



David Lan-Bar

1912–1987

David Lan-Bar was born David Langberg on December 26, 1912, in Rava-Russkaya, a town in eastern Poland (present-day Ukraine). Fleeing the pogroms, he emigrated to Palestine in 1935, settling first in Jerusalem, where he studied painting with Miron Sima and attended the Hebrew University. In the early 1940s he moved to Tel Aviv, studying with Aharon Avni, and in 1945 he was among the founders of The Studio, where he worked alongside two artists who would become central figures in Israeli modernism: Avigdor Stematsky and Yehezkel Streichman.

In 1948 Lan-Bar arrived in Paris, enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts, and effectively never left. He settled permanently in the city, spending periods also in the village of Labeaume in the Ardèche, and died in Paris on March 26, 1987. In Paris he became part of the Second École de Paris, the loose association of largely Jewish, Eastern European émigré artists that defined a vital current in mid-century French art. He moved in circles that included the sculptors Ossip Zadkine and Jacques Lipchitz, and the painter André Lansky, who became a direct influence on his practice.

His early work was figurative and expressionist in character. After 1950, figurative elements gradually gave way to abstraction, the human form dissolving into superimpositions of color and densely worked passages of paint. Applied with a palette knife with controlled violence, his canvases produce luminous, layered compositions that art historian Jean-Pierre Delarge characterized as “abstract impressionism”, a term that captures their simultaneous freedom and atmospheric refinement.

Lan-Bar’s exhibition record spans five decades and three continents. He exhibited at the Salon d’Automne and Salon de Mai in Paris in 1948, the year of his arrival, and built a sustained presence at the Salons des Réalités Nouvelles, Grands et Jeunes d’Aujourd’hui, Comparaisons, and des Indépendants, whose 1977 catalogue cover bore his work. In 1954 he showed in Buenos Aires; in 1958 at the Galerie Blu in Milan and La Salita in Rome; and in 1961 he represented Israel at the Biennale de São Paulo. The 1964 touring exhibition of Israeli painting organized by MoMA’s Department of Circulating Exhibitions brought his work to ten major American and Canadian institutions, among them the Art Institute of Chicago, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Carnegie Institute, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University.

Solo gallery exhibitions in Paris include Galerie Breteau (1949), Galerie Art Vivant (1959), Galerie Kriegel (1977), Galerie Katia Granoff (1978), and a sustained relationship with Galerie Lelia Mordoch, which presented solo exhibitions from 1991 through 1999. Retrospective exhibitions were held at the Musée de Vesoul in 1988 and the Musée Israélien de Paris in 1993 and 1994. His work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montreal, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the museums of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. He was awarded the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French government.

