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Art

Marc Chagall: The Lost Jewish World
Benjamin Harshav
Rizzoli
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Pioneering Painter: In the early and mid-twentieth century, amid depression, war, and the Holocaust, painters seeking transcendence developed the surrealist and cubist movements. A student of both, the sensitive Marc Chagall created fantastic and moving works of art.

More than an art book, Benjamin Harshav's *Marc Chagall: The Lost Jewish World* Rizzoli, 9 x 13, 200 color and b/w photographs and illustrations, 256 pages, hardcover, $75.00, 0-8478-2802-6) is as much a biography of the prolific artist as a collection of his works. The author describes Chagall's background, influences, and works in painstaking detail, from his roots in a Yiddish-speaking region of Belarus, to the tortured paintings he made at the onset of World War II.

The author is professor of Comparative Literature, Hebrew, and Slavic languages at Yale University and has written three previous books on Chagall. The depth to which he understands the painter's influences and style is evident in the chapter on the iconography of his theater paintings. In this section, Harshav examines a large but little-known painting, "Introduction to the Yiddish Theater." The piece features a host of images common to Chagall's paintings, and their meaning is described at length. For instance, the author describes an unusually colored cow: "Chagall often used bright green as a challenge to realism."

Chagall's major works are represented as well, including the dreamlike canvas "The Fiddler" and "I and the Village," with its vibrant colors, a dominant green-faced young man, and folksy village setting. This exhaustive tome promises to enlighten those curious about the artist and delight his devotees.

Whitney Hallberg