the stained-glass windows for the first floor of the Kharkiv Choral synagogue.
 Detail of the B.A. Project *Jewish Holidays*. 1995

דִּירְבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל



אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Holidays: Tisha B'Av, Rosh Ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, Purim.*
The inscription in the structure of the stained-glass windows:

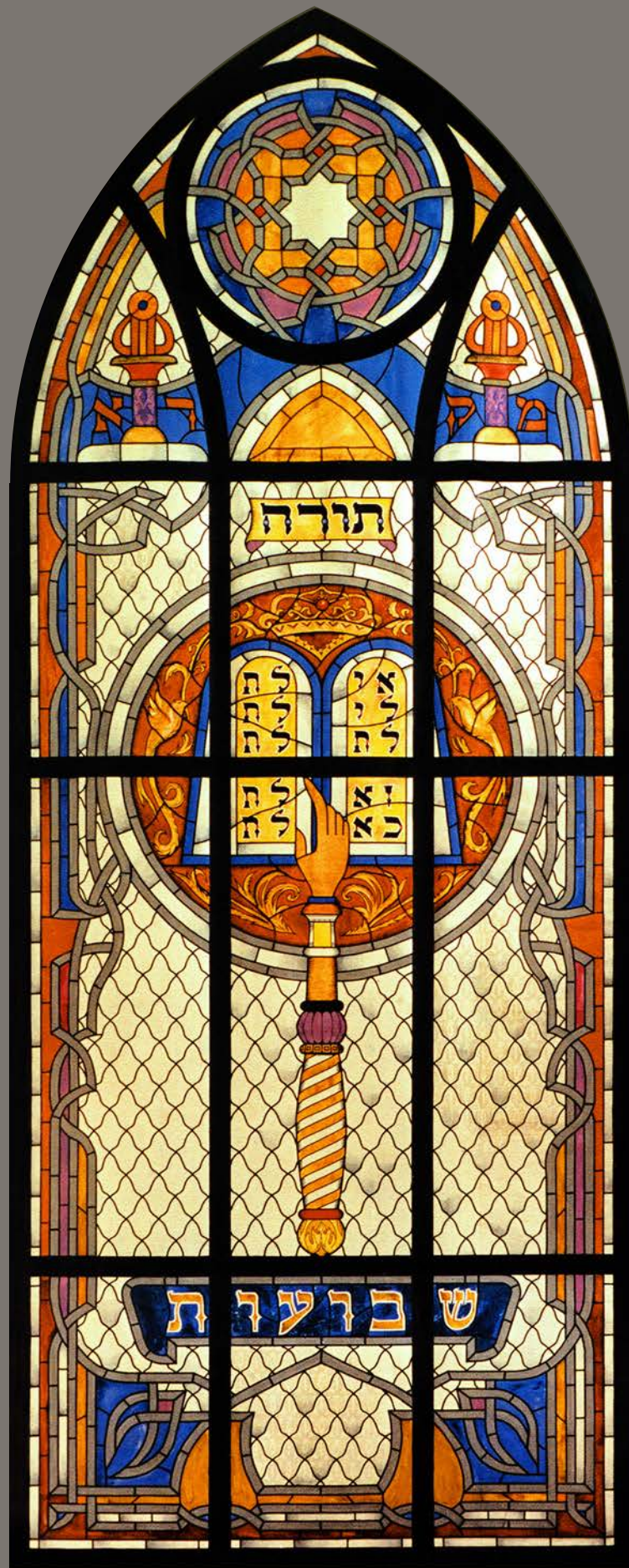
“SO MOSES DECLARED TO THE ISRAELITES THE SET TIMES OF LORD.” (Leviticus 23:44).

Stained-glass project for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1995.
Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor

Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Holidays: Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot.*
The inscription in the structure of the stained-glass windows:

“THOSE ARE THE SET TIMES OF THE LORD THAT YOU SHALL CELEBRATE AS SACRED OCCASIONS” (Leviticus 23:37).

Stained-glass project for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1995.
Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor



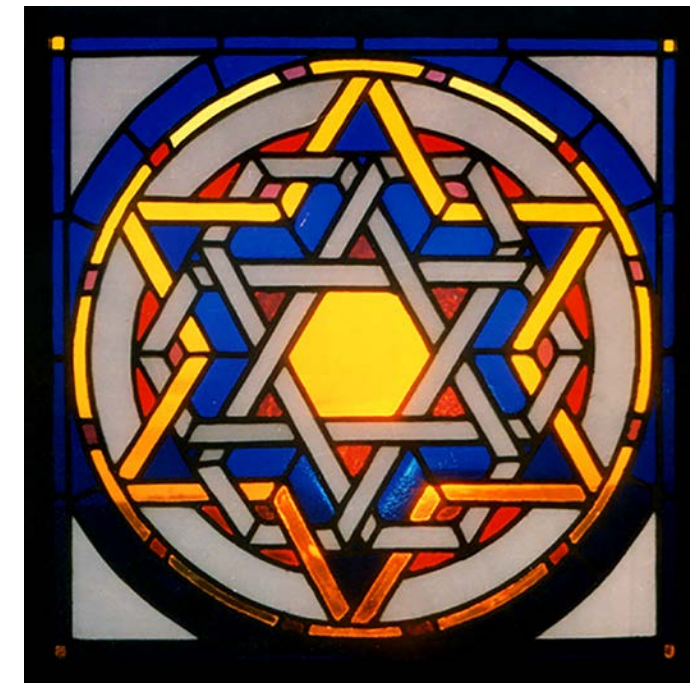
Shavuot. Sketch in natural scale.
Height 4.5 meters. Part of the stained-glass
project for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue. 1995.
Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor, gouache

Shavuot. A stained-glass window detail,
a part of a B.A. Project *Jewish Holidays*, 1995.
Color glass, stained-glass paint, firing,
plastic cement



The work was carried out under the guidance of Professor Olexander Pronin (1934–2002), who helped with the technical part of the project's implementation. In addition to the sketches, I developed a full-size cardboard of the *Shavuot* window (4.5 meters high) and a section as a stained-glass window.

The project was bought from the Institute by the then leadership of the Choral Synagogue, exhibited in the reconstructed prayer hall, and presented to the Jewish community and citizens. However, in 1998 a fire in the synagogue destroyed the entire project. Although photographs of the project survived, the project was not implemented when the prayer hall opened in 2003. ★



Magen David. Stained-glass window. 1994.
Color glass, firing, lead



Exposition of the stained-glass windows project by Eugeny Kotlyar in the hall of the synagogue during its reconstruction.
Photo by E. Kotlyar, 1995



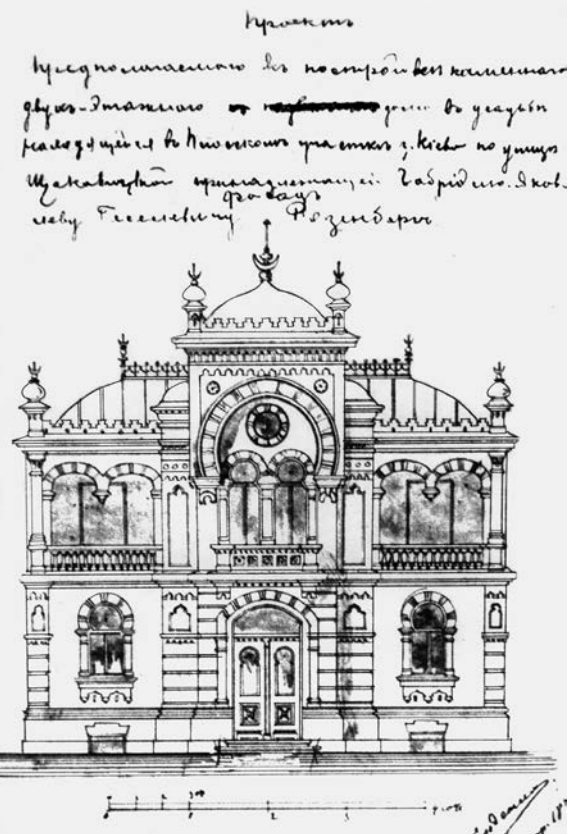
KYIV PODIL SYNAGOGUE

Kyiv’s Podil synagogue is the oldest functioning synagogue in the Ukrainian capital. It was built in 1895. The history of Jews in Kyiv, however, goes deeper. Legends associate the appearance of Jews in this area of Kyiv with the 9th century, when the fortress city was under the control of the Khazar Khaganate and Jewish merchants, known as Radanites, passed through it. The first written mention of Kyiv Jews is found in the famous *Kievan Letter* of the 10th century found in the Cairo Geniza.

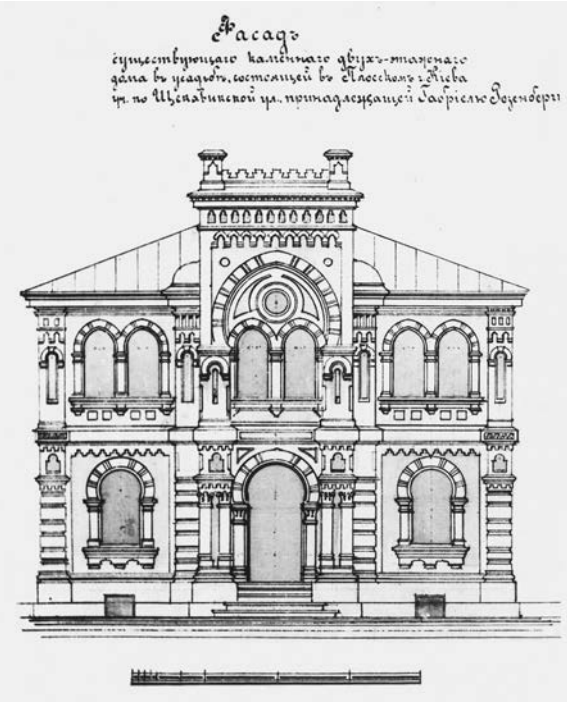
In the following centuries, the life of Jews in the city was marked with disruptions. There is evidence of a Jewish community in the seventeenth century, when they were attacked by Bohdan Khmelnytsky. But it was not until 1794 that Jews were allowed to gain a foothold and establish a community. That presence was interrupted some forty years later and only in the 1860s and 1870s did the Jewish community revive. By 1872 it reached almost 14,000 people, and exceeded 81,000 in 1913, making 13% of the total population. Even with this rise in population, there were still restrictions on the construction of synagogues, which influential Jews were able to bypass by building the synagogues as mansions before transforming them into places of worship.

The Podil synagogue, also called the *Rosenberg Synagogue* and the *Schekavitska Synagogue* (after the name of the street), was erected in 1894–1895 at the expense of the merchant Gabriel-Yakov Rosenberg as a private mansion. It was adapted for a prayer hall only later, even though, according to official documents, the building was originally designed for this purpose. The Architect Mykola Gardenin (1860–after 1925) designed the building in the “brick style” typical of Podil mansions with elements of Moorish decor. In 1915–1916, the synagogue was reconstructed according to Valerian Rykov’s project with internal re-planning.

< General view of the prayer hall of the synagogue. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023



Mykola Gardenin. A drawing of the façade of the mansion designed for Gabriel Rosenberg in Podil in Kyiv. The original version. Due to the ban on the construction of synagogues in Kyiv, this building was designed as a mansion, although at first it was built as a synagogue, which was later legalized. 1894



Mykola Gardenin. A drawing of the façade of the existing two-story house designed for Gabriel Rozenberg in Podil in Kyiv. 1895

The project of reconstruction of the Kyiv Podil synagogue at 29 Shchekavitska street. Main and side façades. Author Volodymyr Khromchenkov (Ukrproektrestavratsiya Institute, Kyiv). 1990s

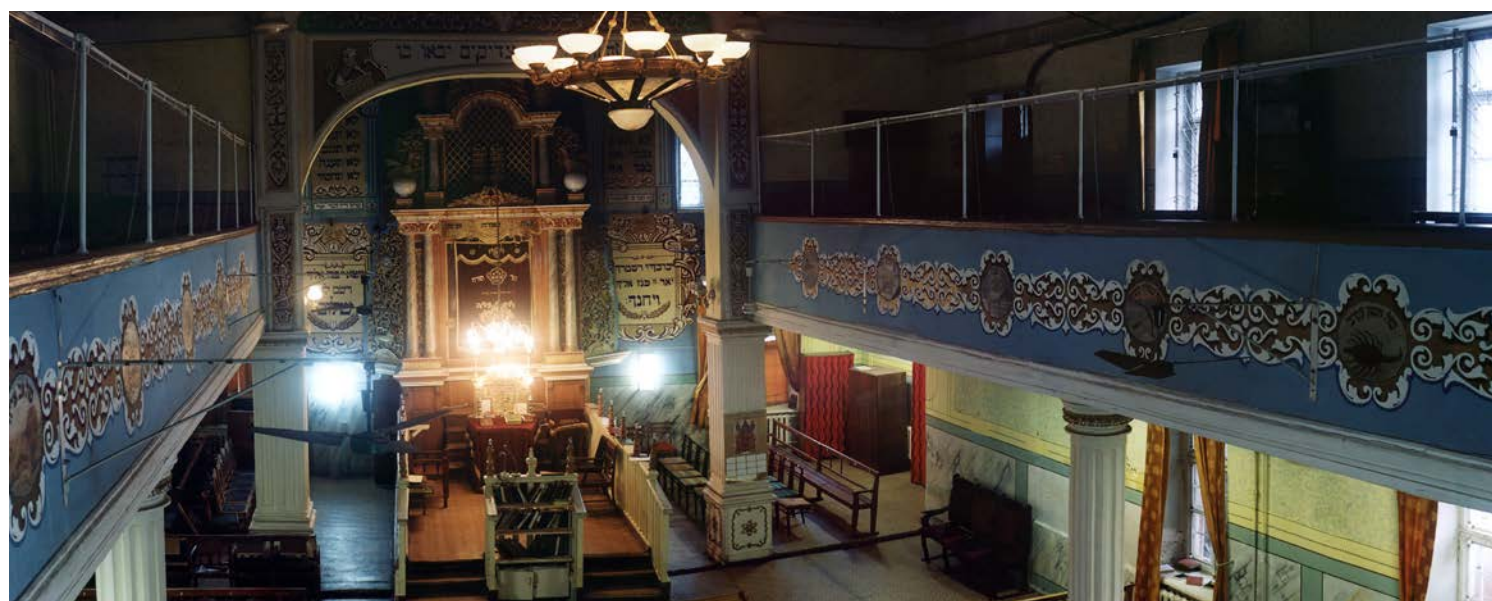


General view of the building of the Kyiv Jewish religious community with a synagogue (in the center), a yeshiva, and a hotel. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2009

The Soviet authorities closed the synagogue in 1929 and transformed it into a working club. After the end of WWII, it was renovated and reopened as a synagogue, with a new Torah ark. It has continued to function as such since. At the end of the 1960s, a matzah bakery was added to the complex.

After Ukraine's independence, the synagogue was headed by Yaakov Dov Bleich, Chief Rabbi of Kyiv and Ukraine, and during 2001–2003 it underwent another reconstruction to return the building to the original plan of 1894 and turn it into an exquisite and presentable synagogue residence of the Chief Rabbi of Ukraine. Restored was the façade according to the original project of Mykola Gardenin, a new vestibule was added, and the prayer hall

was modernized. Refurbished were the wooden Torah Ark, originally installed in 1947, the painted tondo inserts on canvases with *Zodiac Cycle* and *Four Animals* — symbols of religious piety — from the 1950s, and some interior murals. Stained-glass windows for the prayer hall and vestibule were introduced for the first time. The project was led by architect Volodymyr Khromchenkov, designer Aaron Ostreicher, engineer Volodymyr Pinchuk, and Evgeny Ziskind, Executive Director of the Association of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine. In 2006–2012 two new yeshiva buildings and a hotel were built on either side of the synagogue in the recognizable style of Jerusalem architecture.



Kyiv Podil synagogue. The interior of the prayer hall before reconstruction. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 1997



The interior of the prayer hall after the reconstruction in 2003. Design by Aaron Ostreicher. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2022



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Ceremonial*. Sketches of stained-glass windows for the side windows of the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2000. Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor

The Early Sketches for the Stained-Glass Windows and Plafond Murals

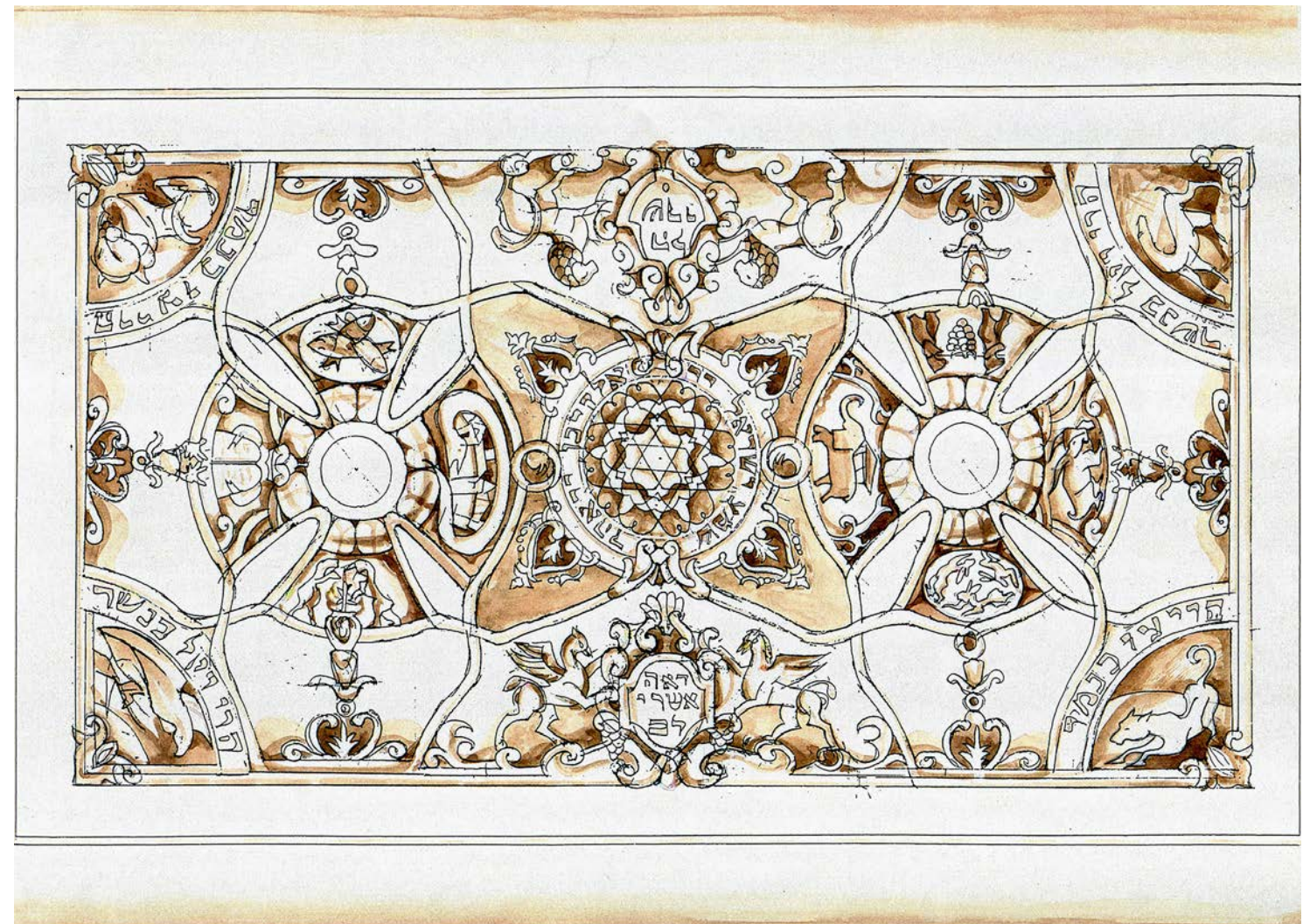
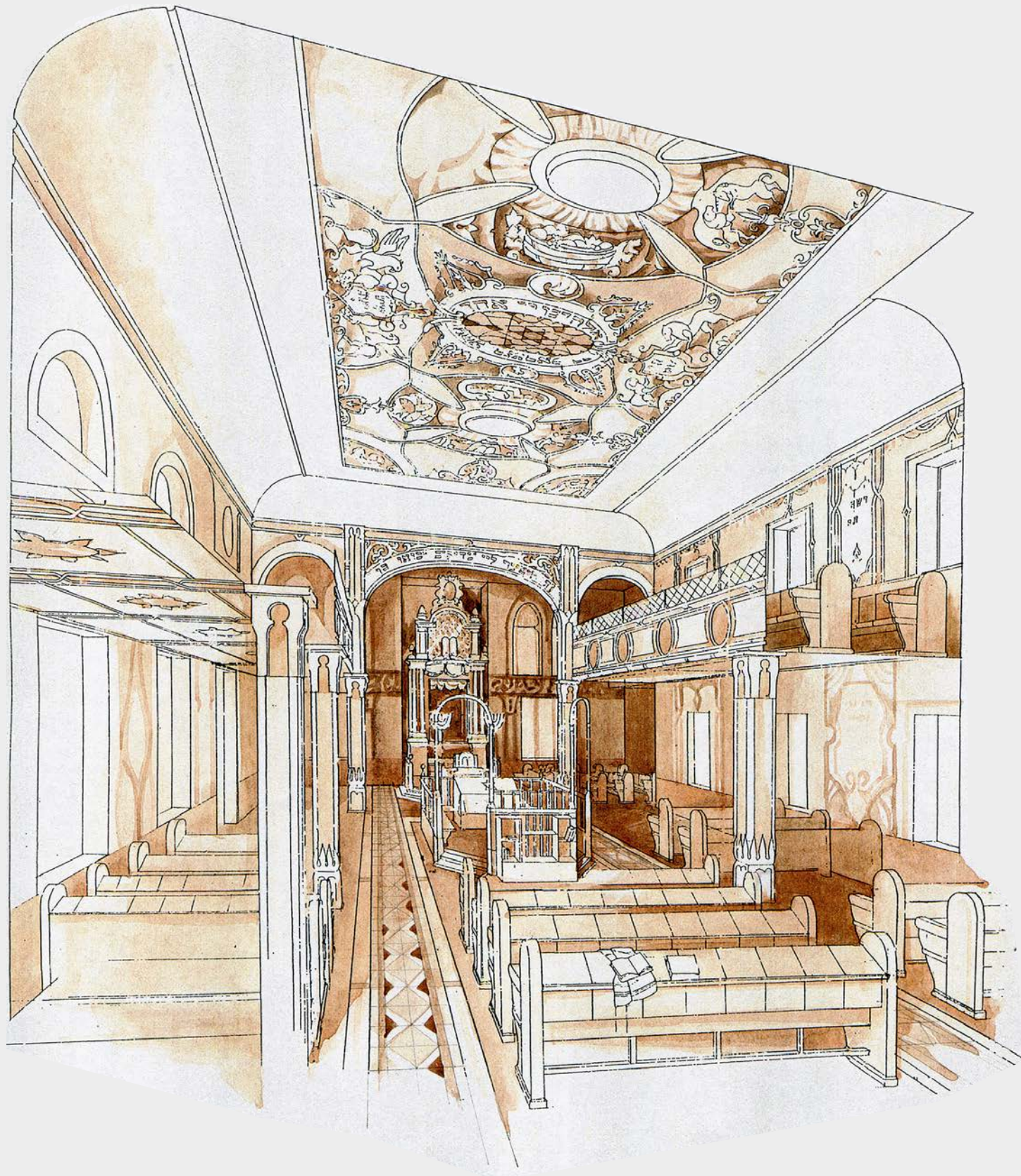
I prepared the first sketches of the stained-glass windows for the synagogue long before the main work on the design of the entire interior. He wanted to get a sense and to feel the space, its proportions, and style. One of the surviving watercolor drawings of the interior shows my early approach to the layout and interior design, where stained glass windows were used for the windows of the entire prayer hall. The set of images of Jewish ceremonial objects — *menorah*, *Sefer Torah*, *besamim* (an incense container consecrating the separation of *Shabbat* from everyday life), and others were developed for all side windows. I used examples from Jewish manuscripts or historic photographs of ritual objects as prototypes. In my approach, I was guided by the artist and rabbi David Hillman (1894–1974), the author of stained-glass windows in many synagogues in Great Britain, including the impressive stained-glass windows at the Wolfson Museum of Jewish Art, housed in the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem, with their intricate plots, ribbons with inscriptions, and technical excellence.

In the early sketch of the monochrome painting of the plafond I wanted to show the richness of symbolism in traditional Jewish art in Eastern Europe. I saw these symbols in old photographs of wooden synagogue murals I found

in Ukrainian archives. The old synagogues did not survive the Holocaust and their iconographic legacy had become forgotten. Such images as three fish or three hares in a circle, a battle between a lion and a unicorn, an elephant with a tower on its back, bears carrying a bunch of grapes, Leviathan and the bull (*shor*), and others were popular in the 18th century but became rare in synagogues by the turn of the nineteenth-and-twentieth centuries. Other images — such as four animals, which are symbols of Jewish piety from the treatise *Pirkei Avot* — retained their popularity until the 20th century, remaining in the tondos on the ceiling of this synagogue. The opened flower with Magen David, the Star of David, in the center of the plafond came to resemble a rose, a bouquet, a wreath from the old synagogues' murals, as a floral symbol of the Supreme Being, giving life and resonating with solar, cosmological symbolism.

Although these sketches were not ultimately accepted, they were part of the process of preparation for the main work.

< Eugeny Kotlyar. A sketch of the architectural and artistic proposal for the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2000. Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor



Eugeny Kotlyar. A design for the plafond decoration of the Podil synagogue in Kyiv, 2000.
Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor

< Eugeny Kotlyar. A sketch of the architectural and artistic solution of the prayer hall with stained-glass windows for the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2000.
Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jewish Suite*. Sketches of stained-glass windows for the central hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. 2002. Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor, whitewash

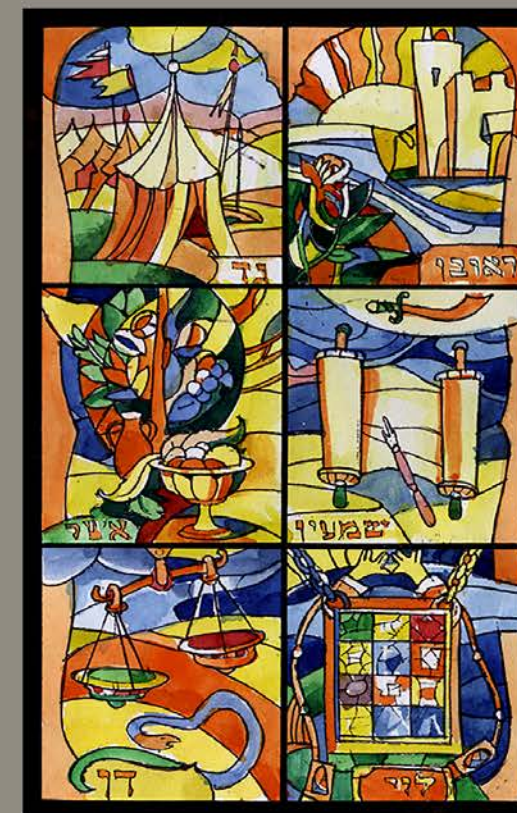
Stained-Glass Windows for the Eastern Wall of the Prayer Hall

During a full-scale reconstruction of the synagogue in 2000–2003, designer Aaron Ostreicher conceived of installing stained-glass windows in the main vestibule of the synagogue and the eastern wall of the prayer hall. The theme Kyiv Jewry, named later *Kiev Suite*, was selected for the vestibule with three windows: *Traditional Jewry*, *Babyn Yar*, and *Jewish Revival*. A theme *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* and *the Tribes of Israel* was chosen to decorate the windows of the prayer hall — their goal was to emphasize the symbolic unity of all worshipers facing east towards Jerusalem and their connection with the Holy Land.

The four windows at the top show the holy landscapes of Israel: *The Wailing Wall and the Jerusalem Temple*, symbolizing the connection between biblical and messianic times; *the Patriarchs' Tomb* in Hebron, and *the Rachel Tomb* near Bethlehem. All subjects were framed and united by motifs of the old Jerusalem gates. In the upper part of the lancet windows, the main attributes of Judaism were depicted in the rays of radiance: the crown of the

Torah, the Torah Scroll, the seven-branch *Menorah*, and the *Shofar* (ram's horn). Stylistically, they echoed the horseshoe-shaped tops of the two lower windows with *Magen David* and the Tablets of the Covenant with the symbols of the Ten Commandments. The ten tribes of Israel were symbolized by the images with which Jacob associated each of his sons with his testament and blessing (Genesis 49:1-27).

The color and graphic solution of the stained-glass windows in the white interior created a bright frame of the wooden Torah Ark on the eastern wall. The stained-glass windows were crafted with traditional technology with painting and firing glass using a lead mounting profile in the Kharkiv stained-glass workshop with the participation of Gennady Myronenko and Volodymyr Prydatko. They were installed in the synagogue in November 2002. ★



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* and *The Twelve Tribes of Israel*. Sketches of stained-glass windows for the eastern wall of the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2002. Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor



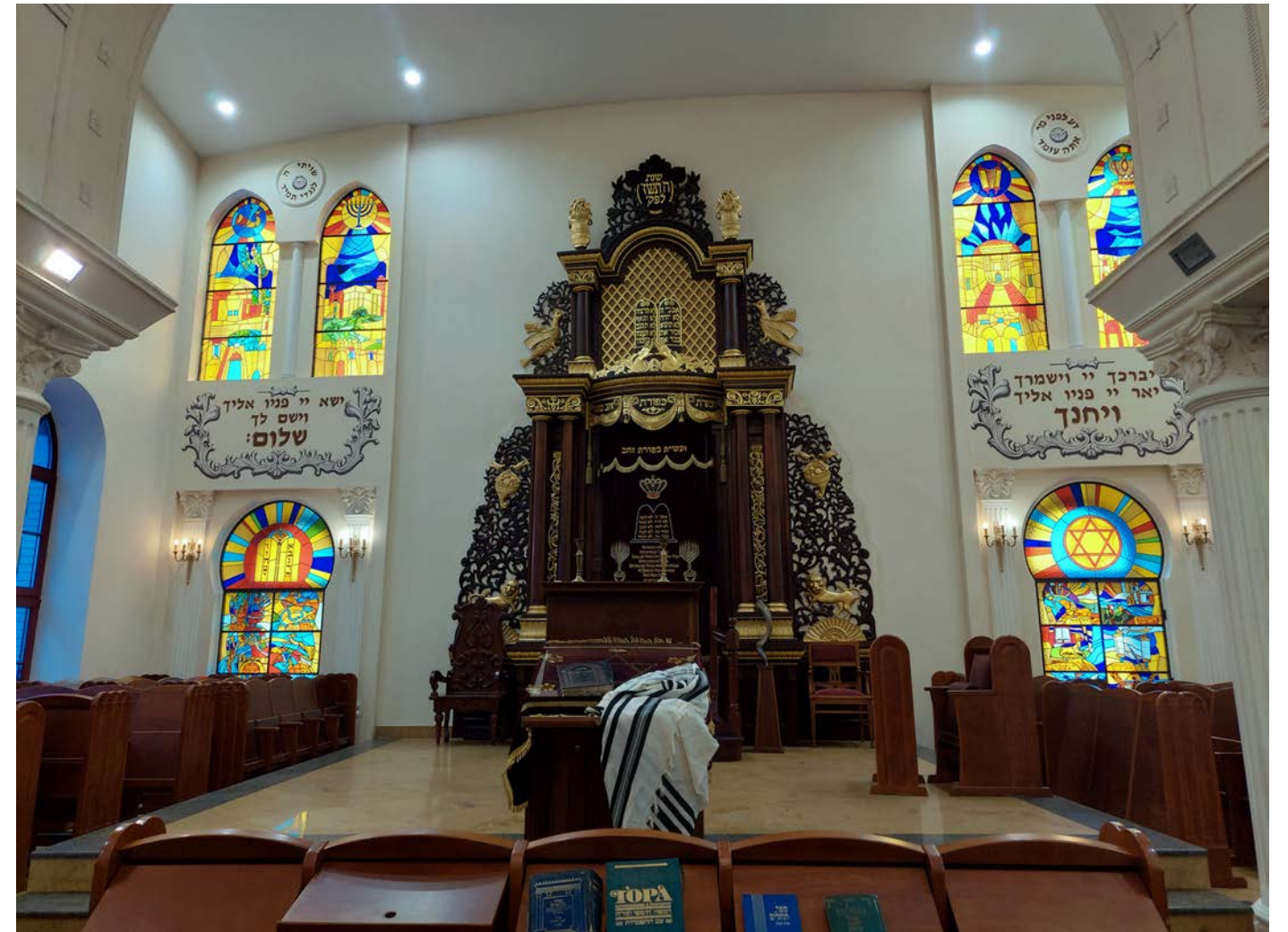
Eugeny Kotlyar. *Holy Places of the Land of Israel and The Twelve Tribes of Israel*. Stained-glass project for the eastern wall of the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2002. Paper, ink, pencil, watercolor, whitewash



View of the eastern wall from the women's gallery. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023



A view from the bimah to the eastern wall of the synagogue. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023



General view of the eastern wall with Torah Ark and stained-glass windows. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023



Eugeny Kotlyar with Yaakov Dov Bleich, the Chief Rabbi of Kyiv and Ukraine. 2003

< View of the eastern wall from the lectern (שטענדער, a shtender) in front of the Torah Ark. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



The Tomb of Rachel near Bethlehem and The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Stained-glass windows from the cycle *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* for the eastern wall of the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. Left side, 2002. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



Jerusalem Temple and The Wailing Wall. Stained-glass windows from the cycle *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* for the eastern wall of the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. Right side, 2002. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Stained-glass window for the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. Left side, 2002.
Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Stained-glass window for the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue. Right side, 2002.
Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



Tribe of Asher. Detail of the stained-glass window *The Twelve Tribes of Israel* for the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2002. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead

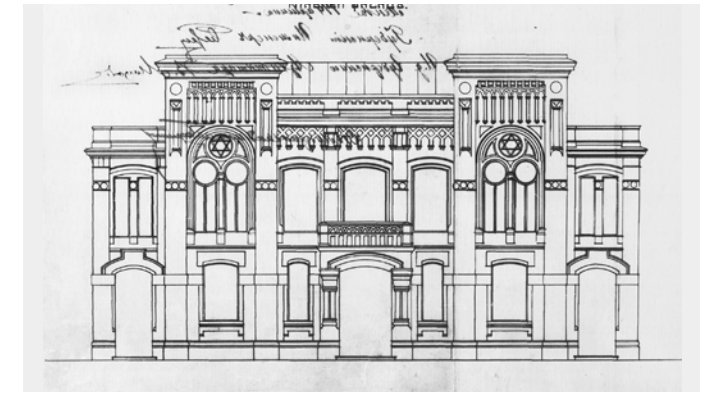


Tribe of Yehuda. Detail of the stained-glass window *The Twelve Tribes of Israel* for the prayer hall of the Kyiv Podil synagogue, 2002. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead

< *The Twelve Tribes of Israel.*
Left side, Detail, 2002. Colored glass,
stained-glass paint, firing, lead



GALITSKA SYNAGOGUE IN KYIV



Fedir Oltarzhevsky. The design of the façade of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv. 1909

Since the late 1850s, the authorities allowed Jews to trade in the outskirts of the city, near the old Galitska Square, where the market was located. It is now the neighborhood near the railway station. Although people of different nationalities traded here, this place came to be called the *Jewish Market*.

Jews who settled here founded the Galitska Jewish Prayer Society. Decades later, in 1909, the architect Fedir Oltarzhevsky (1868/1869 — after 1918) designed a synagogue building, which was built a year later by the Kyiv contractor Yakov Faybyshenko, who headed the Facilities Management of the Galitska Jewish Prayer Society.

The two-story structure included a large prayer room with a women's gallery. Outside, the synagogue was decorated with a central balcony and two symmetrical risalti — exterior parts of the building that jut out — with decorative

arcades and semicircular double arches in the modernized Romanesque style. This decoration was reminiscent of the Brodsky Choral Synagogue in Kyiv, built at the end of the 19th century.

The Galitska synagogue was shuttered by the Soviet authorities in 1930 and became part of the complex of the Kyiv Electrotechnical Plant.

In 2001 the building was returned to the Kyiv Jewish religious community, allowing for the worship activities to resume there. In 2002–2004, the building was renovated. In 2005, a new Torah Ark, with thematic stained-glass windows was installed. The building is now home to the international educational center *Midrasha Zionit*.



Page 42.
View of the Torah Ark with stained-glass windows.
Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023

A view of the main façade of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv.
Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2005



General view of the prayer hall of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv from the women's gallery. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023

Stained-Glass Windows for the Torah Ark

The wooden cabinet for the Torah scrolls was created before the stained-glass windows were installed. To accommodate the stained-glass pieces with two symmetrical wings, each with six rectangular openings, were created. The Torah Ark was reinforced with a wide entablature on two columns, with a semicircular pediment with carved décor on top. The Ark was designed to fit into the silhouette of the semicircular apse niche on the eastern wall, becoming the main focus of the entire prayer hall. The inscription on the protruding part of the entablature "For out of Zion shall the Torah come forth" (Isaiah 2:3) turned the Torah Ark from a place of storage of the Torah scrolls into a symbolic gate to the Land of Israel.

The theme of *The Tribes of Israel* was chosen for the stained-glass windows to be placed in the two wings

placed on each side of the Torah Ark, echoing Jacob's deathbed blessing of his sons (Genesis 49:1-27). The semicircular stained-glass window for the pediment, in turn, was to depict the *Jerusalem Temple*, with stylized motifs of city building and Jewish tombs on the Mount of Olives, forming a collective landscape of Jerusalem with the Temple in the center. The stained-glass design was based on the model of the Second Temple from the reconstruction of Jerusalem in 66 CE, now located in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Symbolically, the stained-glass decorations united the theme of biblical and messianic Israel, when all the tribes will gather as one people in the Land of Israel and the Temple of Jerusalem on Mount Moriah will be restored.

This motif runs through the entire history and art of the Jews, becoming the central messianic narrative of the Jewish people in its religious, historical, cultural, social as well as political perspective.



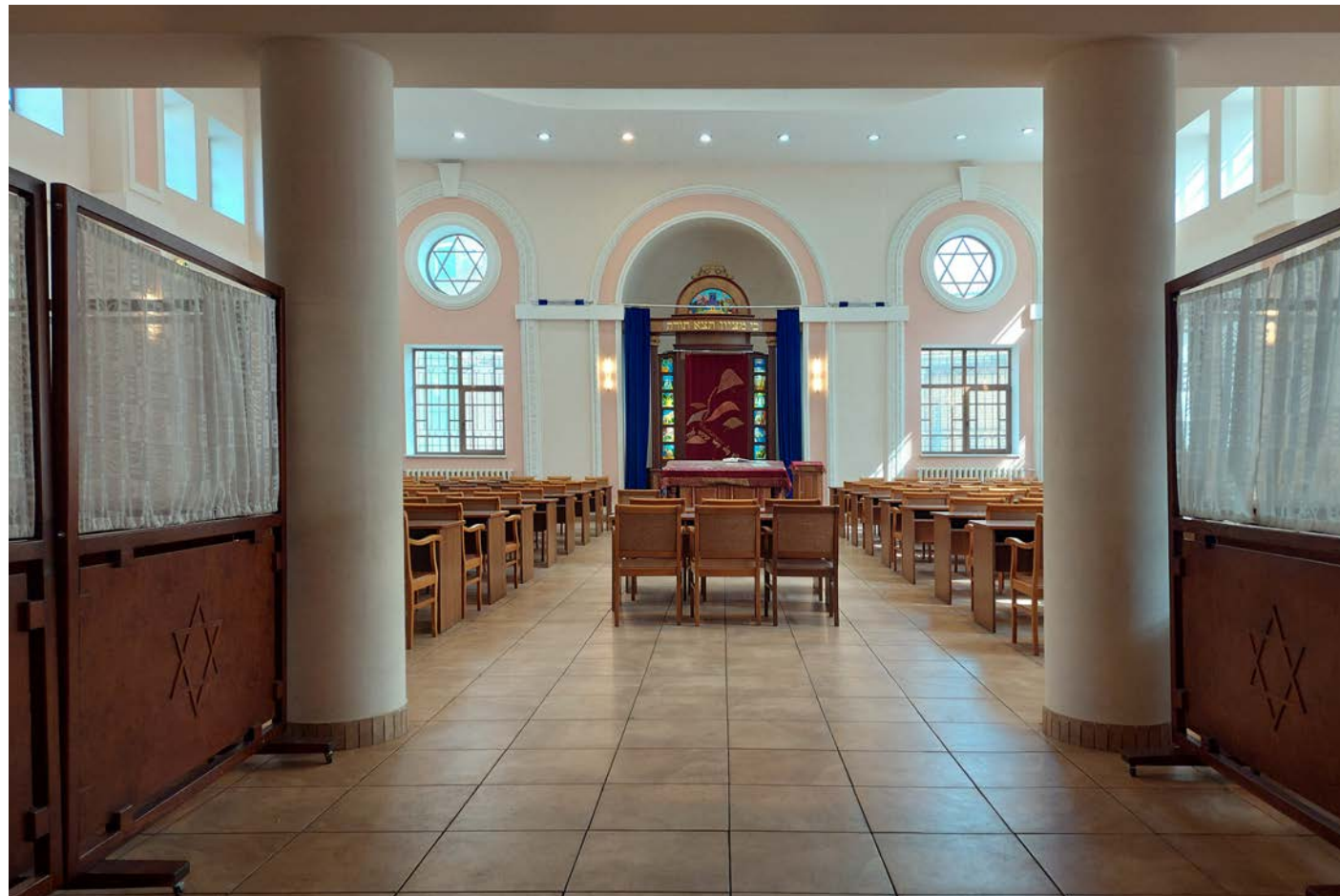
Eugeny Kotlyar. The project of stained-glass windows for decoration of the Torah Ark of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv. 2005. Digital model, paper, print



Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jerusalem Temple*. A sketch for the central stained-glass window for the pediment of the Torah Ark of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv. 2005. Paper, ink, pencil, ballpoint pen, watercolor



A view of the pediment of the Torah Ark with a composition Jerusalem Temple, 2005



Like the stained glass in the Podil synagogue, the Galitska synagogue stained-glass windows were crafted using traditional technology with glass firing and a lead assembly profile in the Kharkiv stained-glass studio with the participation of Gennady Myronenko. This was the first case in Ukraine when the Torah Ark design was created using a stained-glass ensemble. ★

< View of the prayer hall of the synagogue from the main entrance. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023



The author, Eugeny Kotlyar after completing the installation of stained-glass windows in the Torah Ark structure. December 2005

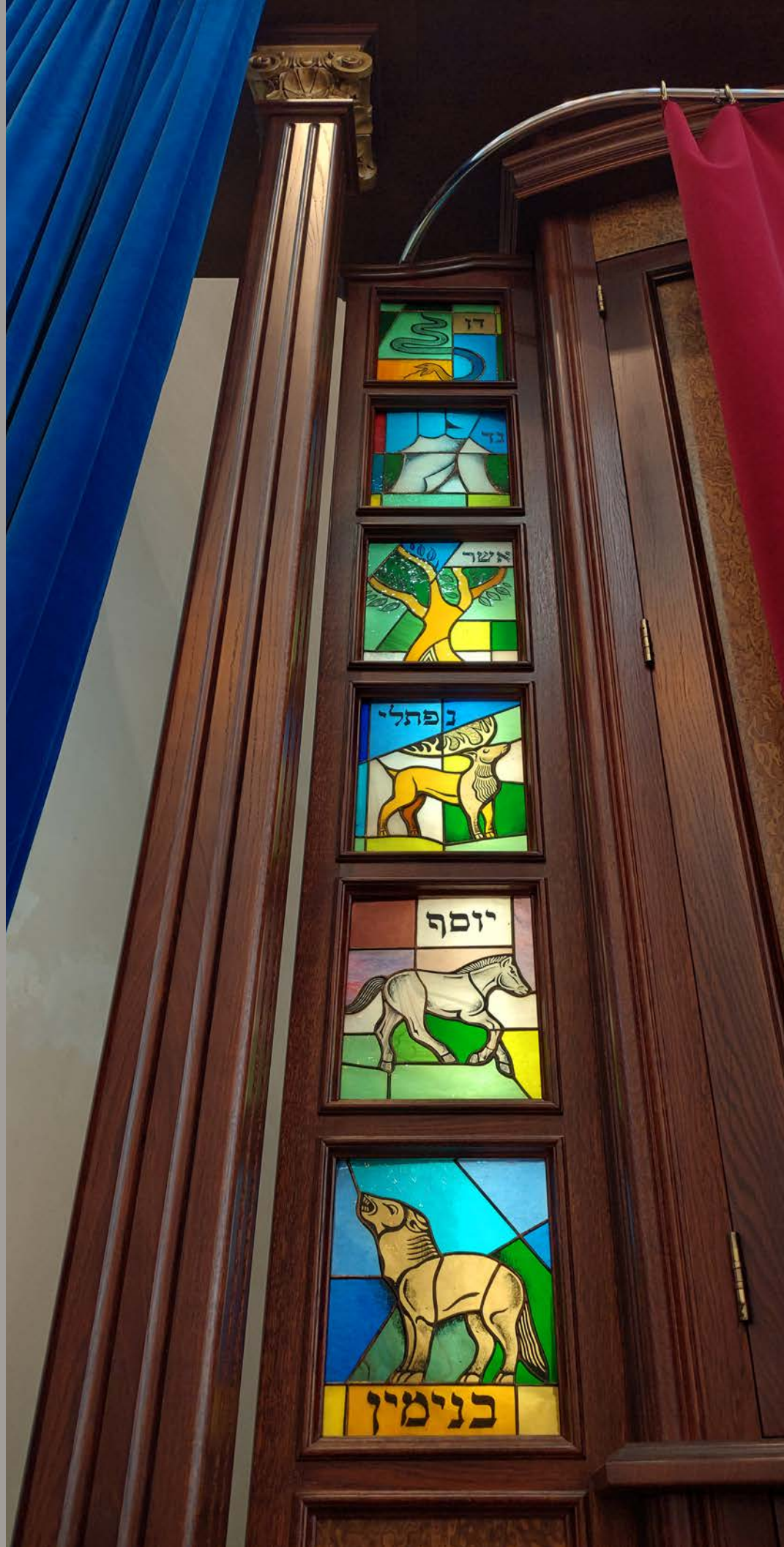


Eugeny Kotlyar. *Jerusalem Temple*. Stained-glass window process. Kharkiv, 2005



General view of the prayer hall of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv. Photo by E. Kotlyar, 2023





The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Left side, 2005. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



The Twelve Tribes of Israel. Right side, 2005. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



Tribe of Yehuda. Detail of the stained-glass windows *The Twelve Tribes of Israel* for the prayer hall of the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv, 2005. Colored glass, stained-glass paint, firing, lead



Tribe of Zebulun.
Detail. Stained-glass windows
The Twelve Tribes of Israel
for the prayer hall of the Galitska
synagogue in Kyiv, 2005



Tribe of Issachar. Detail.
Stained-glass windows
The Twelve Tribes of Israel
for the prayer hall of the Galitska
synagogue in Kyiv, 2005



Professor EUGENY KOTLYAR

Eugeny Kotlyar is an artist, designer, photographer, art historian, tutor, curator, and editor. He is a Professor of Art History and the Head of the Department of Monumental Painting of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts. An internationally renowned scholar, Dr. Kotlyar is a member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine, the Union of Designers of Ukraine, the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), and the European Association for Jewish Studies. He currently serves as the chair of the Academic Board of the Ukrainian Association for Jewish Studies. In 2022, Kotlyar won the Narkiss Prize for Excellence in the Research of Jewish Arts, and in 2022–2023 he was one of the AAJR-Fordham-NYPL Research Fellows.

Born in 1970 in Kharkiv, Ukraine, Eugeny Kotlyar graduated from the Kharkiv State Art School (1990) and the Kharkiv Art and Industrial Institute with a degree in monumental and decorative painting (1995). He did his post-graduate work at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (KSADA), where he also earned his Ph.D. He has been teaching at the Department of Monumental Painting and the Department of Art History at KSADA and has served as editor-in-chief of the academic publication HUDPROM: *The Ukrainian Art and Design Journal*.

Since the early 1990s, as an artist and a scholar, Eugeny Kotlyar has actively participated in the process of Jewish revival in Ukraine. In 1995, for his graduation project, Kotlyar created *Jewish Holidays. Stained-glass Windows for the Kharkiv Choral Synagogue*, which was acquired by the synagogue community. The series focused on the Jewish holidays established by the *Sanhedrin* and holidays from the Torah following the sequence found in the Jewish calendar. In 2001 he defended his Ph.D. thesis *Synagogues of Ukraine*

in the Second Half of the 16th — Early 20th Centuries as a Historical and Cultural Phenomenon. He is the curator of the Center for Eastern Studies of KSADA, a participant in numerous congresses and conferences in Europe, Israel, and North America, the author of more than 200 publications on Jewish art (books, catalogs, articles) published in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands, and Israel.

As an artist, Kotlyar worked on designs of many Jewish cultural objects for synagogues, community centers, Jewish museums, and exhibitions in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Sumy. Among his designs are stained-glass windows for the Kyiv Podil synagogue (2002) and the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv (2005), the design of the *Beit Dan* Jewish cultural center in Kharkiv (2002), and the *Pain and Hope* Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust (2007), an interactive museum for the Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust in Drobitsky Yar in Kharkiv.

The creation of stained-glass windows for synagogues in the early period of E. Kotlyar's work (1995–2005) coincided with the era of the Jewish revival in Ukraine. These works, in particular, stained-glass windows for the Kyiv Podil synagogue, became the first instance of using artistic stained-glass windows in the synagogues of modern Ukraine. It was also an important experience for the artist himself, who was discovering for himself and revealing to the public the lost Jewish artistic tradition.

As a curator, Kotlyar took part in a number of scholarly and artistic projects, including the *Jewish Atlantis* — an expedition and an exhibition of young artists under the project *Neshama: through art to the heart*. *The Jewish Atlantis* invited Kharkiv artists (2011–2012) to explore the shtetl world. Kotlyar also participated in a traveling exhibition “*How Goodly Are Thy Tents, O Jacob...*” Wall Paintings in Bukovinian Synagogues (2015–2016). The main projects are presented on the portal: <https://ksada.academia.edu/EugenyKotlyar>

Acknowledgments

The author sincerely thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies at Fordham University and personally Professor Magda Teter, Professor of History and the Shvidler Chair in Judaic Studies and President of the American Academy for Jewish Research for organizing this exhibition and supporting Ukrainian Jewish scholars who have been affected by the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine.

I would like to give special thanks to Evgeny Ziskind, Executive Director of the Association of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine, for his kind assistance in preparing the exhibition and catalogue.

**THE LIGHT OF THE REVIVAL.
Stained Glass Design for Restituted Synagogues
of Ukraine by Eugeny Kotlyar**

Catalog of the Exhibition at the Walsh Family Library
at Fordham University, September 10 — December 10, 2023, New York,
The Center for Jewish Studies at Fordham University, 2023, 56 p.

Fordham University, Center for Jewish Studies,
113 West 60th Street, Lowenstein 422
New York, NY 10023
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The catalogue of the exhibition “*THE LIGHT OF THE REVIVAL: Stained Glass Design for Restituted Synagogues of Ukraine*” offers a broad perspective on the revival of Ukrainian synagogues after Ukraine’s independence, showcasing three sets of stained-glass windows, which were designed by Eugeny Kotlyar and partially implemented in Ukrainian synagogues in the period from 1995 to 2005. Two early works shown here were the first samples of stained-glass designs for modern Ukrainian synagogues, which set a new trend. The first of them — the stained-glass windows for the Kharkiv Choral synagogue (1995) on the theme of *Jewish Holidays*. The second project — an ensemble of stained-glass windows for the Kyiv synagogue in Podil (2002) — focuses *Holy Places of the Land of Israel* and *the Tribes of Israel*. And, the third work *Jerusalem and the Tribes of Israel* is a part of the original design of the Torah Ark itself in the Galitska synagogue in Kyiv (2005). In Kotlyar’s artistic vision, the stained-glass window projects the light, turns the metaphysical into the physical, materializes the speculative image, and, ultimately, fills the prayer with color and light.

Eugeny Kotlyar is a professor at the Department of Art History and the chair of the Department of Monumental Paintings at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (KSADA). He is also a curator of the Center for Eastern Studies of KSADA and the chair of the Academic Board of the Ukrainian Association for Jewish Studies (UAJS). His research focuses on Jewish art, Jewish heritage in Ukraine, synagogue decorations, and Kharkiv Jewish local lore. Trained as an artist and art historian, Kotlyar designed stained-glass windows for synagogues and Jewish community centers in many cities of Ukraine. In 2022–2023, he was a virtual fellow in the AAJR-Fordham-NYPL Ukrainian Fellowship Program.

Idea and organization of the exhibition, introduction and edited of the catalogue by **Magda Teter**, The Center for Jewish Studies at Fordham University

Concept, entries and photos by **Eugeny Kotlyar**, Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts

Design by **Valeriy Galchenko**, Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts

Edited and produced by the Center for Jewish Studies at Fordham University

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The Light of the Revival

**STAINED GLASS DESIGN
FOR RESTITUTED
SYNAGOGUES OF UKRAINE
BY EUGENY KOTLYAR**

«**W**ITH HIS DESIGNS for stained glass windows in revitalized Ukrainian synagogues, Eugeny Kotlyar reinvented for post-communist Europe a sacral and artistic tradition that had flourished before the Holocaust in synagogues that, if not destroyed outright, were often neglected or stripped of their identity in countries under Soviet domination. His work brings a contemporary sensibility to classic Jewish motifs and iconography, creating colorful dialogue between old and new, past and present, present and future.»

Ruth Ellen Gruber

Director, Jewish Heritage Europe

«**E**UGENY KOTLYAR is simultaneously a researcher and an artist. He researches historical Jewish art in Ukraine and creates contemporary Jewish art there. This unique position allows him to look at both from an angle that is inaccessible to anybody else.»

Dr. Vladimir Levin

*Director, the Center for Jewish Art,
the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

«**S**TAINED-GLASS windows are the most luminous and ethereal, yet also the most fragile portion of a synagogue building. They are the first casualty of pogrom, war, or revolution. Traceable at least to the Middle Ages, when rabbinic debates arose about whether animals could be depicted in them, stained-glass windows saw a revival and expansion in the ambitious synagogue projects of the nineteenth century. Often poorly documented, they are often the most difficult to reconstruct after the cataclysms of the twentieth century. In Ukraine, as in the rest of the Soviet Union, synagogues were expropriated by the Bolshevik state. Their post-revolutionary, secular use encouraged the removal of stained glass. Thus, the post-1990 situation must have been enormously challenging as well as an exciting opportunity.

Eugeny Kotlyar's window designs show a profound mastery of the medium of stained glass as well as a deep knowledge of Jewish artistic traditions. His windows draw on an enormous range of Judaic and art historical resources, from medieval Hebrew manuscript illumination to early modern reconstructions of the Jerusalem Temple and Jewish modernist painters. Always sensitive to the style of the architecture, the shape of the space, and the needs of the community, Eugeny Kotlyar's windows delight and illuminate.»

Dr. Eva Frojmovic

*Associate Professor, History of Art
Director, Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Leeds*