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Salmony

Miss B. Miller

May 14, 1951

May 14, 1951

Dr. Alfred Salmony
Institute of Fine Arts
17 East 80th Street
New York, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Salmony:

After our telephone conversation a few weeks ago, I wrote on your suggestion to Professor Fujio Koyama to inquire about his plans for showing the Japanese Ceramique Contemporaine exhibition in the United States after the close of the show at the Musee Cernuschi in Paris.

I received today a reply from Professor Koyama which I thought you might like to see. A copy of his letter is enclosed. I am returning at the same time your catalog of the Paris exhibition which I had received from Mr. Barr.

Let me thank you once more for the patience you have shown in letting us keep your copy for this length of time. It has helped us, as a matter of fact, in the identification of the only art potter in our present little exhibition of Japanese household objects. Kazuo Yagi's pottery was also shown in Paris and the biographical notes which we found in the catalog were used for label material in our own show.

Mr. W. J. H. B. Sandberg
Stedelijk Museum
Paulus Potterstraat 11
Amsterdam, Holland

Very sincerely yours,

Greta Daniel
Assistant Curator

GD:d
Enc.

cc . Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

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cc: Miss D. Miller

January 8, 1952

Dear Miss Schoelkopf:

Dear Mr. Sandberg:

Thank you for your good wishes and your words about Iris Barry.

To tell the truth I know almost nothing about Iris' status since I have been out of the Museum for the last year working on the Matisse book with only a day every week at my desk.

I am passing your letter on to René d'Harnoncourt who is the Director of the Museum and I shall follow the matter up for I do indeed agree with you that Iris would be of great value in representing the Museum's interest in the film in Europe.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

My very best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Miss Joanna Schoelkopf
New York University
Institute of Fine Arts
17 West 80th Street
New York 28, N. Y.

Mr. W. J. H. B. Sandberg
Stedelijk Museum
Paulus Potterstraat 13
Amsterdam, Holland

AHB:mh

P. S. Last week I had the pleasure of sending you a copy of the Matisse book. It should reach you shortly.

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Schmalhorst

New York University
Institute of Fine Arts
17 East 80th Street
New York City
April 15, 1952
April 8, 1952

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Barr: Dear Miss Schmalhorst:

I am a graduate student. While I described Picasso's La Vie and was writing a paper on it, I said that obviously "allegory" is intended, "I do not know exactly what the allegory is intended," I do not know exactly what the allegory is. I know of no written hint either which might be of help to you. Also I think that if you wrote to Picasso he would reply inviting you to make your own interpretation. In 1946, you state, "...a 'problem' picture... Obviously allegory is intended." (pp. 28)

I am sorry not to give you more explicit help. May I trouble you to ask if you can give me some indication as to the best sources available that would give some written hint about the allegory intended?

Sincerely,

In addition, may I trouble you to ask for this information if available as soon as it is convenient for you? If you would prefer, it would be most satisfactory to me if the information would be more easily relayed by you.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

I thank you for your trouble.

Miss Joanna Schmalhorst
New York University
Institute of Fine Arts
17 East 80th Street
New York 28, N. Y.

AHB:mh

Very truly yours,

J. Schmalhorst
Joanna Schmalhorst

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New York University
Institute of Fine Arts
17 East 80th Street
New York City

April 8, 1952

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Barr:

I am a graduate student at the Institute of Fine Arts and am writing a term paper for Dr. Jose Lopez-Rey in an attempt to determine the allegory implied in Picasso's painting La Vie of 1903.

In your book, Picasso; 50 Years of his Art published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1946, you state, "...a 'problem' picture...Obviously allegory is intended." (pp. 26)

May I trouble you to ask if you can give me some indication as to the best sources available that would give some written hint about the allegory intended?

In addition, may I trouble you to ask for this information if available as soon as it is convenient for you? If you would prefer, it would be most satisfactory to me if the information would be more easily relayed by appointment.

I thank you for your trouble.

Very truly yours,

J. Schmalhorst

Joanna Schmalhorst

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Princeton University
Oct. 7, 1952

Dear Mr. Barr

Correction: The faculty
was invited to the Gorky
opening.

Yours.

Bill Seitz

ars, seeing him two or
Princeton University. I also

know something of his work through the faculty there. He seems to me to be a very intelligent, able and possibly brilliant scholar. I understand that he did very well in his general examinations. I know nothing of his work as a teacher but believe that he would be successful because of his warmth of personality and enthusiasm for his subject.

(2) As a member of the visiting committee of the Princeton University Department of Art and Archeology I have been somewhat involved in the question of Mr. Seitz' thesis subject, which he plans to develop as a book. Since his subject covers the art of the past quarter century this met with some natural skepticism on the part of the faculty which, however, was finally convinced of the seriousness and importance of Mr. Seitz' program.

I myself have no question as to the value of what Mr. Seitz proposes to do, for his subject concerns the most vigorous and wide-spread movement in American painting of the recent past. This movement, most frequently called abstract expressionism, has met with a good deal of professional and public opposition. Nevertheless its vitality and its attraction for the most vigorous talent among younger artists, and even older ones, has given it an unrivaled position.

Although based on European precedent, this new American tradition has developed so richly that for the first time in several decades European critics are considering American painting as a serious factor in the international art world.

It seems to me Mr. Seitz is peculiarly well equipped to analyze and report on this subject because he is not only a highly trained art historian and a painter of considerable distinction but also because he knows personally a good many of the best artists in the movement which interests him. It may be argued that this will involve some subjective or personal judgment but this possible handicap is far outweighed by the direct, first-hand insight which his intimate knowledge of this subject would give him.

I highly recommend his appointment.

American Council of Learned Society
March 1952

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Seitz

(1) I have known Mr. Seitz for the past two or three years, seeing him two or three times a year while he has been a graduate student at Princeton University. I also know something of his work through the faculty there. He seems to me to be a very intelligent, able and possibly brilliant scholar. I understand that he did very well in his general examinations. I know nothing of his work as a teacher but believe that he would be successful because of his warmth of personality and enthusiasm for his subject.

(2) As a member of the visiting committee of the Princeton University Department of Art and Archeology I have been somewhat involved in the question of Mr. Seitz' thesis subject, which he plans to develop as a book. Since his subject covers the art of the past quarter century this met with some natural skepticism on the part of the faculty which, however, was finally convinced of the seriousness and importance of Mr. Seitz' program.

I myself have no question as to the value of what Mr. Seitz proposes to do, for his subject concerns the most vigorous and wide-spread movement in American painting of the recent past. This movement, most frequently called abstract expressionism, has met with a good deal of professional and public opposition. Nevertheless its vitality and its attraction for the most vigorous talent among younger artists, and even older ones, has given it an unrivaled position.

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I highly recommend his appointment.

American Council of Learned Societies
March 1952

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September 2, 1951

in meaning to send
all summer

January 3, 1952

most part you played
out of my plan for
is. I realize, of course,
simple it would be

Dear Mr. Seitz:

Of course you may use my name in applying
for a fellowship to continue your work.

Forgive me for not answering your question
before this. I am still far from the bottom of the
pile of unanswered correspondence accumulated during
the last weeks of the Matisse rush.

Let me know when you come to town next so
that we can have luncheon.

Sincerely,

anticipate to return
and active group.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Mr. William C. Seitz
Department of Art and Archaeology
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

AHB:mh

Sincerely
Bill Seitz

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September 2, 1951

Dear Mr. Barr

Satz

I have been meaning to send you a note all summer thanking you for the great part you played in the approval of my plan for a modern thesis. I realize, of course, that the principle involved is far more important than the immediate issue of what I do next year. At any rate, as you may know, the final approval was granted.

With the general exams a month away, there is no time for any work yet, but the anticipation to return to modern art and artists grows, undiminished immediate demands, every day.

Sincerely
Bill Satz

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Seitz
Mc Cormick Hall
March 29, 1951

Dr. Alfred Barr
The Museum of Modern Art
New York City

Dear Mr. Barr:

I am enclosing a copy of what I hope will be the final statement of the thesis topic. It is far from completely thought out for, as you can imagine, I have had no time to work on it except to sum up the thoughts of random minutes. If it is approved, I shall attempt to forget modern art and prepare for the M. F. A. exams which are scheduled for early October. During the following year I expect to spend all of my time, one way or another, with contemporary painting.

I plan to be in New York on Monday, April 9. If you are free, I should be happy to have the opportunity of lunching with you.

Sincerely,

William C. Seitz
William C. Seitz

(No answer)

...in one manner or another, the fusion has been completed. Rather than dealing with the dualism of the "objective" and "subjective" group, (cf. topic 2) it focuses on the subjectivists, and considers the more rationalistic abstract painters only in relationship to the new central topic. The relationship of experiential thought (cf. topic 3) to the group I have selected must, to some degree, be considered. The fourth topic of the previous outline, which deals with the problem of the communication of ideas in a non-figurative pictorial language, is central to the new topic.

The previous emphasis on internal documents and a full consideration of technical procedure and pictorial language is, if possible, even more necessary in the present context; but the material to be considered can be narrowed in terms of the new limitation.

Inasmuch as the suggestions of the committee seemed to be in general sympathy with my conception of the problem, I shall mention them only where they seem to involve a problematical point.

...the immediate evidence. "Nature" in its broadest sense, provides a great deal of their subject matter, although subjective concepts of Nature, both macrocosmic and microcosmic, are more common than derivation from immediate visual experience. The nature of experience itself, while not visually, provides a vast variety of material for these artists.

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To the Committee on Graduate Students:

Immediate responsibilities have made it impossible for me to spend the amount of time I would have wished in preparing a final statement of my thesis plan. Even so, after discussing the suggestions of the committee with Mr. Friend, and after another conversation with Mr. Barr, I feel the aims which were implicit in the earlier outline can be made specific.

There seems to be some indication of a new tendency toward doctoral work in the contemporary field. Mr. Harris Prior, (director of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica, New York) for example, is working on a dissertation for New York University on the painters of the Pacific Northwest. Although one of his men, Mark Tobey, will be involved in my thesis as well, his subject will not overlap mine in any way. It does, however, call attention to the advisability of publishing my topic as soon as the committee finds it satisfactory.

I am proposing as a title Abstract Expressionism in American Painting: its Meaning and Development. In choosing this topic, there has been no essential change from the ideas previously outlined, except that one problematical phase has been selected which cuts across all of the topics listed. Rather than dealing with the fusion of Abstraction and Expressionism, (cf. topic 1) it focuses on the work of a group of artists in which, in one manner or another, the fusion has been completed. Rather than dealing with the dualism of the "objective" and "subjective" group, (cf. topic 2) it focuses on the subjectivists, and considers the more rationalistic abstract painters only in relationship to the new central topic. The relationship of experiential thought (cf. topic 3) to the group I have selected must, to some degree, be considered. The fourth topic of the previous outline, which deals with the problem of the communication of ideas in a non-figurative pictorial language, is central to the new topic.

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"Abstract Expressionism" is at best an imperfect label for the work of the artists which I have selected to study, and in certain instances I have trespassed established categories. The word expressionism must be interpreted in its broadest sense, freed of the implication of brute self-expression which it carries when applied only to the works of such artists as Van Gogh, Soutine, or Munch. The artists in which I am interested group themselves on the basis of a community of technical methods, pictorial means, and ideas.

Technique

Technically, they have in common a new experimental interest in freedom of execution. The most rigid and geometrical works of the group are approached with freedom and vitality, while the freest are painted in fluid or even volatile techniques which often abandon the brush, sometimes depending for certain effects on the physical and chemical reaction of one medium upon another. All of the artists concerned reject laborious techniques and the slow build-up of forms by strokes, lines, or gradations.

Pictorial Means

Common to all of them, also, is an interest in a rhythmic and relativistic space in which movement into and out of depth is felt, often violently, but in which no point can be absolutely plotted. At the same time, consciousness of the picture plane is retained. This search for an emotionally active space which functions independently of subject matter has occasioned an exhaustive exploitation of the spatially descriptive and expressive possibilities of line, plane texture, and the modulation of tone and color. The traditional means of achieving what might be called "absolute form and space" have been completely abandoned: chiaroscuro, mass, (i. e. three-dimensionally modeled plastic form) and linear and aerial perspective. By consequence of the rejection of linear perspective, the focused composition has also (with perhaps the exception of Hans Hofmann) been abandoned.

Subject Matter

All of the men in the group have discarded direct visual data as subject matter, although the formal qualities of our environment--the natural, the biomorphic, and to a degree the mechanical--are immediately evident. "Nature" in its broadest sense, provides a great deal of their subject matter, although subjective concepts of Nature, both macrocosmic and microcosmic, are more common than derivation from immediate visual experience. The nature of experience itself, while not visual, provides a vast variety of material for these artists.

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The Artistic Process

Significantly, the methods of all of the painters of the group are evolving in character. Preparatory sketches, when they exist, are more in the nature of rehearsals than they are "blueprints" from which a work is finished by systematic and gradual accretion. Psychologically speaking, the picture is seldom the result of an ideal image, projected complete in the mind and approached gradually until completion. The work grows, alters itself, and "talks back" to the painter. It may be regarded as "finished" in one of perhaps several stages of development.

Content

The nature of the common content of the group is one of the problems with which the thesis must deal, but certain aspects of it can at least be suggested. Expression in painting can proceed from many levels of the human personality. The most successful works of these painters often evolve from more elevated states of consciousness than do those of the painters more traditionally known by the expressionist label. Often aspiring in character, these works can become mystical or philosophical while still being rooted in an essentially expressionist base. All of the artists of the group, I believe, set a high value on mood and emotional tone, so that we can properly speak of "content" or "subject matter" as a psychologist might.

In contrast to these subjective artists, the "objective" abstractionists sometimes speak in contempt, or even disgust, of expressive values in art. (cf. Stuart Davis at a recent forum at the Museum of Modern Art)

Also common to the work of the whole group is a fusion of technique, pictorial means, subject matter, and content in such a manner that no separation can be made between them. An idea and its form are conceived simultaneously.

Selection of Painters

I feel it would be harmful to tie the thesis to the discussion of the works of only three or four painters. While preparing these notes, I have attempted to narrow the group to the fewest possible men. After having established stylistic limits, my aim was to present the widest divergence within them, and to represent each of these stylistic "outposts" by one painter.

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Although the problem cannot be treated in detail here, I can demonstrate its nature.

Hans Hofmann is essential not only because of his paintings which, deriving directly from still life or landscape, are possibly the most traditional of the group, but because of his importance as a teacher of painting and an intuitive writer on art. To represent "cosmic" subject matter (which may deal with celestial or psychological concepts) I would select, first, the early paintings of Matta; but to eliminate from direct consideration the work of Hayter and other men working in this direction would be a serious limitation. Certain of these painters interpret natural forms with animistic overtones. Baziotes might well represent them, although others should be considered as well. De Kooning and Motherwell are perhaps the most directly expressionistic of the group, and both must be included. Beside being a painter, Motherwell is one of the most lucid commentators on the problems and aims of the contemporary artist. Pollock is possibly the key figure to be considered in dealing with the problem of the abandonment of the brush, the implications of naturalism in technical processes, and the esthetic and philosophical problems which this presents. The late Arshile Gorky, once eclectic, synthesized his several influences into a rich abstract-expressionist style of great power, and has become the greatest influence on the younger group. Mark Tobey is unique in the mystical and philosophical aspiration of his forms as well as for the austerity of his pictorial means. He is also important to this subject because he has felt directly the impact of the influence of oriental art and calligraphy, which, because of its analogy to the aims of contemporary esthetics, should become increasingly evident.

Thus the "absolute must" painters cannot be narrowed down to fewer than six, and the line between their work and that of the men closest to them would be hard, and perhaps impossible to draw. On the other hand, essential points may often be made by the introduction of only one or two works by certain artists, so that consideration of a larger group does not present as vast a problem as it may at first appear.

Instead of organizing the thesis around the specific study of certain artists, I should prefer to regard the development of the central ideas as its core, and to assemble around it the relevant works and documents.

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It may be appropriate now, to mention a few of the questions and reservations of the committee. I am completely in sympathy with their insistence on an historical orientation. I do not wish to work in a temporal vacuum, and I had already planned to study the relationship of this recent school to the work of the painters of the earlier years of the century, both European and American, with whom they have affinities.

Two other reservations of the committee can be mentioned conjointly: 1) the possibility that being a painter with certain convictions I might attempt to write a manifesto, and 2) my statement that I wished to avoid "value judgements" wherever possible. The latter statement was perhaps unfortunate. Such judgements cannot be avoided without limiting oneself to description. I do aim, however, to avoid purely personal evaluations, and wish to concentrate on the nature and development of the painting with which I deal, rather than to estimate its ultimate value. At the same time, I have no ideas of any one "true" art of the present or the future that I wish to advance.

Mr. Friend has objected, it seems to me justly, to the idea of "creating" documents, and insists on the "naïveté" of true historical evidence. With this in mind, I plan to exhaust already existing material before relying on personal contacts, at the same time judging and correlating it by attendance at meetings, forums, and informal gatherings of artists. The desire to keep the objects of my research "naïve" provides another reason for avoiding the mention of any specific living painters in the title of the thesis.

If it would be helpful to the committee, I should be happy to answer any questions which might clarify these notes.

William C. Seitz

(copies to Messrs. Smith and Barr)

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Seitz

January 12, 1951

349 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey
January 13, 1951

Dr. Alfred Barr
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York

Dear Mr. Barr: I could not have met you today last

My apparent idiocy can be explained by the fact that I copied the calendar a week behind. I had planned to be in New York on January 17, but I shall come, instead, on the 23rd as you suggest. I shall meet you in the penthouse at 5:30.

Sincerely

Bill Seitz

Mr. William C. Seitz
315 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey

encl.
AHR:sh

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Seitz

January 12, 1951

Dear Mr. Seitz:

Dear Mr. Seitz:

Thank you for your letter of January 2.

I enclose your postcard dated January 3 but postmarked January 10. I could not have met you anyway last Wednesday, but could on Tuesday, January 23. If you can't come then, I will try to come to the Museum some other afternoon.

Let me know when you expect to be in New York anyway.

Sincerely,

Until we meet let me say how delighted I am that you find your discussions with

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

He has an extremely fine line, affected even blind prejudice and a tendency to conveniently simplified dialectic.

Mr. William C. Seitz
349 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey

encl.
AHB:mh

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

P. S. The comparison with Picasso's Fifty Years fills me with amazement. You should aim at something better than that.

Mr. William C. Seitz
349 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey

AHB:mh

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Seitz

349 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey
January 2, 1951

January 5, 1951

Dr. Alfred Barr
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York 19
New York

Dear Mr. Barr:

Dear Mr. Seitz:

Many thanks for your letter of January 2. Rather than answer in writing I suggest that you let me know when you can come to town so that we may have lunch or tea together (perhaps the latter since I am working at home most of the day) so that we can talk the matter over.

It is true that I have been deeply interested in persuading the Department to accept your thesis and have discussed it at length with George Rowley and have written Baldwin Smith a long letter.

My own ideas are getting clearer thanks to a discussion a couple days ago with George Rowley.

Until we meet let me say how delighted I am that you find your discussions with Albert Friend rewarding. He has an extremely fine line, affected at times by strong and even blind prejudices and a tendency to conveniently simplified dialectic - the latter I guess chiefly in relation to undergraduates.

Let us meet some time next week at 5:30 P.M. if you think I could help you.

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

P. S. The comparison with Picasso: Fifty Years fills me with misgivings. You should aim at something better than that.

Mr. William C. Seitz
349 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey

AHB:mh

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349 Nassau Street
Princeton New Jersey
January 2, 1951

Dr. Alfred Barr
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York 19
New York

Dear Mr. Barr:

Reverberations of your interest and support have reached me from several directions. As I wrote you last June, the meetings with Holger Cahill and Lloyd Goodrich were most encouraging.

As you may already know, the question of my thesis topic came up concurrently with the formation of a new faculty committee on graduate students, chaired by Mr. Friend and composed of Smith, Weitzmann, Rowley and Egbert. After they had met, I knew only that the idea of work in the modern field had been approved, but that certain objections still remained. I must confess that I felt a certain apprehension about the final outcome. My subsequent meeting with Mr. Friend, however, was both enjoyable and successful. The greatest objection of the committee, it seems, was not that my ideas were vague or subjective, but that by attempting to minimize "value judgements" I was limiting myself to a merely descriptive approach. In trying to fit my outline to the requirements of the Ph. D. I seem to have over trained a bit. It was pleasantly surprising to have the department expand, rather than narrow the possibilities of the subject.

Friend balked, perhaps rightly, at the idea of "creating" documents. I surely agree that conversation or correspondence with contemporary artists is complicated evidence, and that it cannot have the naïveté of a pure historical document. As a matter of fact, I had already planned to have no direct contact with artists until other sources had been exhausted.

Conversation with Albert Friend is an experience which is always rewarding. Despite the fact that he is cynical about modern art, his thought has a peculiar esthetic which has much in common with it. I constantly discover myself unconsciously picturing the workings of his mind in forms like those of a Tobey painting--distilled almost to the point of invisibility, but full of vitality and implication.

You were perfectly right in suggesting that the subjects in my outline were a bit extraneous, and that I really wanted

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

to work on abstract expressionism. I do, however, wish to take a particular point of view toward it. Rather than isolating it, I want to regard it historically as a focal point, or perhaps even an ultimate, in the evolution of painting in America.

The committee, I believe, is sympathetic to the idea of concentrating on the work of a few painters. If I do take this approach, the selection of the men is of great importance. The group must be small, but no important orientation within the limitations of the subject can be left out. Gorky and Tobey, it seems to me, are essential. De Kooning and Motherwell should perhaps be included. Hofmann is important, particularly as an influence. I would not plan, of course to deal with these men biographically, or to be responsible for a catalogue raisonné. It might be happier for the final outcome, as a matter of fact, if names of specific painters did not appear in the statement of the topic.

It has also been suggested that the job which I plan is too large for a Ph. D. subject and that it should be put aside until later for practical reasons, and that I should write a monograph on one artist--Tobey for instance. Although it would surely be easier, and could be completed in a short time, it seems essential to me to compress a natural matrix of ideas rather than to go into an entirely different direction simply to finish a thesis.

I realize that these problems raise certain issues in the relationship of the modern artist to the university which are broader than this immediate incident. Friend, I think, also realizes this. He implied that he felt that both I and the University were on the spot, and added that he felt that the only precedent to which the quality of my work will be compared is Picasso: Fifty Years, so you can see what I have let myself in for.

Sincerely,

Bill Selts

Bill Selts
William C. Selts

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Department of Art and Archaeology

December 10, 1951

Dear Mr. Barr:

May I use your name as a reference in applying for a fellowship on which to continue my work during 1952-1953?

It has become evident that I cannot complete the thesis (particularly as a book of some possible public value) in one year, so I have gone off the deep end and refused two job opportunities for next year despite economic necessity. Mr. Smith, however, seems disposed to revive the Creative Arts Program, and my present plan is to attempt to combine that part-time job with an outside fellowship.

A survey of the fellowship situation does not leave many alternatives. I did not apply for a Guggenheim (on the advice of the Graduate School) because they seem to grant research fellowships only on the basis of noticeable publication, and I am not interested in a creative grant at present. The Met thing is out for obvious reasons, and I fail to qualify for a Learned Societies Faculty Study Fellowship because I have no Ph. D.

I am applying, however, for the Learned Societies Advanced Graduate Fellowship, and, at Mr. Smith's suggestion, to the Bollingen Foundation. Do you know of any other organizations interested in financing work in modern art? I should hate to omit any possibility.

Work on the thesis is progressing well, although its focus seems to be changing somewhat as it begins to develop. When and if you are relieved of immediate pressures, I would enjoy having a chance to see you for tea or lunch again.

Sincerely,

Bill Seitz

William C. Seitz

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON NEW JERSEY

Smith, Baldwin

Department of Art and Archaeology

December 8, 1950

Dear Alfred:

I have delayed answering your long and excellent letter on Seitz's thesis subject until we had threshed out what we consider to be some of the problems involved. We had a meeting of the committee in charge of graduate work the other day, and although we have not as yet come to any definite conclusions, I can assure you that everyone in the Department feels that Seitz should be allowed to do a thesis on a modern subject. We have, however, certain misgivings about the subject that has been proposed, but I am not going into those misgivings at this time until we have talked the matter over more fully with Seitz and found out what his reactions are to our questions. I will merely outline some of the problems.

It was felt that Seitz, in working in the proposed subject, could not escape from, either consciously or unconsciously, writing a kind of manifesto of his own artistic principles and convictions, which he might or might not be able to sustain against the opinions of others by documentary evidence on the one hand and analysis of historical evolution of style on the other. In fact it was the indication in his outline that he did not intend to go into the past to sustain his arguments for present methods of expression that somewhat worried the committee. It was also felt that his plan to talk and work with the artist in question might not prove to be an objective one, inasmuch as he would be immersed in a climate of opinion and could only bring to bear in support of his arguments the rather vague verbal ideas that the artist in question might or might not say. We all know that artists themselves are never very clear about their purposes and methods when it comes to stating them in words.

The principal objection, however, to the subject was its unlimited scope and the fact that we could not see any very clear beginning or end. It seems like an excellent subject for him to work on over a period of years, but we could not see how he could control it and make it a clearly encompassed piece of scholarship in the time which is at his disposal. However, as I have said before, I will go into this more fully after Bert and the other members of the committee have talked over these questions with Seitz. Everyone on the committee expressed his appreciation of your interest and the trouble that you took in analyzing the subject in your letter.

I hope that you did not suffer from your long delay in getting back to New York. Joe Sloane has written an excellent set of minutes and a very good letter to the President. As soon as this has been approved by Otto Kienbusch, I will have it mimeographed and sent out to the Council.

Very sincerely yours,

Baldwin Smith

Mr. Alfred H. Barr
49 East 96th Street
New York, New York.

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cc: George Rowley (thru Prof. Smith)

Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

Dear Baldwin:

Your remarks at the meeting Saturday morning about my having helped the department with some advice to graduate students pleased me very much. Actually you know how very little I have done but, I hope, how gladly I have done it.

At luncheon after the meeting George Rowley told me that Seitz' thesis subject was coming up for consideration by the department in the near future and that he was still eager to do a thesis on American abstract painting of the last twenty years.

At your suggestion, Seitz came to see me here at the Museum in June. I suggested to him that he talk with Lloyd Goodrich at the Whitney Museum and with Holger Cahill, and learned from George that he had done so. I do not think I heard from him again after our conversation. I do remember, however, your speaking of him briefly early in the summer at Greensboro. At that time you suggested that you would like to talk further about the problem.

I realize, of course, that such a thesis offers certain real difficulties, not only to the writer but to the department. I gather from what you wrote me and George said Saturday that you feel that a thesis dealing with the art of the past twenty years could not be seen in sufficient perspective, and that the documentation would be, perhaps, too diffuse and inadequate. Furthermore, the thesis would involve the use of foreign languages to only a limited degree. And lastly, the subject lies well outside the authoritative knowledge of anyone on the faculty, so that it would be difficult to check the student's findings. (Perhaps I am mistaken here; maybe Donald Egbert in his American studies has worked in the field Seitz is interested in sufficiently to control his thesis.)

Granted that there are serious objections to a graduate student choosing to do a thesis in so recent a period, yet I would urge you to permit him to do so for certain reasons which seem to me really cogent.

I do not know Seitz well and believe I've read little or nothing of what he has written, yet he seems to have a good reputation as a scholar - at least I gather that the department would have no objection to his writing a dissertation in some earlier period. From talking with him I gather that he has not only an adequate knowledge of the history of art but some training in philosophy and psychology. Furthermore, he has been a painter himself for some fifteen years, working here in New York during the late 30's when the movement about which he wishes to write was just getting under way. In other words, he

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Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

has participated actively in the movement as well as having a most valuable opportunity to study it from within as it developed. Yet I gather that he is, primarily, not an artist but a scholar who can be counted on to take an objective and measured view of his subject.

His subject is, I assure you, a really important one. The growth of the abstract expressionist movement over the past dozen years has been an extraordinary phenomenon, not only throughout the free world but especially in this country. After the first World War, painters turned to realistic subjects with an objective technique and, often, a nationalistic or socialistic bias; but after World War II, not only young painters but a great many middle-aged painters have turned toward an abstract style. (I do not know why our post-war should have produced so radically different a kind of art than the post-war of the 1920's - perhaps Seitz could throw important light on this interesting problem.)

Not only has abstract expressionism been the overwhelmingly predominant movement (I underline movement because, of course, the vast bulk of painting in this or any other country is marked by inertia), but it has produced, I believe, some of the most original and vigorous painting ever to appear in this country. In fact, I would say that for the first time American painting is as good, if not better, than painting anywhere in the western world so far as the younger generation is concerned. Europeans who have come to this country have been impressed by our painting for the first time in my memory. (Of course, certain American expatriates such as Whistler, Cassatt, Feininger, not to mention Copley and West, made important European reputations, but they all worked virtually as Europeans.)

Our museums have acknowledged the movement's importance by exhibitions, especially at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum, the museum at Andover. Andrew Ritchie who, when he came to our museum a couple of years ago, was skeptical, is now convinced and is making the movement the climax of a large historical show of American abstract art. Even our universities have recognized the movement: Yale has employed one of the best abstract expressionist painters, de Kooning, as a teacher and Harvard - this is confidential - is considering Robert Motherwell as the leading candidate for an important lecture.

Although the movement has become quantitatively important only in the last decade, it springs from certain pioneers which go back in this country some thirty years and in Europe some forty years; and back of Kandinsky, of course, lie the Fauves, particularly Matisse, and behind him, van Gogh, Gauguin, Redon and certain phases of Cézanne, as well as certain non-European traditions. In other words, the movement has a history and an ancestry both here and abroad.

The movement also has documents of importance quite outside the casual and hurried newspaper criticisms of exhibitions. There are numerous statements by the artists themselves, and stenographic reports of symposia, exhibition catalogs, etc. There are the paintings themselves, and there is a whole

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Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

potential body of material of documentary nature which no previous period can possibly afford. I mean the careful, systematic questioning of the living artist, with the resulting notes or written statements which would document the investigation. Seitz would, in other words, be providing his own documentation with the help of the living subjects of his thesis.

I have often wondered why art historians in our universities should feel that the learned study of contemporary art is somehow out of bounds for the graduate student when, in other departments, the study of the present is accepted as a matter of course. I suppose the graduate student in economics, anthropology and the other social sciences, in political or military history, not to mention the natural sciences, rarely has to think twice before embarking on the present or the recent past as a valid field of study, providing he is well equipped with a background of history and theory. Increasingly, students in English and modern languages are permitted to work in the twentieth century. (Yale recently asked me to give a graduate seminar in twentieth century painting.)

If you will grant that Seitz' subject is important and that he has exceptional capacity to handle it, then the disadvantages of his doing so, such as lack of perspective, are more than balanced by the great advantage of being able to study works of art and their history while the artist is still alive.

Besides the importance of the subject and the student's capacity, there is another factor which I hope you and your colleagues may consider carefully: that is, the very serious need for the kind of study which Seitz might be able to achieve. We - I mean everyone concerned with contemporary art - desperately need the help of young, well equipped scholars to help put in order the history and theory of the recent past. Here is a man well trained in Princeton discipline, with enthusiasm and experience and an intense desire to bring this enthusiasm and experience to bear upon a difficult, important problem. I appeal to you to let him try it.

If you can give your consent, I would like to help in any way that I can, even though I am quite desperate myself with a book which has long since passed its deadline. I think that Lloyd Goodrich would be willing to help too, to some extent, and so would James Thrall Soby, Holger Cahill, and Andrew Ritchie.

I hope you won't feel that this letter is importunate - it's simply what I would have told you this summer if you had followed up your suggestion that we should talk the matter over.

And now let me thank you again for your hospitality, both institutionally and personally. I had a most interesting time in Princeton - even though I paid for it by taking six hours on the train to get back to New York.

Sincerely,

Professor E. Baldwin Smith
McCormick Hall
Princeton, New Jersey
AHB/lh

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Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

P.S. - George Rowley does not know that I am writing you, however I think he would be interested in this letter so I enclose an extra copy in case you want to give it to him.

P.P.S. - Reading over this letter, I am reminded by the word Fauves of my own difficulties this summer trying to make some sense of the chronology of Matisse's work and that of his colleagues of forty years ago. If only someone like Seitz with Princeton training had done his thesis on the Fauve movement working, say, in 1910, what a help it would have been! But, alas, the only American art historians who recognized the importance of the Fauves that long ago were Berenson and Whittemore - and they were absorbed in other fields!

Thank you for the advice. I am planning to see both Kandinskij and Klee this month, and I shall write to you before I go to Berlin. It seems advisable, I think, to write to you also.

Your conversation has been extremely helpful to me, although I am afraid I kept you too long. In the time between the writing of a two-year M. A. program, I have been considering the idea of suggesting a paper on the Fauves. At present I am guided by Milton Brown's thesis on American art between 1913 and 1929. Although helpful, it is far from what I would like to do with in subject and treatment.

By early fall, particularly with the help of additional advisors, I should be able to outline several topics in possibilities, which I shall mail to you for criticism, as agreed in May.

May I thank you again for the help.

Yours sincerely,
William F. Seitz

Yours sincerely,

William F. Seitz
William F. Seitz

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SEITZ

June 17, 1930

Box 95
Princeton Junction

Dr. Alfred H. Barr
Director of the Museum Collections
The Museum of Modern Art

Dear Mr. Barr:

Thank you for the advise. I am planning to see both Goodrich and Cahill this month, and I shall write to Larkin. If it seems advisable, I shall go to Northampton also.

Our conversation has been extremely helpful to me, although I am afraid I kept you too long. In the time between the "musts" of a two-year M. F. A. program, I have been considering the ideas suggested by our meeting. At present I am reading over Milton Brown's thesis on American Art between 1913 and 1929. Although helpful as a survey of certain aspects of the period, it is far from what I would like to do both in subject and treatment.

By early fall, particularly with the help of additional advisement, I should be able to outline several specific possibilities, which I shall mail to you for criticism, as we agreed in May.

May I thank you again for the help.

Yours sincerely,

William C. Seitz
William C. Seitz

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SEITZ

June 17, 1950

Dear Mr. Seitz:

I have now had a chance to talk with both Lloyd Goodrich and Holger Cahill about your problem. Both of them seemed interested and were very willing to see you and talk with you. Both will be in town during June, Lloyd Goodrich at the Whitney Museum, Spring 7-0770, and Holger Cahill at 12 East 8 Street, Algonquin 4-1691 (private).

I do strongly advise you to see these two men who are to my mind the best scholars in the modern American field.

You might also care to talk with Oliver Larkin at Smith. In that event, you should write him directly.

Sincerely,

Mr. William C. Seitz
Box 95
Princeton Junction
New Jersey

AHB:js

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Mr. William C. Seitz
McCormick Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

STRAIGHT TELEGRAM

5/25/50

MUST BE IN BALTIMORE MONDAY AND TUESDAY. COULD YOU COME WEDNESDAY,
MAY 31, AT 5:30?

ALFRED H. BARR, Jr.

Charge: Good will for the Museum

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be discouraging. My broader aim is to find some point from which the uniqueness of contemporary expression can be isolated and studied. At the same time, I am much interested in the social-esthetic problems which Read and others have begun to investigate.

Perhaps these notes seem unduly diffuse. However, I will not take the M. F. A. until September, 1951, so a certain openness at this point may contribute toward an organic concentration.

Yours sincerely,

William C. Seitz

William C. Seitz

Mr. Charles F. Parkinson
Department of Fine Arts
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

ADDRESSEE

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QDY 5 15 PD MAY 25

Mr. William C. Seitz
McCormick Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

STRAIGHT TELEGRAM

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Yours sincerely,

William C. Seitz

William C. Seitz

Mr. Charles F. Parkinson
Department of Fine Arts
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

ANDERSON

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DR ALFRED BARR

DLR MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

THANKS FOR LETTING ME KNOW WEDNESDAY 530 FINE

BILL SEITZ

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

be discouraging. My broader aim is to find some point from which the uniqueness of contemporary expression can be isolated and studied. At the same time, I am much interested in the social-esthetic problems which Read and others have begun to investigate.

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Yours sincerely,

William C. Seitz

William C. Seitz

Mr. Charles F. Parkinson
Department of Fine Arts
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

ADDRESSEE

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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Box 95
Princeton Junction
May 16, 1950

Mr. Alfred Barr, Jr.
Director of the Museum Collections
The Museum of Modern Art

Dear Mr. Barr:

Your cooperative response to my letter is most encouraging. If it is convenient to you, I shall meet you at the Museum on Monday, March 29th, at 5:30. Department work will be over by then.

My greatest interest at present is in the more advanced painting of the past twenty years, during which new concepts begin to emanate from artists working in America and England, while the influence of the School of Paris declines. I have briefly mentioned this to Mr. Smith, who later remarked that both he and Mr. Weitzmann felt that we have insufficient perspective on these years. He suggested concentration on the earlier years of the century.

Abandonment of my idea, while it would engender in me a certain resigned disappointment, would not be discouraging. My broader aim is to find some point from which the uniqueness of contemporary expression can be isolated and studied. At the same time, I am much interested in the social-esthetic problems which Read and others have begun to investigate.

Perhaps these notes seem unduly diffuse. However, I will not take the M. F. A. until September, 1951, so a certain openness at this point may contribute toward an organic concentration.

Yours sincerely,

William C. Seitz

William C. Seitz

Mr. Charles F. Parkinson
Department of Fine Arts
Charles College
Oxford, Ohio

6/1/50

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OSHERUN COLLEGE

OSHERUN, OHIO

May 10, 1950

5/16/50

May 17, 1950

Dear Alfred:

Two or three years ago, I mentioned to you the hope that I cherished, that you would see your way to advising certain Princeton graduate students who were worthy of the privilege of studying under you in connection with their doctoral researches. I have just learned that Baldwin is entertaining

Dear Charles: connection with William C. Seitz, one of his better men from the present crop of students. I am writing

Thanks for your letter of May 10th. Baldwin did indeed write me about Seitz, asking whether he could come up to consult me but he made no definite proposal about my working with graduate students in more than a casual, advisory way. The fact is, that I am not sure that I would have time for anything more, much as I should enjoy it. I have an increasing admiration and esteem for Princeton in general and would like to help out in any way I could.

I have not yet seen Seitz and he has not as yet replied to my letter. Probably he is pressed with end-of-term work.

Of course I am curious to know about the La Coiffure of Picasso. I hope your student will complete her work within the next few months so that I may mention her findings in the next edition of my Picasso book, which will be published in the spring (this means I must have all new material by next October).

It is good to hear from you. Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Charles P. Parkhurst

Mr. Charles P. Parkhurst
Department of Fine Arts
Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

AHB:hrr

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OBERLIN COLLEGE

OBERLIN, OHIO

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

May 10, 1950

5/16/50

Dear Alfred:

Two or three years ago, I mentioned to you the hope that I cherished, that you would see your way to advising certain Princeton graduate students who were worthy of the privilege of studying under you in connection with their doctoral researches. I have just learned that Baldwin is entertaining such an idea in connection with William C. Seitz, one of his better men from the present crop of students. I am writing on behalf of Seitz, for whom I have the greatest admiration, and hope you will give such a proposition very serious consideration if it is made by Princeton.

Seitz is a pretty good painter, as you know. He has had a show at Marian Willard's and also is one of the most stimulating teachers and friends that I have encountered. You can ask Andrew Ritchie about him also.

I wish New York were nearer to Oberlin, but I have managed to get there a good deal this year by plane, and only the restrictions of committee work and teaching keep me here regularly. One of our students recently made an interesting discovery in connection with "La Coiffure" of Picasso in your museum, which I hope she will study and perhaps write up. When she does, I'll see that you have a copy.

Sincerely,

Charles P. Parkhurst

Charles P. Parkhurst

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
The Museum of Modern Art
11 W. 53rd St.
New York City

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SEITZ

cc: Professor Smith

May 3, 1950
McCormick Hall
Princeton University
April 25, 1950

Mr. Alfred Barr
Director, Museum Collections
The Museum of Modern Art
New York City, New York

Dear Mr. Barr:

Dear Mr. Seitz: During my visit to Buffalo in 1945, I had the opportunity of talking with you for a few minutes regarding two matters. Thank you for your letter which Mr. Smith enclosed with his. As I wrote him, I should be very happy to talk with you about your doing a thesis in modern art.

Perhaps you would come in to New York so that we could talk about the matter either at luncheon or late some afternoon for tea here at the Museum at 5:30.

It might be helpful if before this you were to give me some idea of what interests you. Otherwise I may find it hard to make any wise suggestions.

I remember our meeting in Buffalo, and look forward to seeing you with pleasure.

Sincerely,
Sincerely,

William C. Seitz
William C. Seitz

Mr. William C. Seitz
McCormick Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

AHB:js

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Princeton University
Mc Cormick Hall
April 25, 1950

Mr. Alfred Barr
Director, Museum Collections
The Museum of Modern Art
New York City, New York

Dear Mr. Barr:

During your visit to Buffalo in 1945, I had the opportunity of talking with you for a few minutes regarding two matters: graduate work at Princeton, and the precedents for doctoral work in the modern field. You informed me that you had participated in more than one examination in contemporary art, and advised me that graduate work at Princeton was not easy. At his writing, I can surely agree with your latter advise.

As a background for planning the next few years, I have spoken to Mr. Smith, quite unofficially, regarding a desire to do a modern thesis, and the possibility that, as a Department alumnus, you might assist in such a project. Mr. Smith felt that you would be willing, at least, to discuss it, and was kind enough to offer to enclose a note with this letter.

If you have the time available, I should appreciate the opportunity of discussing this possibility with you.

Yours Sincerely,

William C. Seitz
William C. Seitz

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AHB replied
longhand
himself

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON NEW JERSEY

Seitz
(Pankhurst)

Department of Art and Archaeology

4 December

Dear Mr. Barr

Can you spare a few moments next Thursday morning, December 9th, around 11 o'clock, to discuss the question of studies in contemporary art for our graduate students? I believe one of next year's students, William Seitz of Buffalo, may have broached the subject to you previously.

I must be in New York for a luncheon engagement that day in any event, so do not hesitate to reply in the negative, if you are occupied and unable to see me.

Sincerely, Charles Pankhurst

care to come into town so that we might discuss the matter. and where sources of new material, like letters, etc., can be found.

Of course I am delighted to know that he is interested in the field. Only person with knowledge and understanding of the problem to advise both Seitz and myself, I would appreciate it very much if you could give me suggestions as to what might be profitably worked upon for a thesis.

Sincerely,

Appreciatively yours,

Pankhurst

Enc.

Professor Baldwin Smith
Department of Art and
Archaeology
Mr. Alfred Barr
The Princeton University
New Princeton, New Jersey

AHB:js

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON NEW JERSEY

Department of Art and Archaeology

April 24, 1950

May 3, 1950

Dear Alfred:

I am enclosing an accompanying note to reintroduce William Seitz to you and also to inform you that he is an absolutely first-class man who is doing exceptionally fine work as a graduate student. I have suggested that he get in touch with you because of what he wants to do for his doctor's thesis. In principle I fully agree with him that his experience, interests, and ability make it desirable for him to do a thesis in modern painting.

The difficulty, however, is to find a subject which can be done in a reasonable time and allows of scholarly, objective analysis that will produce a scientific contribution to knowledge of the subject. While I am writing him to ask whether he would care to come into town so that we might discuss the matter. Of course I would be delighted to talk with William Seitz whom I remember very clearly meeting in Buffalo. I am writing him to ask whether he would care to come into town so that we might discuss the matter. Of course I would be delighted to talk with William Seitz whom I remember very clearly meeting in Buffalo. I am writing him to ask whether he would care to come into town so that we might discuss the matter.

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Sincerely,
Appreciatively yours,

Baldwin

Enc.

Professor Baldwin Smith
Department of Art and
Archaeology
The Princeton University
New Princeton, New Jersey

AHB:js

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON NEW JERSEY

Department of Art and Archaeology

April 24, 1950

Dear Alfred:

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The difficulty, however, is to find a subject which can be done in a reasonable time and allows of scholarly, objective analysis that will produce a specific contribution to knowledge of the subject. While critical evaluation will, of course, have to enter into any study of art, I feel that a thesis should be directed towards an objective analysis of evidence, an historical tracing of influence and to the development of certain uncontrovertible conclusions. So much has been written with one bias or another on so many aspects of modern painting that I have no idea what are the sound, scholarly problems and where the sources of new material, like letters, etc., can be found.

Inasmuch as you are the only person with knowledge and understanding of the problem to advise both Seitz and myself, I would appreciate it very much if you could give him some suggestions as to what might be profitably worked upon for a thesis.

Appreciatively yours,

Baldwin

Enc.

Mr. Alfred Barr
The Museum of Modern Art
New York, New York.

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cc: George Rowley (thru Prof. Smith)

Smith, Baldwin
see also Seitz

November 4, Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

Dear Baldwin:

Your remarks at the meeting Saturday morning about my having helped the department with some advice to graduate students pleased me very much. Actually you know how very little I have done but, I hope, how gladly I have done it.

At luncheon after the meeting George Rowley told me that Seitz' thesis subject was coming up for consideration by the department in the near future and that he was still eager to do a thesis on American abstract painting of the last twenty years.

At your suggestion, Seitz came to see me here at the Museum in June. I suggested to him that he talk with Lloyd Goodrich at the Whitney Museum and with Holger Cahill, and learned from George that he had done so. I do not think I heard from him again after our conversation. I do remember, however, your speaking of him briefly early in the summer at Greensboro. At that time you suggested that you would like to talk further about the problem.

I realize, of course, that such a thesis offers certain real difficulties, not only to the writer but to the department. I gather from what you wrote me and George said Saturday that you feel that a thesis dealing with the art of the past twenty years could not be seen in sufficient perspective, and that the documentation would be, perhaps, too diffuse and inadequate. Furthermore, the thesis would involve the use of foreign languages to only a limited degree. And lastly, the subject lies well outside the authoritative knowledge of anyone on the faculty, so that it would be difficult to check the student's findings. (Perhaps I am mistaken here; maybe Donald Egbert in his American studies has worked in the field Seitz is interested in sufficiently to control his thesis.)

Granted that there are serious objections to a graduate student choosing to do a thesis in so recent a period, yet I would urge you to permit him to do so for certain reasons which seem to me really cogent.

I do not know Seitz well and believe I've read little or nothing of what he has written, yet he seems to have a good reputation as a scholar - at least I gather that the department would have no objection to his writing a dissertation in some earlier period. From talking with him I gather that he has not only an adequate knowledge of the history of art but some training in philosophy and psychology. Furthermore, he has been a painter himself for some fifteen years, working here in New York during the late 30's when the movement about which he wishes to write was just getting under way. In other words, he

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Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

has participated actively in the movement as well as having a most valuable opportunity to study it from within as it developed. Yet I gather that he is, primarily, not an artist but a scholar who can be counted on to take an objective and measured view of his subject.

His subject is, I assure you, a really important one. The growth of the abstract expressionist movement over the past dozen years has been an extraordinary phenomenon, not only throughout the free world but especially in this country. After the first World War, painters turned to realistic subjects with an objective technique and, often, a nationalistic or socialistic bias; but after World War II, not only young painters but a great many middle-aged painters have turned toward an abstract style. (I do not know why our post-war should have produced so radically different a kind of art than the post-war of the 1920's - perhaps Seitz could throw important light on this interesting problem.)

Not only has abstract expressionism been the overwhelmingly predominant movement (I underline movement because, of course, the vast bulk of painting in this or any other country is marked by inertia), but it has produced, I believe, some of the most original and vigorous painting ever to appear in this country. In fact, I would say that for the first time American painting is as good, if not better, than painting anywhere in the western world so far as the younger generation is concerned. Europeans who have come to this country have been impressed by our painting for the first time in my memory. (Of course, certain American expatriates such as Whistler, Cassatt, Peininger, not to mention Copley and West, made important European reputations, but they all worked virtually as Europeans.)

Our museums have acknowledged the movement's importance by exhibitions, especially at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum, the museum at Andover. Andrew Ritchie who, when he came to our museum a couple of years ago, was skeptical, is now convinced and is making the movement the climax of a large historical show of American abstract art. Even our universities have recognized the movement: Yale has employed one of the best abstract expressionist painters, de Kooning, as a teacher and Harvard - this is confidential - is considering Robert Motherwell as the leading candidate for an important lecture.

Although the movement has become quantitatively important only in the last decade, it springs from certain pioneers which go back in this country some thirty years and in Europe some forty years; and back of Kandinsky, of course, lie the Fauves, particularly Matisse, and behind him, van Gogh, Gauguin, Redon and certain phases of Cézanne, as well as certain non-European traditions. In other words, the movement has a history and an ancestry both here and abroad.

The movement also has documents of importance quite outside the casual and hurried newspaper criticisms of exhibitions. There are numerous statements by the artists themselves, and stenographic reports of symposia, exhibition catalogs, etc. There are the paintings themselves, and there is a whole

Professor E. Baldwin Smith
 National Hall
 Princeton, New Jersey
 11/28

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Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

potential body of material of documentary nature which no previous period can possibly afford. I mean the careful, systematic questioning of the living artist, with the resulting notes or written statements which would document the investigation. Seitz would, in other words, be providing his own documentation with the help of the living subjects of his thesis.

I have often wondered why art historians in our universities should feel that the learned study of contemporary art is somehow out of bounds for the graduate student when, in other departments, the study of the present is accepted as a matter of course. I suppose the graduate student in economics, anthropology and the other social sciences, in political or military history, not to mention the natural sciences, rarely has to think twice before embarking on the present or the recent past as a valid field of study, providing he is well equipped with a background of history and theory. Increasingly, students in English and modern languages are permitted to work in the twentieth century. (Yale recently asked me to give a graduate seminar in twentieth century painting.)

If you will grant that Seitz' subject is important and that he has exceptional capacity to handle it, then the disadvantages of his doing so, such as lack of perspective, are more than balanced by the great advantage of being able to study works of art and their history while the artist is still alive.

Besides the importance of the subject and the student's capacity, there is another factor which I hope you and your colleagues may consider carefully: that is, the very serious need for the kind of study which Seitz might be able to achieve. We - I mean everyone concerned with contemporary art - desperately need the help of young, well equipped scholars to help put in order the history and theory of the recent past. Here is a man well trained in Princeton discipline, with enthusiasm and experience and an intense desire to bring this enthusiasm and experience to bear upon a difficult, important problem. I appeal to you to let him try it.

If you can give your consent, I would like to help in any way that I can, even though I am quite desperate myself with a book which has long since passed its deadline. I think that Lloyd Goodrich would be willing to help too, to some extent, and so would James Thrall Soby, Bolger Cahill, and Andrew Ritchie.

I hope you won't feel that this letter is importunate - it's simply what I would have told you this summer if you had followed up your suggestion that we should talk the matter over.

And now let me thank you again for your hospitality, both institutionally and personally. I had a most interesting time in Princeton - even though I paid for it by taking six hours on the train to get back to New York.

Sincerely,

Professor E. Baldwin Smith
McCormick Hall
Princeton, New Jersey
AHB/lh

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CC: Mr. Karpel

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Professor E. Baldwin Smith

November 27, 1950

P.S. - George Rowley does not know that I am writing you, however I think he would be interested in this letter so I enclose an extra copy in case you want to give it to him.

P.P.S. - Reading over this letter, I am reminded by the word Fauves of my own difficulties this summer trying to make some sense of the chronology of Matisse's work and that of his colleagues of forty years ago. If only someone like Seitz with Princeton training had done his thesis on the Fauve movement working, say, in 1910, what a help it would have been! But, alas, the only American art historians who recognized the importance of the Fauves that long ago were Berenson and Whittmore - and they were absorbed in other fields!

I have to acknowledge your letter of November 22. Since Mr. Karpel is at present extremely busy preparing an exhibition I asked Mr. Karpel, our librarian, what he could do for you. He told me that he had already had a phone call from Mr. Berenson Weinberg on your behalf and had given him all the information.

However, if somehow you did not hear from Mr. Weinberg yet, I can tell you that Mr. Karpel suggests you have the scenario for Sutter's Gold photostated which can be easily done. The cost would be \$12.50 if done in small size and \$15.00 in a larger and more advisable size. The manuscript for an American Tragedy belongs to Paramount and we have no right to have copies of it made without written permission from this company. Should you desire their consent Mr. Karpel believes that he can arrange to give a typed copy prepared which would cost approximately \$15.00.

Please let us know what you would like us to do.

Sincerely,

Secretary to Mr. Karpel

Miss Maria Eaton
c/o John Lane the Gallery Hand
25 Little Russell Street
London W. C. 1, England

en

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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Seton

CC: Mr. Karpel

November 18, 1952

Dear Miss Seton:

I want to acknowledge your letter of November 12. Since Mr. Barr is at present extremely busy preparing an exhibition I asked Mr. Karpel, our librarian, what he could do for you. He told me that he had already had a phone call from Mr. Herman Weinberg on your behalf and had given him all the information.

However, if somehow you did not hear from Mr. Weinberg yet, I can tell you that Mr. Karpel suggests you have the scenario for Sutter's Gold photostated which can be easily done. The cost would be \$12.50 if done in small size and \$18.50 in a larger and more advisable size. The manuscript for An American Tragedy belongs to Paramount and we have no right to have copies of it made without written permission from this company. Should you obtain their consent Mr. Karpel believes that he can arrange to have a typed copy prepared which would cost approximately \$35.-.

Please let us know what you would like us to do.

Sincerely,

Secretary to Mr. Barr

Miss Marie Seton
c/o John Lane the Bodley Head
28 Little Russell Street
London W. C. 1, England

mh

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c/o John Lane the Bodley Head
28 Little Russell Street,
London, W.C.1.

12th November 1952

Alfred Barr Jr.
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 52nd Street
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Barr:

I am writing to you in the hope that you can assist me in a very special and important matter.

You will remember that while I was working on the Eisenstein biography, you very kindly arranged for me to receive the two vols of Eisenstein's original copy of An American Tragedy, and that these were sent for me to work with at the University of Chicago library?

Now I am in England giving a series of lectures to the film societies under the auspices of the British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2. As you probably know, the B.F.I. have a library. From time to time, the Museum of Modern Art Film Library has sent material to the B.F.I.-mostly, I think, to the present deputy-director, Mr. Ernest Lindgren.

In connection with my lecturing, there is something from your Eisenstein Collection in which I stand in the greatest need. It is to make copies of ~~three~~ two of the Eisenstein scenarios which Mr. Jay Leyda placed in the collection. They are Sutter's Gold and An American Tragedy. At this distance it is extremely difficult for me to get someone to come into the Film Library and copy the portions which I require. (I, myself, have only the copy of a few scenes-those which I quoted in my Eisenstein biography). In these circumstances do you think it would be possible for you to make arrangements for the typescripts in the Eisenstein Collection to be sent to the British Film Institute Library? The typescripts would not leave the custody of the library and the portions required would be copied there. I have spoken to the British Film Institute about this and they are willing to be custodian, just as the University of Chicago library were custodian of the two vols of An American Tragedy.

I will greatly appreciate it if you will let me know as soon as possible about this. If you require an official request from the British Film Institute, I will ask Mr. Lindgren to write you a letter. Of course, it will only take me a few days to have the copies made and then, naturally, the originals would be returned to you at once. I will be very pleased to pay the costs of postage and

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and registration.

I was so very sorry that you were unable to write an introduction to my Eisenstein biography. I suggested you to A.A. Wyn. The book is doing very well here and all the reviews here have been very good to date. There will shortly be an Italian edition - five Italian publishers requested the rights.

Thank you very much for all your help.

Sincerely yours,

Marie Seton
Marie Seton

Sender's name and address:-

M. Seton

c/o John Lane the Bodley Head
28 Little Russell St.,
London, W.C.1.

Mr. Alfred Barr, Jr.,
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 52nd Street
New York, N.Y.
U.S.A.

BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER
IF ANYTHING IS EN-
CLOSED THIS LETTER
WILL BE SENT BY
ORDINARY MAIL.



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63, Summingdale Gardens,
London, W.8, England.

July 16th, 1954.

Dear Alfred,

Very many thanks for your letter,
a permission to give your name as a
reference. I am now waiting to be
summoned to an interview for my visa.
I believe this will not be for about five
or six weeks, however, so I must wait
as patiently as possible, though I'm longing
to be certain that I can sail on Oct. 16th!
Looking forward to meeting you again.

Yours very sincerely,

Elvies Siveburg.

SIVEBURG

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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6B, Sunningdale Gardens,
London, W.8, England.

July 16th, 1954.

Dear Alfred,

Very many thanks for your letter,
& permission to give your name as a
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to be certain that I can sail on Oct. 16th!

Looking forward to meeting you again,

Yours very sincerely,

Elinoz Sieveking

SIEVEBURG

Alfred H. Barr Jr.
Director of the Collections

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BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION
AIR LETTER
AÉROGRAMME



Pennell file
M? Alfred H. Barr Jr.
Greensboro,
Vermont,
U. S. A.

First fold here

Second fold here

Sender's name and address: E. Sieweking,
6B, Sunningdale Gardens,
London, W. 8. England.

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS LETTER
MAY BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL

To open cut here

Alfred H. Barr Jr.
Director of the Collections

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Speyer

16 August 1952
c/o Chase Bank
51 Berkeley Sq.
London

Miss Darthea Speyer
Assistant Cultural Attache
American Embassy
Paris

Dear Darthea,

Rather than writing you in detail about my conversation with Cassou I am sending you a copy of a confidential report I made to the Museum. The report refers to one or two other matters as well, but I trust your discretion. However, you may quote from the report if you wish some official evidence of your very real help in this matter.

Of course I'm not sure whether our Museum will want to go ahead with this kind of show but my guess is it will.

Anyway we are really indebted to you for your help.

Now, as a favor to the Museum, would you mind having that Klee etching photographed for our Print Room? And since I'm always ruthlessly acquisitive for the Museum Collection won't you put it in your will for us? I'm quite serious about this since it is likely that we'll never have a chance to acquire another of the three existing prints. As I explained to you we're trying to form the most complete collection of Klee prints in the world.

We both greatly enjoyed seeing you.

Sincerely

Alfred H. Barr Jr.
Director of the Collections

copied
for
MCA
+ WSC

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December 6, 1950

Dear Miss Speyer:

I can't tell you how sorry I am to say that I can't write the preface to the Fine Arts Section of the special issue of L'Age Nouveau. You honor me greatly by asking me, and it is certainly something that I would like to do very much, in fact, ought to do, but the pressure of work here in our Museum makes it impossible. Here are a few suggestions on the subjects which you list.

- 1) Museums and Scholarship. I think Aline Louchheim would be excellent for "Museums", which she has surveyed personally more widely and more thoroughly than almost anyone I know. I do not think she would be as good a person for an article on American Scholarship in the Arts. It would be better to have an American scholar of greater prestige do this. I would suggest Prof. C. R. Morey for this article. He is emeritus of Princeton University, where he was for years the head of the Department of Art and Archaeology. Over the past three years he was Cultural Attaché in Rome, where he did a most distinguished job. I think he would have time to write such article and believe me, time is what is most lacking to American scholars and Museum people. Prof. P. J. Sachs would be good too.
- 2) John Marin. I think Jerome Melquist would be excellent.
- 3) Loren MacIver. You may have to use reprints in a good many cases just as, apparently, was necessary in the British number. If you do, I would suggest the article on Loren MacIver by Renée Arb, which was published two or three years ago in the Magazine of Art. It seemed to me sensitively written. (Miss Arb happens to be in Paris at the present time at 24, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin - you could reach her there. She was, incidentally, for several years an associate editor of Art News and might be of some help to you.)
- 4) Hyman Bloom. Sydney Freedberg would be fine, if he would take the time.
- 5) Jackson Pollock. Greenberg is perhaps too enthusiastic, but no one writes with such eloquence about this interesting painter.
- 6) Edward Hopper. I should think that you might be able to reprint an article

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Miss Darthea Speyer

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December 6, 1950

- by Lloyd Goodrich or J. T. Soby, either one of whom is much better known and I think rather better equipped to write about Hopper than Milton Brown.
- 7) Abstract Art. I think that either Andrew Ritchie of our own Museum, head of the department of painting and sculpture and now at work on an essay about American Abstract Art, or perhaps Thomas Hess, managing editor of Art News, would be more available than James Soby, though of course Soby would be excellent, if you could get him.
 - 8) Modern American Sculpture. I would suggest Prof. Charles Seymour, Jr. of Yale University.
 - 9) Frank Lloyd Wright. Elizabeth Mock would be fine, though Henry-Russell Hitchcock would have more authority and so would John McAndrew.
 - 10) Mies van der Rohe's American work. Frankly, I don't think this is particularly important or relevant for such a symposium though, if you include it, I am sure your brother would be excellent. Instead, I would recommend a piece on American domestic architecture by Betty Mock and a second article on a typical big American industrial and sky-scraper firm. One of them has done preeminently beautiful buildings, namely Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Such an essay would not only indicate something of the complexity and scale of a big American architectural firm, but could be illustrated by some of the most distinguished large buildings put up anywhere in the world during the past five years. Betty Mock's article on domestic architecture would balance this. She is inclined to favor an agreeable and informal style, quite different from the grandeur and severity of the big buildings I have just mentioned. (I am sending you a Museum Bulletin on Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.)

Except for the Mies van der Rohe article I have not questioned the other sections. I think I should like to do so in one or two cases however: for one thing I do not think Hyman Bloom is of sufficient importance to be one of the three younger American artists selected. Instead of Hyman Bloom I would certainly put in Ben Shahn, who is not only one of our best painters but seems to have qualities which interest Europeans. Furthermore, Ben Shahn would represent the American painter concerned with social issues which MacIver and Pollock certainly are not. Finally Shahn is one of the best American mural painters. His mural work would, I am sure, interest the French whose walls are for the most part given over to the sheerest pompierism. James Soby had written an excellent short study of Shahn, published by Penguin in Great Britain and by our own Museum here.

I also think that Stuart Davis of the older artists would interest Europeans, because of his assimilation of American elements of a popular and

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Miss Darthea Speyer

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December 6, 1950

folk character into his more or less abstract style. Between ourselves, I think Marin is not only a bit overrated but reproduces very badly in black and white. Nevertheless, I suppose he is the best American painter of the oldest living generation and should certainly be included.

I wonder, if you know James T. Soby's book "Contemporary Painters" published by our Museum in 1948? It contains excellent chapters on Edward Hopper, Ben Shahn, Loren MacIver. I wish you could get him to do a general essay on younger American painters. If you do not have his book, let me know and we will send you a copy.

My best wishes to you in this really important undertaking. I wish I could help further.

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director
of the Museum Collections

P. S. Let me know if in fact you are assembling this symposium partly from material already published in English or if all the essays must be original?

Miss Darthea Speyer
Assistant Cultural Officer
Office of the Cultural Attaché
41, rue du Faubourg St. Honoré
Paris 8e, France

encl.
AHB:mh

cc: Mr. J. T. Soby

My idea was to have a sort of symposium of modern American art. I thought this would be the best way, and it was necessary for the section to be inclusive of Modern American art. Any ideas you have on the subject will be of the greatest interest to me.

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Office of the Cultural Attache
41, rue du Faubourg St.Honore, Paris 8e

November 27, 1950

Mr. A. Barr Jr.,
Museum of Modern Art
West, 53rd Street
New York, N.Y., U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Barr,

The magazine "L'Age Nouveau", which appears monthly, (except for the summer months), has discussed with me their desire to publish an American number. "L'Age Nouveau" is a magazine somewhat similar to Harper's and the Atlantic Monthly. The regular numbers do not have illustrations. However, there will be illustrations for the art section of the American number.

For the American number, there will be three sections -- Fine Arts, American Literature, and Philosophy and Ideas.

When John McAndrews was in Paris, we discussed possible ideas, and he suggested that you might be willing to write a short introduction to the Fine Arts section. I should roughly envisage, for this section, the following articles, all quite short in length :

- Museums and Scholarship -- Aline Louchheim
- John Marin -- perhaps Jerome Melquist, recently in Paris.
- Loreen MacIver -- John McAndrews
- Hymen Bloom -- Sydney Freedberg
- Jackson Pollock -- Clement Greenberg
- Edward Hopper -- Milton Brown
- Abstract Art -- James Soby
- Modern American sculpture -- (Whom would you suggest?)
- Frank Lloyd Wright -- Elizabeth Mock
- Mies van der Rohe's American work -- (if my brother does not want to write this, someone else in Chicago could.)
- Modern American Design -- Edgar J. Kaufmann, Jr.

My idea was to have a sort of symposium of modern American art. I thought this would be interesting, and it was not necessary for the section to be inclusive of Modern American Art. Any ideas you have on the subject will be of the greatest interest to me.

.... /

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

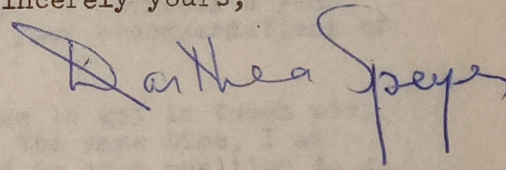
The articles will be translated by "L'Age Nouveau". They offer the typical French fee for original articles. This fee considered good in France, is such a pittance that I am ashamed to even offer it to the writers. I have not approached anyone concerning the above articles. I first would like your advice. "L'Age Nouveau" will publish this number October 1st. All the material should be in their hands in May.

I would deeply appreciate any suggestions or advice you may have.

Under separate cover, I am sending the copy of "L'Age Nouveau", which was devoted to Great Britain. "L'Age Nouveau" is not enthusiastic about this number, since some of the writers were French, and certain articles are reprints rather than original. They expect far better things from us!

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Darthea Speyer
Assistant Cultural Officer
American Embassy
Paris.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Chief of European Unit
Mission Service Section
International Press and
Publications Division

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Director of the Museum Collections
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York 19, N. Y.

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ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

State Rep.

June 14, 1951

Dear Mr. Barr:

Thank you for your letter of June 8 and your telegram of the 11th.

I am sorry the pressure of work prevents you from undertaking the article for "Age Nouveau", but of course I understand how burdened you must be. I appreciate your having approached Mr. Ritchie, and your recommendations of Robert Goldwater and Thomas Hess.

We are asking our Paris office to get in touch with Mr. Goldwater for the article. At the same time, I am writing Mr. Hess to see if he would be in a position to do another article for the magazine -- on "The Growing Appreciation of American Art."

Many thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Sol S. Hirsch

Sol S. Hirsch
Chief of European Unit
Mission Service Section
International Press and
Publications Division

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Director of the Museum Collections
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York 19, N. Y.

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June 11, 1951

Mr. SOL S. HIRSCH
CHIEF OF EUROPEAN UNIT
MISSION SERVICE SECTION, INP
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ROOM 226
1778 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., NW
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

P. S. MY LETTER JUNE EIGHT STRONGLY RECOMMEND ROBERT GOLDWATER
EDITOR MAGAZINE OF ART NOW FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR PARIS OR THOMAS HESS
MANAGING EDITOR ART NEWS NEWYORK WRITE ABSTRACT ART ARTICLE.
BOTH EXCELLENT.

ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

charge to Museum Collections

send straight telegram

Registrar

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Director of the Museum Collections

Chief of European Unit
Mission Service Section, INP
Department of State
Room 226
1778 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington 25, D. C.

Alfred

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

cc: Miss D. Miller

June 8, 1951

May 25, 1951

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 WEST 53rd STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Re _____

_____the following, which you have

desperately trying to finish a book so that
my correspondence, and have not answered Mr.
letter of May 25, 1951.

Unfortunately, because of my own writing schedule,
article which Mr. Miller requested. In order
we also approached Andrew C. Ritchie, director
Painting and Sculpture, who has recently
subject. But because of the pressure of
write the piece either.

truth is that most people working in American
ties have during the past years been so over-
their own institutions that they cannot write
ons without long notice. The two or three
r proposes is simply not time enough even if

very sorry indeed to have to write you
letter and apologize again for my delay in
magazine, however, can pay only a

Sincerely,

Registrar

ted in writing such an article?
enough to indicate the minimum fee
you agree to writing the article,
ript by June 25 in order to get it
elation and

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Director of the Museum Collections

We would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible,
so that _____ be able to plan its issue accordingly.

Mr. Sol S. Hirsch
Chief of European Unit
Mission Service Section, INP
Department of State
Room 226
1778 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington 25, D. C.

AHB:mh

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Dear Letitia:

I have returned today to Dr. Salmony the catalog of the Japanese pottery exhibition in Paris which he had lent to Mr. Barr. A copy of my letter to Salmony is enclosed.

5.14.51

Greta

cc: Miss D. Miller

June 8, 1951

May 10, 1951

to finish a book so that
and have not answered Mr.

relatively limited. Unfortunately, because of my own writing schedule, I cannot write the article which Mr. Miller requested. In order to save you time I have also approached Andrew C. Ritchie, director of our Department of Painting and Sculpture, who has recently finished a book on the subject. But because of the pressure of Museum work he cannot write the piece either.

The truth is that most people working in American museums and universities have during the past years been so overwhelmed by work for their own institutions that they cannot write for outside publications without long notice. The two or three weeks which Mr. Miller proposes is simply not time enough even if the person were free.

I am very sorry indeed to have to write you such a disappointing letter and apologize again for my delay in answering. The magazine, however, can pay only a nominal fee, in francs.

Sincerely,

Would you be interested in writing such an article? If so, would you be good enough to indicate the minimum fee you would accept? Should you agree to writing the article, we would need your manuscript by June 25 in order to get it to Paris in time for translation and publication.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Director of the Museum Collections

We would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible, so that we may be able to plan its issue accordingly.

Mr. Sol S. Hirsch
Chief of European Unit
Mission Service Section, INP
Department of State
Room 226
1778 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington 25, D. C.

AHB:mh

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

cc: Miss D. Miller

June 8, 1951

May 20, 1951

Dear Mr. Hirsch:

The Paris monthly I am desperately trying to finish a book so that I am, I fear, behind in my correspondence, and have not answered Mr. Charles P. Miller's letter of May 25, 1951. is a serious, well-edited publication which, while its circulation is relatively limited, is an important intellectual and cultural force in France.

Unfortunately, because of my own writing schedule, I cannot write the article which Mr. Miller requested. In order to save you time I have also approached Andrew C. Ritchie, director of our Department of Painting and Sculpture, who has recently finished a book on the subject. But because of the pressure of Museum work he cannot write the piece either.

The truth is that most people working in American museums and universities have during the past years been so overwhelmed by work for their own institutions that they cannot write for outside publications without long notice. The two or three weeks which Mr. Miller proposes is simply not time enough even if the person were free.

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Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Director of the Museum Collections

We would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible, so that Mr. Sol S. Hirsch be able to plan its issue accordingly.

Mr. Sol S. Hirsch
Chief of European Unit
Mission Service Section, INP
Department of State
Room 226
1778 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington 25, D. C.

AHB:nh

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ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

WASHINGTON

May 25, 1951

Dear Mr. Barr:

The Paris monthly review "Age Nouveau" is planning an American number for October 1951, dealing with literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. "Age Nouveau" is a serious, well-edited publication which, while its circulation is relatively limited, has a certain degree of influence in intellectual circles, not only in France but in other French-speaking areas of the world.

A special American issue of this review, containing articles by Americans prominent in their respective fields in the United States, would assist in furthering the cause of Franco-American relations and would go a long way toward dispelling some of the misconceptions unfortunately still prevalent in France on the subject of American culture.

For the section to be headed "Painting in American Life Today", the United States Information Service in Paris advises us that the editors of "Age Nouveau" would very much like to have an article from you on "Abstraction as a Force in U.S. Painting" - an article of 2,000 words, accompanied by 4 illustrations. The magazine, however, can pay only a nominal fee, in francs.

Would you be interested in writing such an article? If so, would you be good enough to indicate the minimum fee you would accept? Should you agree to writing the article, we would need your manuscript by June 25, in order to get it to Paris in time for translation and editing.

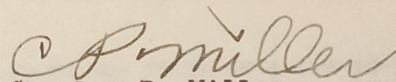
We would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible, so that the review may be able to plan its issue accordingly.

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Please address your reply to: Sol S. Hirsch, Chief of
European Unit, Mission Service Section, INP, Department of
State, Room 226, 1778 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington 25, D.C.

Your cooperation will be very much appreciated.

Sincerely,



Charles P. Miller,
Chief,
Mission Service Section,
International Press and
Publications Division

Mr. Alfred Barr
c/o Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York, N. Y.

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK 19

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

August 8, 1952

Dear Mr. Barr:

I wrote to Strand in April, telling him about the first of a new series of exhibitions we were doing and asking if he had anything new or the illustrations from his New England book to make up a group of about twenty-five prints. He answered telling me about the book he was doing and that he wanted to show that material in Europe first. Since then he has written Mr. Wheeler asking him to use his influence to get his work shown in Paris.

Rene believes that the long dreamed of project of doing a large photography exhibition on the theme of "The Family of Man" is practically assured, in which case I shall be in Europe in September or October to contact photographers. I hope I get to see you either over there or here before I leave, to take counsel with you about the various aspects of the project.

I will also see Strand then and try to convince him to let us show twenty-five to fifty of his French pictures in one of our group shows.

If you should happen to see Brancusi, please give him my love and tell him I count on seeing him before long. I hope you are enjoying a good rest.

Cordially yours,

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
c/o The Chase National Bank
51 Berkeley Square
London, England

ES:nt

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date May 12, 1950

To: Alfred Barr

Re: _____

From: Betty Chamberlain

Dear Alfred,

I quote a piece of train conversation with Steichen for your possible interest.

I told him of the letter from the Georgia school teacher who couldn't believe that Negro culture of any kind could exist, and the fact that, in the midst of everything else, you would take time to write her an answer and send a substantiating article.

Steichen said yes and he is right too, and told, as nearly as I can remember, the following:

"I remember one summer, working in my garden, that for several days I kept catching a glimpse of something red over in the corner of the garden. I knew I hadn't planted it, and finally I decided to push through the bushes and investigate. It was a huge Flanders poppy - probably from a seed dropped by a bird - very big and healthy. I decided to count the pods - there were 247 - and then I took one pod and laboriously counted the tiny seeds. Through this calculation I figured out that the seeds from that one poppy, if they all grew, would cover $2\frac{1}{2}$ square miles with poppies. So Alfred is right and wise in taking the time to plant one seed."

Let me thank you for your extreme kindness in giving my plea such genuine consideration.

Sincerely,

John Steichen

JMS:cc

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Stenhouse

FAULKNER, KINGSBURY & STENHOUSE - ARCHITECTS
1200 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W. - WASHINGTON 6, D. C. - TEL. METROPOLITAN 5382
WALDRON FAULKNER SLOCUM KINGSBURY JOHN W. STENHOUSE ERNEST D. STEVENS

March 5, 1952

Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
The Museum of Modern Art
11 W. 53rd Street
New York 19, New York

Dear Mr. Barr:

Your letter of February 29 came as something of a surprise for I had given up hope of hearing from you.

Your discussion and recommendations coincide largely with information I have received elsewhere and my own conclusions.

I am particularly appreciative of your postscript suggestions for they had not been offered before.

If there were a closer alliance between architect and artist today it would perhaps have been unnecessary for me to seek your advice. I very much hope that wherever the fault lies a change can be brought about whereby greater collaboration will result.

Let me thank you for your extreme kindness in giving my plea such genuine consideration.

Sincerely,

John W. Stenhouse

JWS:ec

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February 29, 1952

Dear Mr. Stenhouse:

Mr. Johnson has been out of town on various jobs but has come back recently and we have had a chance to talk about the problem of your son's school.

It does seem to me that Yale offers incomparably broader education for the student seriously interested in painting. Although Josef Albers, who I believe is the head of the Painting Department at Yale, is fairly narrow in his range, he usually has important visiting teachers every year and a permanent staff which can conduct a considerable variety of discipline. Princeton for instance (where my own first loyalty rests) has never pretended to offer serious technical education in the practice of painting or sculpture. The few undergraduate amateurs who work in sculpture or freehand drawing apparently enjoy the classes but the instruction is extremely limited.

Therefore I think that Yale is perhaps a good place to consider, especially as it also has a highly developed architectural school in case your son's interest in architecture should revive.

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Mr. John W. Stenhouse
1200 Eighteenth Street, N. W.
Washington 6, D. C.

P. S. You might also consider Cornell, Minnesota, Iowa and George Washington University in St. Louis. For studying painting it seems to me there is no place as good as the Art Students League, partly because it is situated in New York.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date February 13, 1952

Re:

Mr. Alfred Barr

Arthur Drexler

Dear Mr. Barr

I have discussed

with enthusiasm

painting design

understand

in Raleigh

varied and

active

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date February 13, 1952

To: Mr. Alfred Barr

Re:

From: Arthur Drexler

Dear Mr. Barr:

I have discussed this with Philip but we are unable to recommend with enthusiasm any particular school. According to Philip the painting done at Yale indicates fairly competent instructors. I understand that the North Carolina State College School of Design in Raleigh, where Buckminster Fuller has been teaching, offers a varied and imaginative program.

25

than I am. I hope to write you further in a few days.

I do not believe that in thinking **Sincerely,** was erred, although it is possible that in the selection of a place of study I may have. However in these times one does not always have a choice.

Recently my son has expressed the thought that he was not entirely happy about continuing towards architect **Alfred H. Barr, Jr.** in contact with painting and did not sympathize with the attitude that his mentors had toward such course **Mr. John W. Stenhouse** who touched upon painting.

Faulkner, Kingsbury & Stenhouse

1200 Eighteenth Street, N. W. To work on I have promised that
Washington 6, D. C. of his trust during next fall to a school where
he would be able to indulge in greater measure his inclinations.

A HB : rah

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Stenhouse

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date January 21, 1952

To: Mr. Philip Johnson
From: Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Re: _____

Dear Philip:

Could you and Arthur Drexler read this letter, talk it over briefly and let me know how you think I should answer it? At least so far as architecture is concerned I need your help.

measure to than I am. I hope to write you further in a few days.

I do not believe that in this Sincerely, have served, although it is possible that in the selection of a place of study I may have. However in these times one does not always have a choice.

Recently my son has expressed the thought that he was not entirely happy about continuing towards architect Alfred H. Barr, Jr. his contact with painting and did not sympathize with the attitude that his mentors had toward such course Mr. John W. Stenhouse that touched upon painting.

Faulkner, Kingsbury & Stenhouse
1200 Eighteenth Street, N. W.
Washington 6, D. C. to work on I have promised that I would exp. Washington 6, D. C. of his transferring next fall to a school where he would be able to indulge in greater measure his inclinations.

AHB:mh

The Yale school would I believe from what I have heard of it, answer the requirements. Painting, sculpture and the theatre being so to speak under one roof. I have heard too rather favorably of a school at Black Mountain; though I do not know with whom to communicate or where this last is located.

Perhaps you can give me your opinion of these two without jeopardizing your position and at the same time make such other suggestions as you think will be helpful.

For your assistance I will be very grateful.

Sincerely,

John W. Stenhouse

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FAULKNER, KINGSBURY & STENHOUSE - ARCHITECTS
1200 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W. WASHINGTON 6, D. C. - TEL. METROPOLITAN 4382
WALDRON FAULKNER BLOOM KINGSBURY JOHN W. STENHOUSE ERNEST D. STEVENS

January 17, 1952

January 21, 1952

Mr. Alfred Barr, Jr.
Museum of Modern Art
New York City, New York.

Dear Mr. Barr:

In searching for information that might help my son in determining his future course of studies it occurred to me that you might be willing to advise us with respect to Art Schools.

Dear Mr. Stenhouse:

Let me explain that acting as I thought at the time with consideration for such artistic Thank you for your very interesting letter of at Princeton University and is now in the middle of his sophomore year.

January 17. Before answering I should like to discuss

The thought behind this action was to expose him to certain phases of Architecture the question in conference with one or two of my college rather than to a school which offered instruction only in painting or sculpture for instance. I felt that colleagues here in the Museum who are better informed education which though perhaps not as many would in all probability contribute in a larger measure to than I am. I hope to write you further in a few days.

I do not believe that in thinking Sincerely, have erred, although it is possible that in the selection of a place of study I may have. However in these times one does not always have a choice.

Recently my son has expressed the thought that he was not entirely happy about continuing towards architect Alfred H. Barr, Jr. his contact with painting and did not sympathize with the attitude that his mentors had toward such course Mr. John W. Stenhouse that touched upon painting.

Faulkner, Kingsbury & Stenhouse

1200 Eighteenth Street, N. W. as to work on I have promised that I would exp Washington 6, D. C. of his transferring next fall to a school where he would be able to indulge in greater measure his inclinations.

AHB:mh

The ideal school would I believe from what I have heard of it, answer the requirements. Painting, sculpture and the theatre being so to speak under one roof. I have heard too rather favorably of a school at Black Mountain though I do not know with whom to communicate or where this last is located.

Perhaps you can give me your opinion of these two without jeopardizing your position and at the same time make such other suggestions as you think will be helpful.

For your assistance I will be very grateful.

Sincerely,

John W. Stenhouse

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Stenhouse

FAULKNER, KINGSBURY & STENHOUSE - ARCHITECTS
1200 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W. - WASHINGTON 6, D. C. - TEL. METROPOLITAN 5382
WALDRON FAULKNER SLOCUM KINGSBURY JOHN W. STENHOUSE ERNEST D. STEVENS

January 17, 1952

Mr. Alfred Barr, Jr.
Museum of Modern Art
New York City, New York.

Dear Mr. Barr:

In searching for information that might help my son in determining his future course of studies it occurred to me that you might be willing to advise me with respect to Art Schools.

Let me explain that acting as I thought at the time with consideration for such artistic ability as he had evidenced, my son was entered at Princeton University and is now in the middle of his sophomore year.

The thought behind this action was to expose him to certain phases of Architecture and obtain his reactions. In sending him to college rather than to a school which offered instruction only in painting or sculpture for instance. I felt that he would be obtaining in these early years a broader education which though perhaps not mandatory would in all probability contribute in a larger measure to success in any work which he might undertake.

I do not believe that in thinking thus I have erred, although it is possible that in the selection of a place of study I may have. However in these times one does not always have a choice.

Recently my son has expressed the thought that he was not entirely happy about continueing towards architecture, that he missed his contact with painting and did not sympathize with the attitude that his mentors had toward such courses as he was taking now that touched upon painting.

Glad to have something definite to work on I have promised that I would explore the possibility of his transferring next fall to a school where he would be able to indulge in greater measure his inclinations.

The Yale school would I believe from what I have heard of it, answer the requirements. Painting, sculpture and the theatre being so to speak under one roof. I have heard too rather favorably of a school at Black Mountain; though I do not know with whom to communicate or where this last is located.

Perhaps you can give me your opinion of these two without jeopardizing your position and at the same time make such other suggestions as you think will be helpful.

For your assistance I will be very grateful.

Sincerely,

John W. Stenhouse

JWS/hd

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cc: Mr. Lieberman, w/orig ltr

February 12, 1952

Dear Mr. Stern:

Congratulations on your plan to sell original prints instead of reproductions.

I am puzzled, however, by the large color etching by Matisse. Could you let me know just what this is, since I am not familiar with it?

Sincerely,

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
Director of the Museum Collections

Mr. Charles Stern
174 State Street
Brooklyn 2, New York

AHB:lh

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Del. Gobelin's 88.29

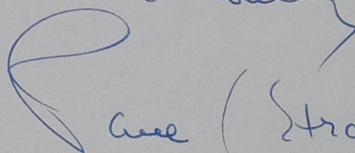
98 Blvd. ^{Strand} Auguste Blangui
Paris (13) June 19.52

Dear Alfred:

A letter from Max rose tells me that you may be in Paris sometime this month. It would be good to see you if you have some time and of course, I would like to show you some of the work I have done here. Could you perhaps come some day for tea or something stronger if you prefer? If so, just give me a ring. We shall be here, I think up to early July. Eventually have to go to Lausanne to oversee the plates of my books - Hope to see you.

As always

Sincerely


Anne (Strand)

Mr Alfred Baver
of Chase Bank
41 Rue Cambon, Paris

Saw photos
and wrote Stricklin
a card July 10