

THIS WEEK WITH

Joy Schonberg

Women to Know

AGE: 50s

OCCUPATION: Arts and antiquities consultant, appraiser and auctioneer, and president of Joy Schonberg Galleries

LIVES IN: Manhattan and Monsey

NUMBER OF CHILDREN: 4

HOBBIES/INTERESTS:
Reading, Jewish history,
hiking, gardening

In the 1980s and '90s, archaeologist Joy Schonberg blazed a trail in the art world for Jewish antiquities, for religious Jews and for women as the founder of Christie's Judaica Department in London and New York, and later as the president of Joy Schonberg Galleries in Manhattan. When you get to know Joy, it becomes clear that this powerhouse is also a paradox—a modern woman whose life is history.

Joy grew up in a *frum* home in the Willesden Green neighborhood of London, which was then a very Jewish community. Her parents, Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews, infused Joy with a love of art from early on. "They schlepped us to museums," Joy remembers. "I was always surrounded by art."

After graduating from high school, Joy went to university in Israel. Her major: archaeology. "The reason I chose archaeology," she says, "was that it sounded fascinating to me to unearth the real history of our past. I was always religious, but I wanted to see with my own eyes the biblical things I had learned."

Joy was an anomaly in Hebrew University's archaeology department, which was populated mostly by Israeli *kibbutzniks*. She was one of only two *frum* students in the program, and her perspective often conflicted with that of her peers—and even her teachers.

"Archaeology was their religion," she explains. "They looked and said, 'This happened in this period, so that's what I believe in.' If you are religious, you're coming from a different standpoint because your religion comes first. I never let archaeology come before religion. If there wasn't a piece that matched the period, an archaeologist would say, 'We haven't found it, so it doesn't exist.' I would say, 'There is a piece; we just haven't found it yet.'"

It was difficult to find her place, she admits, but she was fascinated by her studies. As part of her training, she was involved in excavations all over Israel, including the Western Wall and Southern Wall digs with Professor Benyamin Mazar, the Old City of Jerusalem with Meir Ben-Dov, and Hazor with the illustrious Yigael Yadin. Eventually, she completed her BA and MA in archaeology and the history of Jewish art.

After college, Joy came on holiday to New York City, where she decided to stay. Her first job here was curating an exhibition at YU on Ze'ev Raban, one of the famous artists at the Bezalel School of Art in the 1920s. After two years, she decided it was time for a change. She sent her résumé to places like the Metropolitan Museum of