

46. Take 18.

OK.

Yes. A very important moment in my creative work in the ghetto began after Mr. Tory had talked to me. And he introduced me to Professor Chaim Nachman Shapiro, who was in charge of the educational part of the ghetto. They had schools there. It was not allowed by the Germans, but still they had them.

And told me that Professor Shapiro will advise me as what is important for the archives, and I should bring everything I'm drawing to him, and he will see to it that it goes to safety. And for a few years, I did it. It was-- I couldn't do much of it, because I was organized to forced labor, like everybody else. But from time to time, they gave me some piece of paper that I was employed by the inside, the services of the ghetto. And then I could go and draw every day.

And I went to the social services and to the gates. All those drawings that I did near the gates and all those things that are connected with types from the ghetto is what-- Professor Shapiro tried to tell me, we want people, how they looked, how they lived. There's this scene where old people stay in line to receive their soup at the social kitchen. It was one of them that the team mostly appreciated-- and then that woman that sits at the table and then has her cup of soup.

And then the scene at the gate when people come back from work or go out to work-- this I did from a window that was opposite the gate where the police department was. And they came from the Council of Elders to persuade the policeman to let me sit there. And they were bringing me up all sorts of people from downstairs. I had a big collection of those types.

But they were lost with my collection that was lost. What has remained is what Mr. Tory has photographed at an exhibition that was arranged in the ghetto of the work that, by that time, I had managed to do. So he chose about 20 to 25 pictures that were most characteristic. And they are what I later reconstructed from the photographs he did from my pictures.

What about that house that you went to? You want-- ?

Yes. There was a room where there was-- in the first days of the ghetto, there was a slaughter of a family. And the people were so depressed by it that they shot it up. And no one went into it.

And even the living conditions were so difficult and so crowded in the ghetto, they didn't open the tomb. And Mr. Tory told me he wanted me to do a drawing of the tomb. And it is among the collection of the series, A Living Witness, Room After Slaughter.

What did it look like? How did you feel?

Look, by that time, I tried to do a good drawing. This is my concern till today. It doesn't matter what it is. Make a good drawing.

Of what you--

Of what you see, yes. Don't think of anything. Only think of making a good drawing.

What did you see?

Well, I can show. Everything was upside down. And there were remains of blood and remains of human tissue on the walls. But between them were pictures, and the arrangement of a nice room, of a nice Jewish family.

Do you know why they were slaughtered?

This was the reaction of-- the first reaction of the Lithuanians, yes. When they heard that the Germans were coming in, they were rounding up Jews wherever they could find them, or went into houses and slaughter them in the hundreds, in the thousands. There were no Jews left in the little towns, not at all. This was their revenge for the collaboration with the Soviets.

And you drew the Democracy Square and the road.

Yes. I did the things that were historically important and that appealed to me as a subject for my painting. And these were mostly appreciated. So they survived, because they were photographed.

And that way up the mountain to the Ninth Fort, it was a most beautiful [NON-ENGLISH], a most beautiful view with big trees. And you see it in the picture. I did [NON-ENGLISH] of it.

And especially in rainy days, it had such an atmosphere that really appealed to me as what it was, the [NON-ENGLISH], as we called it, the march to death by many tens and hundreds of thousands of Jews, because they brought over Jews from Austria, from Czechoslovakia, from all over Europe to be shot at the Ninth Fort, because they wanted to confound the population that they were going to other working places.

So there were certain concentration camps, like Treblinka. And one of the places of destruction, of annihilation, was the Ninth Fort that now has a museum where my pictures figure. I am in contact with them. I sent--

After Gorbachev, there was a release of many difficulties. And Jews started to come here. And Jews from Vilnius started to come here. And Jews from here went to and Vilnius.

And then they came to me and asked me for my pictures. And there are three or four museums in Vilnius and Kovno who have my work on view, on permanent view. This is why I did the etchings.

How did you get drawing materials?

I had my own. In the ghetto, I still had my own.

Where did you get paper?

I still had my own paper. And paper, you could get at the offices that worked for the Germans. Paper was no problem.

I had my [NON-ENGLISH], my-- I even had my colors. I was an artist in full creative strength just then. And I took my things with me into the ghetto.

Did you make two copies of everything?

This was later. This was another enterprise. This was the archives, what I did with Professor Shapiro. By the way, his fate was very tragic, if you want to hear of it. This was initiated by Mr. Tory, by the Council of Elders itself, for their archives.

I did several. I always-- when the subject intrigues me, I always do stay with it for a few drawings or paintings, especially when it's beautiful and appealing from the painter point of view. So I return to it, like I did the Democratic Square, and I did the way up--