

THE PERIPHERY AS
CENTRE: R.B.KITAJ,
DIASPORA-ISM AND THE
"SCHOOL OF LONDON"

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The dichotomy of centre and periphery is active in the work of R.B.Kitaj. An American, he specifically chose to come to Europe during the period of the hegemony of the New York School. Anticipating his later preoccupation with Jewish themes, and a personal obsession with the lost intelligentsia of the Holocaust, he chose first to study in Vienna.

However, Kitaj has made his permanent home in London, which came to embody an idealised site for him of the Baudelarian city, and a city of refugees. In 1976 Kitaj curated a seminal exhibition entitled "The Human Clay", which signalled a return to order among British artists, and a renewed interest and confidence in drawing from the figure among avant garde practitioners. This paper will try to establish links between Kitaj's support for the British drawing tradition, his concern with Jewish themes, his critique of late-modernism, and his sense of the artist as "Diasporist".