

A World Premiere Tel Aviv Museum Exhibits Treasures Of Bible Lands



THIS 3,000-YEAR-OLD BRONZE CHERUB from Cyprus is one of the highlights of the exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum titled, "Treasures of the Bible Lands," from the collection of the noted expert Elie Borowski. The exhibition, one of the most comprehensive on the subject ever mounted, will be on display through January, 1988.

By Emmanuel Pratt

One of the most comprehensive exhibitions of early Near Eastern art ever assembled had its world premiere last week in the Tel Aviv Museum. Israel's President Chaim Herzog was the guest of honor at the opening of priceless artifacts from the 2,000-piece collection assembled by one of the world's great authorities on the art of the period, Elie Borowski.

The exhibit features some 250 statuettes, utensils, seals, jewelry and other artifacts created between 2,000 and 5,000 years ago in the ancient lands of the Near East. It will continue on display through January, 1988, according to Marc Scheps, Director of the Tel Aviv Museum.

"Our museum prides itself on its exhibitions of fine arts and does not present ancient artifacts," Mr. Scheps said. "But the quality of this collection is so unusual, and the variety so rich, that we were delighted to be the first museum to show these beautiful objects, created in this region, so long ago."

Elie Borowski, who assembled his collection over the past 40 years, says of his collection: "These mute objects speak of the authenticity and historicity of the Bible; they call us to return to our sources, to the ethics and morality of our

ancestors."

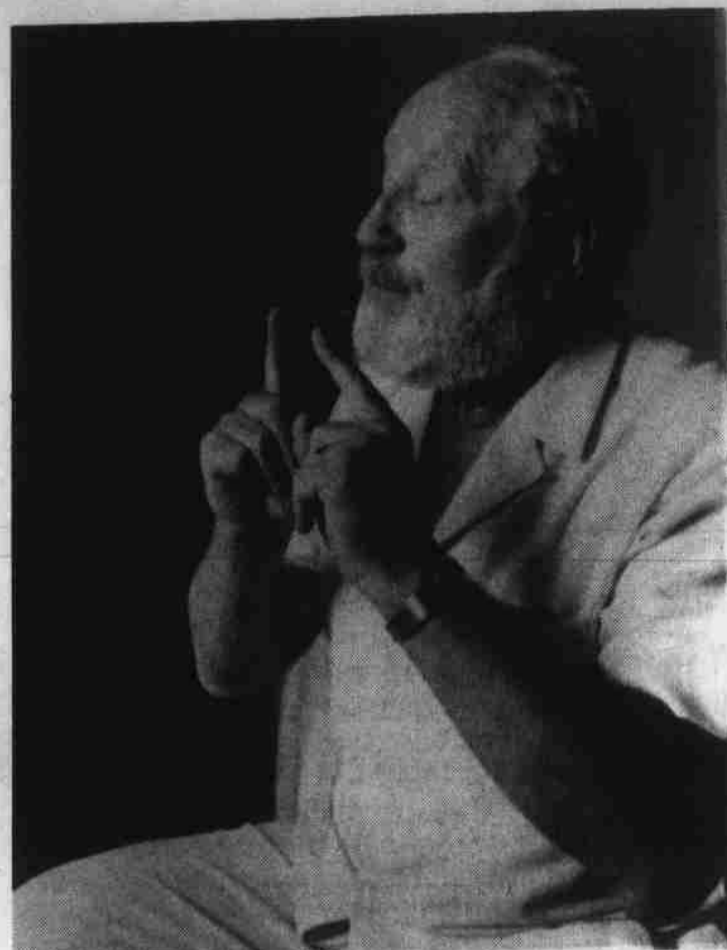
The collection is valued at some \$40 million. Borowski calls it "priceless."

Still tall and vigorous at 74, Elie Borowski was born into an affluent Hasidic family in Warsaw. He combined Talmud studies with philosophy and art history, training as a specialist in Assyriology and other Near Eastern disciplines. In 1940 he joined a volunteer combat unit of the French army, then found refuge in Switzerland, where he began his collection.

"I fell in love," he recalled, "with a 4,000-year-old blue calcedone cylinder seal, both for its beauty and the inscription in ancient Hebrew script -- 'shalom' -- which could either mean 'belonging to a man named Shalom' or 'in peace.' I bought it for 300 Swiss francs. I still have it and will never part with it."

A Family Perishes -- a Collection Begins

When the war ended and Borowski learned that his entire family had perished in the Holocaust, collecting Biblical art assumed a deeper dimension. "I knew I had to avenge the murder of my family and people," he recalled. "But how? The only way to avenge Nazism would be to make it impossible for Nazism ever to resurface again."



ELIE BOROWSKI, part of whose collection of early Near Eastern art premiered recently at the Tel Aviv Museum, describes one of the 150 artifacts in the exhibition, which continues through January 1988. The exhibition features statuettes, utensils, seals, jewelry and other artifacts 2,000 to 5,000 years old.

Elie Borowski became obsessed with the dream of creating a Museum of Bible Lands and Archaeological Art "that will bring us all -- Jews and non-Jews -- back to our sources and let humanity's ethical past build our ethical future."

So he became an art adviser to the world's foremost collectors and dealers, taking his commissions in the form of art. His collection grew as he kept adding to his store of Biblical treasures.

The Borowski Collection now on view at the Tel Aviv Museum includes statuettes used by idol worshippers in early Biblical times, Phoenician ivories used as ornaments by King Solomon, a 2-1/2-ton statue of Rameses II, the Pharaoh who enslaved the Hebrews; a relief from the palace of King Sennacherib depicting the exile to Babylon, and original examples of ancient Hebrew writing.

The exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum is an initiative of its director, Marc Scheps, who points out that the 250 articles on display make it one of the most comprehensive exhibitions of its kind ever mounted.

The Tel Aviv Museum is Israel's largest fine arts museum, alternating individual and group shows of Israeli artists with important and innovative international exhibitions. Its Helena Rubinstein Pavilion is a major center for the exhibition of contemporary art. As an educational center, the Tel Aviv Museum is visited daily by hundreds of school children participating in a variety of activities. The Tel Aviv Museum also presents programs of music, dance, theatre and cinema.

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