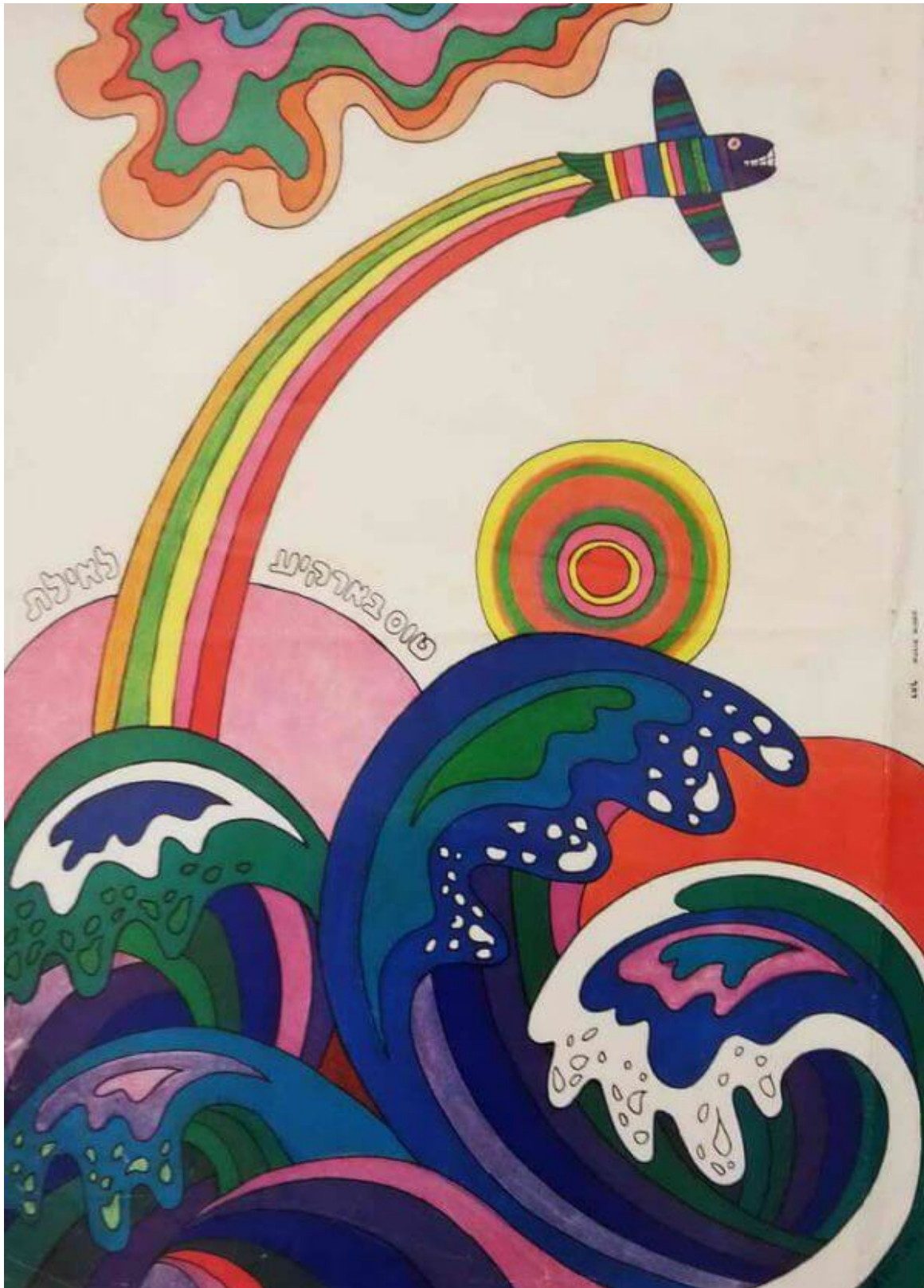


From Vaisler Brothers to Tel Aviv

by [John RC Potter](#) (March 2024)



Israel Tourism poster, by Paul Kor for Arkia Airlines,
1960

One year of university, then a gap year—no five!
Went out to work, had to pay the bills.
A retail clerk at Vaisler's, a clothing emporium
in east London, when it was still bustling.
*(London! Oh no, not the jolly olde one;
but London Ontario Canada.)*
One side men's clothing, the other women's wear;
two openings between, like porticos,
to allow for ease of passage (and gossip).

My bosses were Jewish-Canadian,
self-made men, pillars of the community.
I admired their business savvy,
as well as their wealth and success.
The woman's manager was Ida,
a shrewd and intelligent woman,
always perfectly coiffed and dressed impeccably.
Ida took me under her wise wing,
and became a mentor of mine.

*She once said to me with a steely voice and eye:
"Mr. Hitler took all my relatives from me."*

Little did I know that many years hence,
my life's journey would take me
from these Jewish managers and mentors
to Eretz Israel and the bustle of Tel Aviv.

*From the plane's window, a glimpse of blue sea, silver sand,
and blond beach.
A sense of history and time's passage; what lay beyond one's
reach.*

For a year I lived in Tel Aviv,
not far from the Ben Gurion House.

Wandering streets that called me home.
Walking into my past across the millennia,
mullioned memories of spaces and places:

*The corner of Gordon and Dizengoff,
where my imagination took lift-off.
From Ben Yehuda to Arlozorov
Boker tov! L'hitra'ot! Mazel tov!
Then making my way back home on two tired feet,
to my cosy nest on Eduard Bernstein Street.*

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John RC Potter is an international educator from Canada, living in Istanbul. He has experienced a revolution (Indonesia), air strikes (Israel), earthquakes (Turkey), boredom (UAE), and blinding snow blizzards (Canada), the last being the subject of his story, "Snowbound in the House of God" (*Memoirist*, May 2023). His poems, stories, essays, and reviews have been published in a range of magazines and journals, most recently in *Blank Spaces*, ("In Search of Alice Munro", June 2023), *Literary Yard* ("She Got What She Deserved", June 2023), *Freedom Fiction* ("The Mystery of the Dead-as-a-Doornail Author", July 2023), *The Serulian* ("The Memory Box", September 2023), *The Montreal Review* ("Letter from Istanbul", November 2023) and *Erato Magazine* ("A Day in May 1965", January 2024). His story, "Ruth's World" (Fiction on the Web, March 2023) was nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize. His children's picture book, *The First Adventures of Walli and Magoo* will be published in the autumn of 2024.

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