A Modern Bezal__

By Alfred Werner

Very few of those who, last spring, flocked to the Brooklyn Museum's exhibit of works by Myer Myers, or who read Miss Jeannette W. Rosenbaum's new biography of that early American-Jewish silversmith are aware ~~of the~~ that in New York today can be found a craftsman in silver and gold, brass and copper of equal industry and skill. This modern Bezalel is Ilya Schor. The master who quietly celebrated his fiftieth birthday last April is, indeed, a link in the great Jewish tradition of craftsmanship that started in very ancient times. Schor, incidentally, often talks of the widespread Jewish participation in the arts and crafts in the face of all obstacles in his native Poland. Skills were handed down from father to son through the centuries, in strict observance of the Talmudic admonition that a Jewish father ought to teach his son a trade, "for if one does not do so, it is like teaching his son robbery." Before the era of emancipation no Jew in Eastern Europe could attend a trade school, and the Christian guilds used any means at hand to eliminate Jewish competition. Nevertheless, in 1786 all pewterers and coppersmiths in Lublin were Jewish, and in 1797 there were more Jewish than Christian goldsmiths in Posen (Poznan).

Naftali

Ilya Schor's father was a master craftsman, a shildenmoler, specializing in painting cows and chicken, plus the required legend in Yiddish and Polish, for the meat and poultry shops of Zloczow, a medium-sized city in Galicia. From the elder Schor - who died at the venerable age of eighty-six, shortly before the outbreak of World War II - Ilya inherited the diligence and painstaking accuracy demanded by the always over-exacting patrons of a sign-painter. He obtained his Jewish background from this saintly man, but it was chiefly Ilya's older brother, Moses, a Hebrew scholar, who encouraged the youngster to become a professional painter, a Kunstmoler. (Moses Schor was to die a martyr's death in the Warsaw ghetto).

Schor spent eight years of his adolescence apprenticed to an engraver. This time was not wasted, for not only did Ilya earn his livelihood as an engraver while attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, but the feeling for metal which he acquired was invaluable when he became a silversmith. Although he had to work to support himself, Schor graduated from the Academy with honors, and he even received a scholarship to contimue his studies in France. He arrived in Paris in 1937, worked as a silversmith, but also studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, sent paintings to various exhibitions, and settled down happily with his bride, Rezia, herself a gifted painter, in this city which has welcomed so many talented Jews from the days when Camille Pissarro arrived there from the West Indies. But the period of Schor's bliss in Paris was brief. Like Chagall, Lipchitz, Mane-Katz and other Montparnassians the Schors arrived in New York in 1941. The initial worries and problems of adjustment were overcome by the intrepid and frugal Schors. Facing the difficulty of living in a new country on the sale of one's pictures, the determined Schor set up shop as a silversmith, and after a while had enough commissions to provide for a family now including two daughters born in this country.

There are three Ilya Schors, the graphic artist, the painter, and the silversmith. Schor's book illustrations, especially those for works by Sholem Alechem are insufficiently known, though they are real gems of woodcutting. His rich fantasy crowds a multitude of fascinating detail into small compass. He captures humor as well as tragedy in rhythmically whirling designs reminiscent of folk art as well as of medieval miniatures. Schor's poetic rendering of poor Mottel's trek from the shtaedtel to the confusing skyscrapers of New York matches the charm of the beloved book, <u>The Adventures of Mottel</u>.

Schor feels that he is not sufficiently appreciated as a painter. But his 1953- one-man show at New York's Salpeter Gallery got at least favorable comments in the professional magazines. The same sensitivity that guides his hand when he produces book miniatures rendered with the skill and devotion of a medieval sofer serves him in gouaches or oils describing jugs, flowers and leaves with love and tenderness, albeit with cool restraint in color. (His pure abstractions seem to me less successful.) But the bulk of his pictorial work is - and one might say: of course! - inspired by reminiscences of the artist's youth. He still remembers very clearly the bearded Hasidim in their fur-caps, the pious families gathered around the table, the musicians, the country Jews with their domestic animals. He is at his best in very small pictures, often no larger than eight by ten inches. One of these, showing a sofer, in tallith and tefillin, painstakingly copying a scroll of the Law, has been reproduced many times.

He achieved his greatest acclaim, however, as a worker in metal. With the rise of the machine age punch presses and power lathes replaced the hand craftsman , factory-made baubles took the place beautiful objects lovingly fashioned and the silversmith almost became an extinct species. But in recent years there has been a turn back to originality and individuality, and of these two qualities Schor certainly has more than anyone else. It is astonishing how little he needs in tools and space to conjure up the most elaborate fantasies in metal. In the Schor home on West 79th Street, Manhattan, a tiny room is set aside as a workship. The tools here are basically the same as those used by King Solomon's craftsmen, or those still employed by Yemenite masters - blow pipes, hammers, mallets, pliers, shears, files, saws, drills, polishing

materials, escept that gas and electricity now save human force and energy. Still, seeing him bend, form, raise, planish, and polish on his small work-bench, one needs little imagination to feel transferred into a work-shop of the pre-machine age. For him, no time-saving devices seem to exist, as he spends days and weeks and even months on an item that can be slipped into a pocket. What a keen eye is needed for the fineness of detail, and what patience is demanded to bring a work to its ultimate finish!

Schor luckily finds plenty of compensation in his work (for whatever customers pay, the sum total of ab artist's labor can never be repaid in dollars and cents!). In his work, he finds outlets for his imagination, his sense of humor, his metaphysical thirst. Rarely, if ever, do his customers, be they kaymen or representatives of religious institutions, endeavor to give him more than the barest outlines for a commissioned work, realizing that it would make no sense to limit Schor's unmatched fantasy - and they are not disappointed. Schor actually likes to set himself the most difficult tasks.

For instance, ordinarily silversmiths are content to decorate the outside of a piece, leaving the inside untouched. Not so Schor. Most of his brooches, bracelets, and ear rings are filled out completely on all sides with intricate design, often so delicate that it pays to look at them through a magnifying glass in order to appreciate fully all the twists of his inexhaustible fantasy. Take one of his celebrated pieces, a brooch, presenting figures that turn about - lovely ladies on one side, gay cavaliers on the other. In another brooch /he shows the Greek philosopher, Diogenes, searching for his honest man with a tiny, free-swinging lantern. On the other side a child gazes upward to a heart - yet the face of the heart swings aside to reveal a fanged serpent!

Jewish motifs are oftan included in items meant for secular use. Typical is a beautiful silver brooch which shows the traditional Sabbath table, with the mother lighting the candles. Even where his work is destined for ritual use, he does not restrain his vivid imagination. I remember one besamim box, less than 9 inches high, in the possession of that famous collector, Charles E. Feinberg of Detroit. It is shaped like a tower. On the octogonal base are engraved signs of the zodiac, while the stem is decorated with harvest scenes. There are opening doors in the opper part of the tower which is filled with figures, pomegrenades and flower blossoms. To avoid resemblance to a church tower, craftsmen usually topped the spice box with a gay weather wane. Schor often places a delightful little winged angel, or another figure on the top.

Making a yahrzeit lamp, Schor filled the circle on the top with the Hebrew months, while each panel was made to bear a sentence of a prayer above the illustration. On a wedding cup, the center is filled with a gay pageant of musicians approaching the bridal canopy, while on the top of the lid a Hasid in prayer shawl raises his arms in excitement. A candlestick is designed to show a balcony from which womenfolk gaze down on the procession with the scroll. A particular masterpiece is his capsule for a mezuzah: in this tiny confine is seen a family of three at the portal of a medieval synagogue...

Schor "suffers" with what is known as horror vacui. Like the medieval illuminators of Haggadoth, or like the equally anonymous miniaturists of the Middle East and India, he objects to empty spaces. This is, perhaps, not in keeping with the modernistic spirit, with a modern art that often presents us with large areas of monotones, with a blankness that cannot easily find a response in the

onlooker's restless heart. But Schor, though a "realist" in his work in metal, does not simply copy the masters of yesterday. He is modern in the simplification of his figures, in "distortions" for the sake of emotional emphasis and drama, in composition that sees the highest good in beautiful design. On the other hand, there are few contemporary masters who can compare with Schor in craftsmanship and skill. To be more precise, there is none at all. One has to go back to Israel Roukhomovsky and his sons to find men who were his peers, who were filled, like Bezalel, "with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."

Ilya Schor: A Modern Bezalel

By Alfred Werner

During his life-time, my friend, the painter, print-maker and silversmith Ilya Schor was not adequately recognized as the outstanding, and unusual, artist that he was. In this country, to which he fled from Nazi-dominated Europe with his wife in 1941, he had only two one-man shows - at the Jewish Museum in 1948, and at a gallery on 57th Street five years ~~xxxixxx~~ later. He received commissions from temples and from individual patrons, but the fees he commanded could never be high enough to compensate the artist for his tremendous investment of time in executing each commission (the silversmith's instruments are costly, and so are the materials he uses; to produce a small mezuzah, he, an utterly conscientious "old-fashioned" craftsman spent hundreds of hours of careful, devoted work). He illustrated only five books - not many American publishers realized that in the person of Schor this country had a master whose wood engravings were far superior in quality to most of the "art work" that "embellishes" book pages.

Hence, I am pleased that, last summer (three years after Schor's untimely death) New York's Jewish Museum devoted two large rooms to a Schor Memorial Exhibition comprises of more than two hundred items, displaying mostly his ingenuity as a silversmith (mezuzoth, kiddush cups, candle holders, spice containers, wedding cups, wedding rings, and so on), though a number of paintings (oils and gouaches) as well as samples of his graphic art were included. "Depth of feeling runs deep in Schor's work," Tom L. Freudenheim, curator of the Museum, characterized the master: "Sentimentality and love, both for the object and for the idea, are expressed in each object."

Schor, whom I knew well and whose true friendship and animated talk meant much to me, was a link to the great Jewish tradition of craftsmanship that started in very ancient times. He often talked to me of the extensive

Jewish participation in the arts and crafts, despite all obstacles, in his native Poland. Skills were handed down from father to son through the centuries, in strict observance of the Talmudic admonition that a Jewish father teach his son a trade, " for if one does not do so, it is like teaching his son robbery." Before the era of emancipation no Jew in Eastern Europe could attend a trade school, and the Christian guilds used any available means to eliminate Jewish competition. Nevertheless in 1786 all pewterers and coppersmiths in Lublin were Jewish, and in 1797 there were more Jewish than Christian silversmiths in Posen (in Polish, ~~Poznan~~ Poznan).

Schor was born in Zloczow, Galicia which, in the year of his birth (1904) was still part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. His father, Naftali, was a master craftsman, a shildenmoler, specializing in painting cows and chickens, plus the required legend in Yiddish and Polish, for the meat and poultry shops of their shtetel. From him - who was to die at the venerable age of ~~sixty~~ eight-six shortly before the outbreak of World War II - Ilya acquired the diligence and painstaking accuracy demanded by the always over-exacting patrons of a sign-painter.

While he obtained his Jewish background from this saintly man, it was the older brother, Moses, who encouraged the youngster to become a professional artist (Moses Schor, who taught history and was also something of a "Sunday painter", was to die a martyr's death in the Warsaw Ghetto). Thanks to Moses' efforts, Ilya studied the metal crafts with several masters, a training which was to serve him well later. At the age of twenty-six Schor enrolled in the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts from which he graduated with honors. For three years he was associated with Poland's pioneer of freco painting, Felician Kowarski. Though the Polish government was, on the whole, anything but philo-Semitic, individual gifted Jews were excepted from the basic anti-Semitic practices, and Ilya Schor got a grant to study in Paris. He arrived there in 1937, studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, sent paintings to various exhibitions

(including the celebrated Salon d'Automne), but to support himself and his bride, Resia - who was to make a name for herself as a painter - he made jewelry and other objects in gold and silver. This period of fulfilment was not to last very long. When, a few months after the outbreak of the war, the Nazis were able to crack the defenses of France, the Schors, like many of their friends and colleagues in Montparnasse, escaped to the country's unoccupied zone in the South. Knowing that even there they were not safe, they awaited an opportunity to come to the United States, and arrived here, with no baggage but their skills, in 1941

The initial worries and problems of adjustment were gradually overcome by the intrepid and frugal Schor. Realizing that he would be unable to feed hnd clothe himself and his family (which included two daughters born in America) on the sale of his pictures, the determined Schor once again set up shop as a silversmith. In the Schor home on W. 79th Street, Manhattan, a tiny room was set aside as a workshop. The tools were basically the same as those used by King Solomon's craftsmen, or those still employed by Yemenite masters in Israel : blow pipes, hammers, mallets, pliers, shears, files, saws, drills, polishing material, except that gas and electricity helped him save some strength and energy.

Seeing him bend, form, raise, planish and polish on his small work-bench, I felt transferred to a workshop of the pre-machine age. For Schor, no time-saving devices seemed to exist as he spent days and weeks and even months on an item that can be slipped into a pocket. What patience was demanded to bring a work to its ultimate finish! As I have said before, whatever sums customers might pay (and in his final years Schor was, at last, able to demand, and get, high prices), the total sum of his labor was never fully repaid in dollars and cents. Moreover, the ideas, motifs, variations found in his work were always his own, coming as they did from his almost inexhaustible imagination.

Rarely, if ever, did his customers, were they laymen or representatives of religious institutions, bother to give him more than

the barest outlines for a commissioned work. In some cases this was due to indifference. But often his patrons may have realized that it would make no sense to limit the master's unmatched fantasy. This was true, in particular, regarding his greatest achievements as a worker in metal - the Torah crown he created for Milwaukee's Emanu-El B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue, and the many-faceted and intricate silver gate to the Ark for Temple Israel in Great Neck (this pair of Ark Doors consists of 36 panels, 18 on each side, each of them dealing with a Biblical episode).

Schor actually liked to set himself the most difficult tasks. For instance, ordinarily silversmiths are content to decorate the outside of a piece, leaving the inside untouched. Not so Schor. Most of his brooches, bracelets, and earrings are filled out complicately on all sides with intricate design, often so delicate that it pays to look at them through a magnifying glass in order to appreciate fully all the twists of his unique fantasy. I remember a brooch, presenting figures that turn about - lovely ladies on one side, gay cavaliers on the other. In another brooch he shows the Greek philosopher, Diogenes, searching for his honest man with a tiny, free-swinging lantern. On the other side a child gazes upward to a heart - yet the face of the heart swings aside to reveal a fanged serpent!

Jewish motifs are often included in items meant for secular use: "Schor brought to life the Polish shetel and its inhabitants," the catalogue to the Memorial Exhibition says: "He created characters from the past who continually run across his works like a cast of actors playing out a Sholem Aleichem story. Through these works we can almost relive the experiences of a period of Jewish life in Eastern Europe: holidays, family celebrations, and all the joys which punctuate the existence of simple pious people." Typical is a beautiful silver brooch which shows the traditional Sabbath table, with the mother lighting the candle.

Even where his work was destined for ritual use, he did not restrain his vivid imagination. I remember one <u>besomim</u> box, less than nine inches high, which is shaped like a tower. On the octagonal base are engraved signs of the zodiac, while the stem is decorated with harvest scenes. There are opening doors in the upper part of the tower which is filled with figures, pomegranates and flower blossoms. To avoid resemblance to a church tower, Jewish craftsmen usually topped the spice box with a gay weather wane. Schor, however, often placed a delightful little winged angel, or another figure on the top.

Making a yahrzeit lamp, Schor filled the circle on the top with the Hebrew months, while each panel was made to bear a sentence of a prayer above the illustration. On a weddding cup, the center if filled with a gay pageant of musicians approaching the bridal canopy, while on the top of th lid a Hasid in prayer shawl raises hid arms in excitement. A candlestick i designed to show a balcony from which womenfolk gaze down on the procession with the Scroll. A particular masterpiece is his capsule for a mezuzah: in this tiny confine is seen a family of three at the portal of a medieval synagogue.

Schor was - how it hurts to be required to write "was"! - a genuine artist, eager to express his fervent soul in everything he made. But he was also a modest and wise man. Putting his skill at the disposal of the synagogue, he always adhered to a healthy balance between the free flow of imagination and the restraint necessary for the object's quick identification and untrammeled usefulness. Fashioning objects to be worn by a woman, he wished to please her , to add to her attractiveness - without ever abandoning his high aesthetic principles.

Schor felt that he was not sufficiently appreciated here as a graphic artist, and perhaps he was right. The books he illustrated with charming wood engravings were <u>The Earth is the Lord's</u> and <u>The Sabbath</u>, both by Abraham J. Heschel; <u>Hillel</u>, by Ely E. Pilchik ; <u>Adventures of</u>

Mottel the Cantor's Son, by Sholem Aleichem, and Prayer, Humility, and Compassion, by Samuel H. Dresdner. Schor's rich fantasy crowded a multitude of fascinating detail into small compass. He captured humor as as well as tragedy in rhythmically swirling designs reminiscent of folk art as well as of medieval miniatures. I liked, in particular, Schor's poetic rendering of poor Mottel's trek from the shtetel to the confusing sky-scrapers of New York.

Schor originally wanted to be a painter, and nothing else. Personally, I never thought that pigments were his appropriate media, but I noted sensitivity and great decorative charm in the smaller panels, some of them no larger than eight by ten inches. They were often inspired by reminiscences of his youth - the bearded Hasidim in their fur-caps, the pious families gathered around the table, the musicians, the country Jews with their domestic animals. Among his last paintings is a stunning self-portrait, melancholy in mood, showing the master as he really was, his pleasant, urbane manner being something in the nature of a mask, hiding the soul of a dissatisfied, restless man.

Among those who liked Schor's small pictures is Stephen S. Kayser, former director of the Jewish Museum. Introducing Schor's album of reproductions, Paintings on Yiddish themes, he wrote: "... A little piece of cardboard or canvas, the media of oul or gouache, a vivid look into memory, and they appear, the little men with their great creed. Their prayers and their works, their ways and manners become alive in a few hasty strokes...."

Schor, like his closest friend, the painter Mane-Katz, beneath a layer of Parisian sophistication, remained the somewhat naive and modest small-town Jew. But he could always, with the fruits of his skill, reach out into the non-Jewish world. His works were included in group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Boston, the Arts Club of Chicago, the Newark Museum, the Milwaukee Arts Center, and even

the old and distinguished Victoria and Albert Museum of London. The American periodical, Crafts Horizons, devoted an article to him. In this piece, "Fantasies in Silver," Mary Lyon wrote:

"There is an Old World flavor to his finely-wrought pieces, although the actual design very often has the fresh angularity of all that is speakingly modern. Despite the Gothic and Byzantine solemnity of his framework he is able to evoke a mood of gayety from the malleable metals, to recreate the naive and the nostalgic from the profound stream of ancient folklore."

While the bulk of his work belongs to what, for lack of a more appropriate word, is known as representational art, in his final years he experimented, often successfully, in idioms close to the abstract schools that flourish in this era (these small configurations in copper, brass or silver are unconnected with Jewish themes, and are often untitled).

Schor's death at fifty-seven came as a shock to thousands whom knew him as a lively, spry man, always full of ideas, of new plans, hot-tempered, but free of any malice. With him, one of the great truly Jewish artists passed away, a man, to whom might be applied the Bible's characterization of an artist as one who is filled "with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanshi;." Luckily for the world, his work has remained, an inspiring bequest of an urbane, nobly, witty and philosophical man whose memory should not be obliterated by the relentless flow of time.

Ilya Schor: Versatile and Profound Artist

By Alfred Werner

It is a sad task to write the obituary of a close friend - and I must start out by saying that I loved and admired the late Ilya Schor, painter, print-maker, sculptor and silversmith whose death at fifty-seven came as a shock to thousands who knew Schor as a lively, spry optimist, always active, always full of ideas, hot-tempered, but free of any malice. His sudden death in New York last June, robbed his family of a most conscientious husband and father who devoted all his strength to the arduous job of eking out a living for the four of them, while the art world and the Jewish world lost a master endowed with feeling and imagination, in addition to an unusual skillfullness.

Schor was a link in the great Jewish tradition of craftsmanship that started in very ancient times. He often talked to me of the widespread Jewish participation in the arts and crafts, in theface of all obstacles, in his native Poland (he was born in Zloczow, Galicia, in 1904). Skills were handed down from father to son through the centuries, in strict observance of the Talmudic admonition that a Jewish father ought to teach his son a trade, "for if one does not do so, it is like teaching his son robbery." Before the era of emancipation no Jew in Eastern Europe could attend a trade school, and the Christian guilds used any means at hand to eliminate Jewish competition. Nevertheless, in 1786 all pewterers and coppersmiths in Lublin were Jewish, and in 1797 there were more Jewish than Christian goldsmiths in Posen (Poznan).

Schor's father, Naftali, was a master craftsman, a shildenmoler, specializing in painting cows and chickens, plus the required legend in Yiddish and Polish, for the meat and poultry shops of their shtedtel. From the elder Schor - who died at the venerable age of eighty-six shortly before the outbreak of World War II - Ilya inherited the diligence and painstaking accuracy demanded by the always over-exacting patrons of a sign-painter. He obtained his Jewish background from this

saintly man, but it was chiefly Ilya's older brother Moses, a Hebrew scholar, who encouraged the youngster to become a professional painter, a Kunstmoler (Moses Schor was to die a martyr's death in the Warsaw ghetto).

Schor spent eight years of his adolescence apprenticed to an engraver. This time was not wasted, for not only did Ilya earn his livelihood as an engraver whileattending theAcademy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, but the feeling for metal which he acquired was invaluable when he became a silversmith. Although he had to work to support himself, Schor graduated from the Academy with honors, and he even received a scholarship to continue his studies in France. He arrived in Paris in 1937, worked as a silversmith, but also studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, sent paintings to various exhibitions (including the celebrated Salon de Automne), and settled down happily with his bride, Rezia, herself a gifted painter, in this city which has welcomed so many talented Jews from the dayswhen Camille Pissarro arrived there from the West Indies.

But the period of Schor's bliss in Paris was brief. A few months after the outbreak of the war, the Nazis were able crack the defenses of France, and to enter Paris. Like Chagall, Lipchitz, Mane-Katz and other Montparnassians, the Schor fled to Unoccupied France, and from there to New York, where they arrived in 1941. The initial worries and problems of adjustment were gradually overcome by the intrepid and frugal Schor. Realizing that he would be unable to support himself and his family on the sale of his pictures, the determined Schor set up shop as a print-maker and silversmith, and after some lean months and even years finally was able to get enough commissions to provide for a family now including two daughters born in America.

Schor was, widely known here as a graphic artist. Among the books he illustrated with charming woodcuts were Sholem Aleichem's Adventures of Mottel, the Cantor's Son; The Earth is the

Lord's, and The Sabbath, by the philosopher Abraham J. Heschel; and Rabbi E. E. Pilchik's Hillel. Schor's rich fantasy crowded a multitude of fascinating detail into small compass. He captured humor as well as tragedy in rhythmically whirling designs reminiscent of folk art as well as of medieval miniatures. I liked, in particular, Schor's poetic rendering of poor Mottel's trek from the shtedtel to the confusing skyscrapers of New York.

Schor felt that he was not sufficiently appreciated as a painter. Personally, I never thought that pigments were his appropriate media, but I noted sensitivity and great decorative charm in the smaller canvases of his, some of them no larger than eight by ten inches. They were often inspired by reminiscences of his youth - the bearded Hasidim in their fur-caps, the pious families gathered around the table, the musicians, the country Jews with their domestic animals. Introducing Schor's album of reproductions, Paintings on Yiddish Themes, Stephen S. Kayser wrote:

"... A little piece of cardboard organs, the media of oil or gouache, a vivid look into memory, and they appear, the little men with the great creed. Their prayers and their works, their ways and manners become alive in a few hasty strokes..."

He achieved his greatest acclaim as a worker in metal - vide the Torah Crown he created for Milwaukee's Emanu-El B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue, or the many-faceted and intricate silver gate to the Ark for Temple Israel in Great Neck. In the Schor home on West 79th Street, Manhattan, a tiny room was set aside as a workshop. The tools there were basically the same as those used by King Solomon's craftsmen, or those still employed by Yemenite masters in Israel - blow pipes, hammers, mallets, pliers, shears, files, saws, drills, polishing material, except that gas and electricity helped him save some strength and energy. Still, seeing him bend, form, rais planish and polish on his small work-bench, I felt transferred to a work-shop of the pre-machine age. For Schor, no time-saving devices seemed to exist,

as he spent daysand weeks and even months on an item (such as a silver mezuzah) that can be slipped into a pocket.

What patience was demanded to bring a work to its ultimate finish! Whatever sums customers might pay (and in his final years Schor was, & at last, able to demand, and get, high prices), the sum total of his labor was never fully repaid in dollars and cents. Moreover, the ideas, motifs, variations found in his work were nearly always his own, coming as they did from his almost inexahustible imagination. Rarely, if ever, did his customers, were they laymen or representatives of religious institutions, bother to give him more than the barest outlines for a commissioned work. In some cases this was due to indifference while in others his patrons may haverealized that it would make no sense to limit the master's unmatched fantasy.

Schor actually liked to set himself themost difficult tasks. For instance, ordinarily silversmiths are content to decorate the outside of a piece, leaving the inside untouched. Not so Schor. Most of his brooches, bracelets, and earrings are filled out completely on all sides with intricate design, often so delicate that it pays to look at them through a magnifying glass in order to appréciate fully all the twists of his unique fantasy. I remember a brooch, presenting figures that turn about - lovely ladies on one side, gay cavaliers on the other. In anothrbrooch he shows the Greek philosopher, Diogenes, searching for his honest ma with a tiny, free-swinging lantern. On the other side a child gazes upward to a heart - yet the face of the heart swings aside to reveal a fanged serpent! "Schor likes to have fun with his craft," a reviewer in Craft Horizons commented : "Whether it is a locket for a lady, a box for trinkets, a buckle or a brooch, he not infrequently inserts a sly joke..."

Jewish motifs are often included in items meant for secular use. Typical is a beautiful silver brooch which shows the traditional Sabbath table, with the mother lighting the candle. Even where his

work was destined for ritual use, he did not restrain his vivid imagination. I remember one <u>besomim</u> box , less than nine inches high, which is shaped like a tower. On the octagonal base are engraved signs of the zodiac, while the stem is decorated with harvest scenes. There are opening doors in the upper part of the tower which is filled with figures, pomegranates and flower blossoms. To avoid resemblance to a church tower, craftsmen usually topped the spice box with a gay weather vane. Schor often placed a delightful little winged angel, or another figure on the top.

Making a yahrzeit lamp, Schor filled the circle on the top with the Hebrew months, whileeach panel was made to bear a sentence of a prayer above theillustration. On a wedding cup, the center is filled with a gay pageant of musicians approaching the bridal canopy, while on the top of the lid a Hasidic in prayr shawl raises his arms in excitement A candlestick is designed to show a balcony from which womenfolk gaze down on theprocession with the scroll. A particular masterpiece is his capsulefor a mezuzah: in this tiny confine is seen a family of threee at the portal of a medieval synagogue.

Schor was - how it hurts to be required to write "was"! - a genuine artist, eager to express his fervent soul in everything he made. But he was also a modest and wise man. Putting his skill at the disposal of the synagogue, he always adhered to a healthy balance between the free flow of imagination and the restraint necessary for the object's quick identification and untrammeled usefulness. Fashioning objects to be worn by a woman, he wished to please her, to add to her attrwctiveness without ever abandoning his high aesthetic principles. For he was a good, decent individual as well as an extremely gifted artist. To my wonderful friend, the late Ilya Schor, might be applied the Bible's characterization of an artist as one who is filled

"with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."