

STREET VISIONS

EUROPE • 1934

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
RICHARD J. SCHEUER



DR. BERNARD HELLER MUSEUM

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION, NEW YORK

Street Visions: Europe • 1934

Photographs by Richard J. Scheuer

August 22 – December 15, 2022

Dr. Bernard Heller Museum, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York

huc.edu/hellermuseum

Jean Bloch Rosensaft, *Director*

Dr. Laura Kruger, *Curator Emerita*

Phyllis Freedman, *Co-Curator, Exhibitions*

Nancy Mantell, Ph.D., *Co-Curator, Travelling Exhibitions*

Susan Rosenstein, *Registrar and Archivist*

Rose Starr, Ph.D., *Research Director*

Susan H. Picker, Ph.D., *Assistant Curator*

Eleanor Berman, *Museum Communications*

TabakDesign.com, *Catalogue Design*

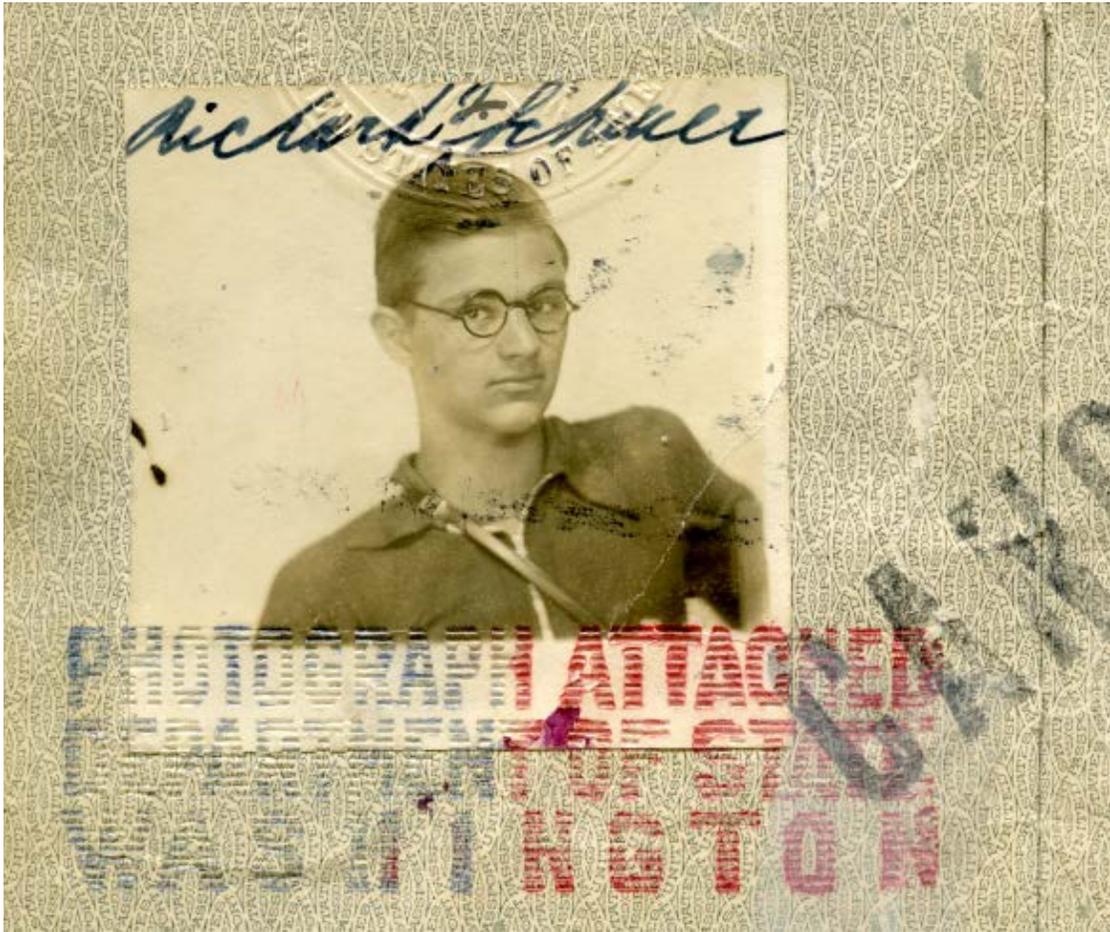
Ian Mankes and Thelonious Fiorito, *Exhibition Installation*

© 2022 Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

This exhibition is made possible by the Richard J. Scheuer Family.

Presented by the Irma L. and Abram S. Croll Center for Jewish Learning and Culture at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, with the generous support of Mildred Weissman, z"l, and George Weissman, z"l.

Cover: Richard J. Scheuer, *Street Scene, Warsaw, Poland, 1934*.



Richard J. Scheuer
1934 Passport Photo
(note the camera strap)

Introduction

Jonathan S. Scheuer

On July 15th, 1934, the day after his 17th birthday, Richard “Dick” Scheuer and his father Simon boarded the SS Champlain in New York harbor, bound for Le Havre, France. For the next eight weeks, Dick Scheuer toured Europe. Along the way, he made photographs. His subjects were most often ordinary people going about their business. Consequently, the record of this journey offers a window into street life in central Europe at the time. Scheuer’s intimate portraits of shopkeepers demonstrate a remarkable rapport with strangers. His photographs of passers-by are precocious examples of the emerging aesthetic of 35mm street photography. The framing is consistently complex, characterized by a strong interplay of central and edge elements. Gestures and expressions are captured with exquisite timing. Scheuer’s sensitivity to existing light conditions is apparent in every frame.

(continued on next page)

From Paris, he traveled southwest by train to the Basque region of France and Spain, then to Italy, stopping at Genoa, Milan, and Venice. From Venice, he crossed the Adriatic by ferry to Yugoslavia, visiting Split, Dubrovnik, Mostar, and Sarajevo. Scheuer continued by train to Budapest and then Warsaw, where he photographed the city's Jewish neighborhood. Traveling on to Moscow, he attended the Second Moscow Theater Festival, and from there returned to France.

In his photographs from the Jewish quarter of Warsaw, we see the members of that community appearing generally relaxed and unconstrained (this was five years before the Nazi invasion of Poland). In Moscow, Scheuer photographed a street parade and a young women's kazoo band, as well as productions at the Vakhtangov Theater, the Bolshoi Opera, the Moscow Children's Theater, and the Moscow State Yiddish Theater.

After his return to New York, Scheuer's negatives from this trip were developed and contact strips were made, but he appears to have never enlarged any of these pictures. Upon his graduation from Ethical Culture Fieldston School the following spring, he went on to undergraduate study at Harvard, service as an officer in the Army Signal Corps during WWII, and a career as a real estate executive. His philanthropic work included service as Board Chair at The Jewish Museum and at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he spearheaded the development of HUC-JIR's Jerusalem campus in partnership with the architect Moshe Safdie. Dick Scheuer passed away in 2008 at the age of 91.

Throughout the rest of his life, he continued photographing as an amateur, building a darkroom in the basement of his home in Larchmont, NY, where he taught his children how to develop and print film. Scheuer's later work, though less audacious than these European photos, is often suffused with a similar tenderness and attention to detail. Some of his portraits of family life are collected in the book *Dick's Wooden Box*, which Dan Scheuer and our friend Charles Seton published in 2013. In 2018, Dan and Charles turned their attention to the 1934 photos, which had never been seen in the more than eighty years since Dick Scheuer made them, and began digitizing and restoring them.

Dick Scheuer captured a unique visual record of daily life in Europe in 1934. Those who knew Dick will recognize the sensitivity and intellectual curiosity that these images reveal. The boldness of this young man, between his junior and senior years of high school, may come as a surprise to those who remember the scholarly, reserved gentleman of his maturity. Those who never met him will discover a photographer who met the world with empathy and courage.

“The world has to see these pictures!”

Restoring Dick Scheuer’s 1934 Photographs

Charles Seton

In 2014, my friend Dan Scheuer showed me an old cardboard box of uncut, tightly wound negatives and contact strips from a trip his father Dick made to Europe in 1934. As I gently uncurled the first of the fragile paper contact strips, and then the next, I was smitten. My first thought was: “The world has to see these pictures!” I was astounded by the proficiency and aesthetic quality of these images made by a 17-year-old. The boldness and experimentation evident in the photos didn’t match with the mellow older gentleman that I knew. The realization that some of the people in these pictures almost certainly did not survive the next ten years gave the project an emotional urgency for me.



BEFORE



RELIT BUT NOT
RETOUCHED



RETOUCH LAYER ONLY



FINAL

Dan told me that he had taken a quick look at the contact strips in the 1990s, when his father had been cleaning out the top shelf of his clothes closet, and had asked Dick for permission to print some of them. For some unknown reason, Dick had politely demurred. Dick Scheuer passed away in 2008, before we had a chance to talk with him in depth about the trip.

The negatives were shot on nitrate-based 35mm movie film, famous for bursting into flames and causing warehouse fires that, sadly, have destroyed many vintage movies and collections of still photographs. Dan and I recognized this risk, and insisted on waiting until we found a proper conservator to uncurl and digitize the 13 potentially brittle and degraded rolls of film – some 374 individual frames. In 2018, we sent the negatives to Chicago Albumen Works, specialists in silent film restoration, where they were converted at high resolution with a digital Hasselblad camera. Once we had the digital files, I worked on them intermittently over the next four years.

(continued on next page)

The negatives had some flaws that were likely there at the outset – a few light leaks, lens flares, the occasional underexposure or missed focus. There were stains, scratches, crimps and small tears that may have been compounded by 80+ years of casual storage. I fixed the defects in the digitized negatives using modern technology, primarily Lightroom, and Photoshop's cloning and healing tools. Some images required more than ten hours of precise pixel-by-pixel repair.

A few of the images were too flawed or damaged to even consider. Of the ones that remained, we chose to begin with those that would attract the most interest, principally the Warsaw pictures. I began the restoration by modifying contrast and fixing light leaks and lens flares using Lightroom, adjusting the light so that the main subject was highlighted. From there I moved to Photoshop, where I would sometimes create multiple layers in order to try new techniques that might or might not work. Typically, I make multiple passes through each image file, fixing the big problems first, and then returning to tackle the small problems. It's a process of incremental refinement. I do all of this detailed work at a high magnification. If something looks perfect at 300% or 400%, it will look perfect at 100%. When the image has been restored to my satisfaction, I bring it back into Lightroom, make a virtual copy, and then tweak the results. Sometimes the picture will look very different after restoration, requiring further adjustments and toning.

I believe that the full restoration of vintage photographs removes a barrier that keeps viewers at a distance. Dan and I discussed this at length. People not familiar with professional darkroom techniques may not be aware that in the pre-digital era, printers regularly employed sophisticated techniques of manipulation of photographs, including burning, dodging, masking, bleaching, and retouching. Digital editing tools are analogous in many ways. I used them in the spirit of bringing out the best in each image.

The reigning ethic among photography art dealers and museums is to exhibit only vintage prints made by the photographer, close to the time that the negatives were exposed. In this case, those prints do not exist. We decided that these photographs needed to be fully restored, printed, and exhibited.

In another move against convention, we decided to make 16" x 24" archival digital prints, which are much larger than the prevailing print size of the 1930s. There are so many exquisite details in these images that we want viewers to be able to see in all their glory.

Dick Scheuer first hired me in 1981 to photograph one of the family's big Thanksgiving reunions. From that time on, I was the family's regular photographer. I also restored vintage family photographs. Dick always trusted me and gave me the freedom to produce prints the way that I saw them, working in the family's darkroom in Larchmont. I'm grateful, at long last, to be returning the favor.

Remembering Dick Scheuer

Rabbi David Ellenson, Ph.D., *Chancellor Emeritus, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*

There were many privileges attached to serving as President of HUC-JIR, though none was greater than the closeness that office afforded me to Richard Scheuer. His devotion to HUC-JIR was absolute and no one supported or guided the College-Institute more than he. He was always caring, kind, modest, and generous. HUC-JIR could not have prospered and grown as it did during his years of service without his involvement and guidance.

However, as I consider this exhibition of photographs that he took in Europe as a teenager, I am reminded of his extraordinary intellect and his wide-ranging intellectual interests and concerns. Indeed, I experienced his scholarly curiosity long before I became President. Mr. Scheuer would often attend academic lectures I would deliver at meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature when I was still a professor at the Los Angeles campus of HUC-JIR, and he would carry on animated correspondence and rigorous discussion with me of what were surely esoteric scholarly topics far beyond the purview and concern of virtually all non-academics. At lunches and dinners in later years, this man, who later in life earned a degree in archaeology from NYU, would inform me in detail of how recent archaeological discoveries in 6th century BCE Northwest Assyria had transformed our knowledge of that time and place. On other occasions, he would ask me whether I thought there were parallels between the notion of the “categorical imperative” in Kant and the notion of “mitzvah-commandment” in Judaism. His was not a pedestrian mind and I delighted in my time with him and with Joan. What a couple!

I am so happy the College-Institute can share this glimpse into the life of the young Richard Scheuer and the world of Eastern European Jewry, on the eve of what would prove to be a tragic chapter in the life of our people, through these photographs. They provide a rare and important glimpse into the being of the Jewish people at a critical moment in our history. We are grateful to his family and friends for recovering and presenting these images and to the College-Institute and Jean Bloch Rosensaft for presenting them in our New York Museum. All who see them should enjoy and be edified by them. Nothing would grant Dick greater satisfaction!

Girls in Hats,
France



Cheesemonger,
Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France



Cattle Market (Vétérinaire),
Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France



Cattle Market (Races Étrangères),
Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France



Threshing,
French or Italian
Riviera



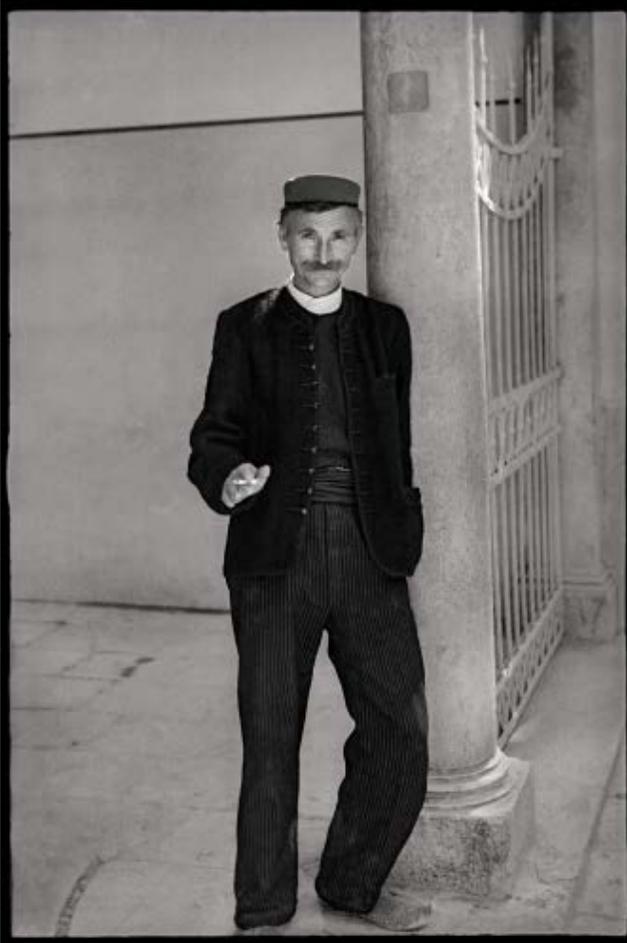
Butcher,
Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France



Train Station, Milan, Italy

Man in Dalmatian Costume,
Yugoslavia





Man with Cigarette,
Yugoslavia

Outdoor Market,
Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia



Tinsmith,
Mostar,
Yugoslavia



Street Market,
Yugoslavia



Man with Fez, Sarajevo, Yugoslavia



Shoemaker, Mostar, Yugoslavia

Courtyard with Three Women, Yugoslavia





Fabric Shop, Sarajevo, Yugoslavia



Woman with Veil,
Sarajevo, Yugoslavia



Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque, Sarajevo, Yugoslavia



Man with Ducks, Sarajevo, Yugoslavia



Szechenyi Baths, Budapest, Hungary

Livery Driver,
Warsaw,
Poland

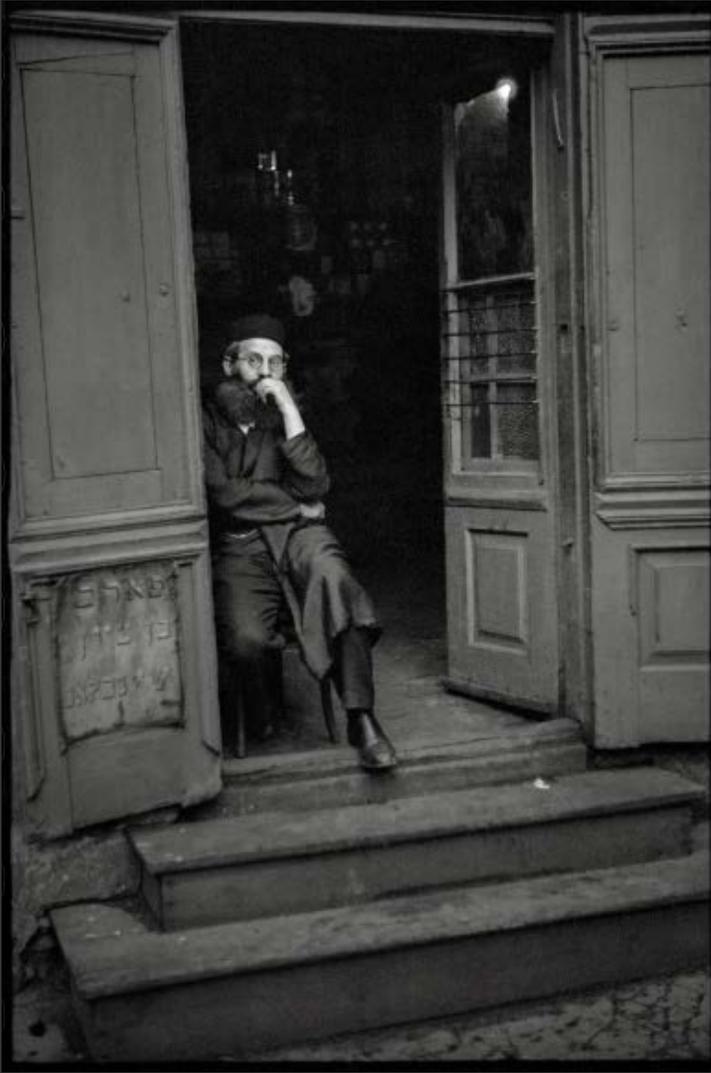


Men with Prayer Shawls,
Warsaw, Poland





Man Outside Women's Apparel Store, Warsaw, Poland



Man in Front of Paint Store,
Warsaw, Poland



Man in Train Station,
Warsaw, Poland



Men in Front of Clothing Store, Warsaw, Poland

Watermelon Seller,
Warsaw, Poland



Seated Man
Outside Store,
Warsaw, Poland



Shoemaker and Customers, Warsaw, Poland



Street Parade, Moscow, USSR



Girls' Kazoo Band, Moscow, USSR



Official Proceeding, Moscow, USSR



Ringmaster Character, Moscow Children's Theater, Moscow, USSR



Characters in Hats, Moscow Children's Theater, Moscow, USSR



Sholem Aleichem's "The Jackpot" (#1),
Moscow State Yiddish Theater, Moscow, USSR



Sholem Aleichem's "The Jackpot" (#2),
Moscow State Yiddish Theater, Moscow, USSR



Dog Jumping Over Girl, France

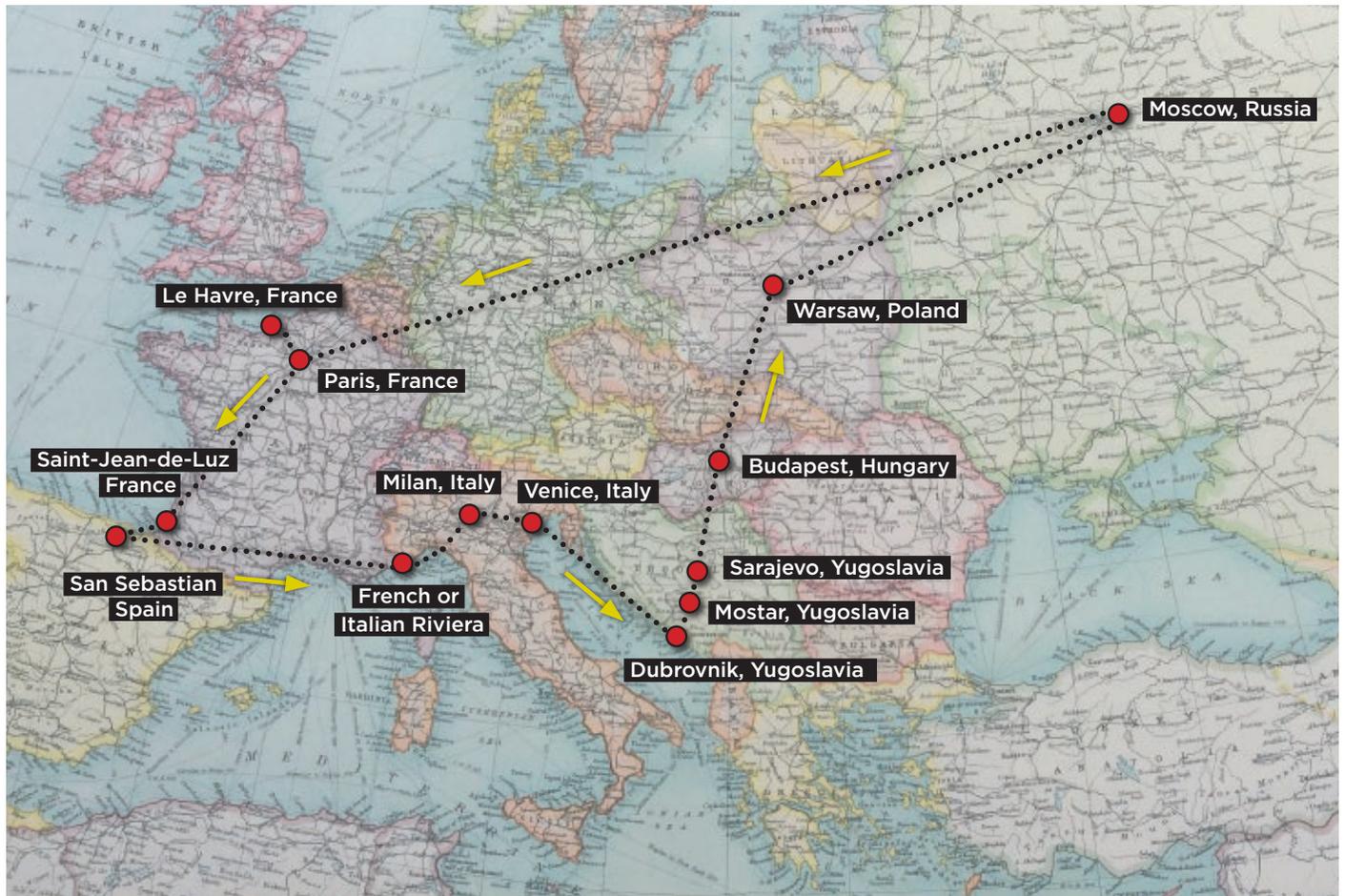


Family Meal in Garden, France

For inquiries regarding the purchase of prints
from the exhibition, or the forthcoming book
Street Visions: Europe • 1934 - Photographs by Richard J. Scheuer,
please contact Charles Seton at
Charlie@charlesseton.com, or go to
www.StreetVisions1934.com

—

All photographs © Richard J. Scheuer Archive



Richard J. Scheuer's journey across Europe during the Summer of 1934.



DR. BERNARD HELLER MUSEUM

Brookdale Center
One West Fourth Street
New York, NY 10012