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Drawings in the BEN SHAHN book

Color:

Harpie 1951
Triple Dip 1952
Phoenix 1952
Porch with Two Figures 1953
Study for Goyescas 1956
Mine Building 1956
Lute 1957



Bach 1954
Study for Maimonides 1954
Typewriter 1954
Blind Botanist 1954
Alphabet 1954
Second Alphabet 1954
Te Deum 1954
Boy Reclining 1954
From the Marriage of Heaven and Hell 1955
Today is the Birthday of the World 1955
Bach 1955
Chicago 1955

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Drawings in the BEN SHAHN book

Color:

Harpie 1951
Triple Dip 1952
Phoenix 1952
Porch with Two Figures 1953
Study for Goyescas 1956
Mine Building 1956

Ben Shahn: Cafe' Conversation (1930) 1928-29
watercolor, 12 x 15 ⁵/₈"
MMA, gift of Mrs. Cornelius N. Blinn

S-5732

Photographed for The Museum of Modern Art
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Bach 1954 Study for Maimonedes 1954
Typewriter 1954
Blind Botanist 1954
Alphabet 1954
Second Alphabet 1954
Te Deum 1954
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From the Marriage of Heaven and Hell 1955
Today is the Birthday of the World 1955
Bach 1955
Chicago 1955

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Drawings in the BEN SHAHN book

Color:

- Harpie 1951
- Triple Dip 1952
- Phoenix 1952
- Porch with Two Figures 1953
- Study for Goyescas 1956
- Mine Building 1956
- Lute 1957
- Clown (jacket pic)

- Girl Skipping 1943
- Girl Skipping Rope 1943
- Father and Child - picture of the painting and three studies
- Dancers 1947
- The Violinist 1947
- Vanity 1948 (drawing)
- Boy on Porch 1947
- Susanna and the Elders #3 1948
- Brick Building 1948
- Brownstone Front 1950
- Where There's a Book 1950
- Where There's a Book 1950
- Man Picking Wheat 1950
- Bicycle Act 1950
- Silent Music 1950
- Einstein 1950
- Porch 1951
- Frog Monster 1951
- Cello with Two Chairs 1951
- Homeric Struggle 1951
- Sacco and Vanzetti 1952
- Television Antenna 1952
- Six 1952
- Artist 1953
- Drawing for "Mother and Child" 1953
- Discord 1953
- Arch of Triumph 1953
- Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer 1954
- College Reunion 1954
- Bach 1954 Study for Maimonedes 1954
- Typewriter 1954
- Blind Botanist 1954
- Alphabet 1954
- Second Alphabet 1954
- Te Deum 1954
- Boy Reclining 1954
- From the Marriage of Heaven and Hell 1955
- Today is the Birthday of the World 1955
- Bach 1955
- Chicago 1955

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BEN SHAHN drawings - 2

Farm Machine 1955
P. S. #3 1955
Head of Lincoln 1955
Cafe 1955
Sad Clown 1955
National Pastime 1955
Tablets of the Law with Lion 1956
African Porters 1956
The Owl 1956
Tricuput (After Titian) 1956
Negro Mother and Child 1956
Circus Tumblers 1956
Street Scene 1956
Safe 1956
Freud 1956 (drawing)
Skating Rink 1956
The Existentialists 1957
Priest and the Prophet 1957
Helix 1957

(Unnamed, no date - to come from Mr. Shahn)

Street
Satchmo
Boat
Trio
Drummer
Group
Jail
Desk
Head with Arms
Lillies
Three Boys
Two Men
Boy Sitting
Man and Woman

(No date or size)
Watermelon Eater

Illustrated Books: (showing two double page spreads from each)

The Alphabet of Creation
Wilfred Owen, Thirteen Poems
Homage to Mistress Bradstreet
The Sorrows of Priapus

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Among American painters of his generation Ben Shahn is eminent and unique. As to fame, he has come to it slowly but inexorably. During the early 1930's, when he painted his gouache series on such sociological themes as the cases of Sacco and Vanzetti and Tom Mooney, he was admired by a small group of enthusiasts, who found his political and humanitarian involvement a welcome relief from the prevailing interest in ^{self-containedly sufficient} autonomous esthetic values. And then for a long time much of Shahn's energy and talent was put to public use, and for various Federal agencies he created murals, posters and graphic ^{art} imagery. We see ~~now~~ in retrospect that his work in these media ^{is} of extreme distinction. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that it is unrivaled in the America of its period. It also forms an integral part of a strong and individual visual process. It has not diluted or compromised Shahn's force, conviction and lyric sensitivity as an easel painter. On the contrary, it has given him breadth and profundity, as was immediately apparent when he began again to exhibit his paintings ~~in~~ one-man shows: 1940, 1941; and in 1948 at a large retrospective exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art.

Shahn once remarked that he had a dread of being left "with a paintbrush in my hand." By this he meant, of course, that his imagination as an artist needed the ^{his painting} nourishment of living event. If in recent years ^{has} turned away from specific ^{occurrence} event toward a broader symbolism, as may be seen by comparing The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti with Parable in these pages, ^(Shahn 48, 49) it still evolves from a deep ^{regard for} involvement in human situations ^{rather or subtle} and ideas. Unlike ~~so~~ many contemporary artists, whose studios are their moated castles, Shahn embraces the world around him and brings to it a remarkable warmth and compassion. He does so, it must at ~~once~~ be added, with no surrender whatever of ^{the} that more formal plasticity ^{painting} which allows all fine ~~to~~ survive daily circumstance, to become ~~in a word~~ art instead of news. His courageous struggle ⁱⁿ to distill and intensify ^{up} his human reactions and ^{going} to give them lasting form, has been successful and rare. He is



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concerned not merely with content but with "the shape of content" - the very title he gave his eloquent book, published by Harvard University Press in 1957.

Shahn was born in Kaunas, Russia, in 1898. When he was eight, he came to America with his family and settled in Brooklyn. By the time he was fifteen he was working as a lithographer's apprentice and attending high school at night. Both ^{are} facts especially relevant to an understanding of Shahn's mature career as an artist. For his painting to this day carries the mark of the technical precision and control which are requisites of the commercial lithographer's trade. And his knowledge in the scholastic sense is exceptionally broad, as one is instantly aware in ~~talking to him about any number of cultural and scientific topics~~ ^{from his} in youth he studied at New York University and City College of New York, and during the summers of 1921 and 1922 he had a scholarship in botany at the Marine Biological Laboratories at Woods Hole on Cape Cod. Furthermore, his technical certainty was abetted by his studies at the National Academy of Design and by the fact that he supported himself as a lithographer until roughly 1930, ^{while} two extended trips to Europe (1925, 1927) brought him into contact with the most advanced developments in European art, particularly ^{those} that of the School of Paris.

In 1930 he had his first one-man show at the Downtown Gallery in New York. It included for the most part watercolors and drawings of subject which had interested him on an excursion to Africa. The chief quality of these pictures ^{is} was their calligraphic liveliness, but they give only an oblique indication of the ^{style} his mature art was to assume. Seeing them all together in a public exhibition probably made Shahn realize that he had not yet found the clue to his ^{identity} personality as an artist. At any rate, it was very soon after his show that he turned his back on the purely esthetic lessons he had learned abroad and decided to follow his instinct for story-telling and social commentary. First, however, he completed ten lithographs to illustrate De Quincey's "Levana" from Suspisia de Profundis and twelve superbly personal border illustrations for the Haggadah. From



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that day to this Shahn has been inspired by literary sources, whether secular or religious, as when he painted Dream (page xx) after one of his own illustrations for a book of Wilfred Owen's poems, or when he ^{gave} has given the figure in Parable (page xx) a biblical intensity. He has never been afraid of being led into mere anecdote by the written word. Instead, like many modern artists from Delacroix to Miro, he has stimulated his visual awareness through a love and respect for prose, ^{as} poetry ^{as well as} and music.

In the early 1930's, as briefly noted, Shahn completed his now-celebrated series of gouaches on the ordeals of Sacco-Vanzetti and Tom Mooney. When exhibited in New York at the Downtown Gallery, the latter series was admired by Diego Rivera, than at work on his ill-fated mural for Rockefeller Center. Rivera hired Shahn as his assistant, and not only taught him the fundamentals of fresco painting, but also the Renaissance device of making "pounce" drawings, that is, drawings whose contours were perforated and which were affixed directly to a panel or wall and painted through with color. The device was enormously helpful to Shahn, who until very recent years used it in preparing a number of his finest easel works, notably Father and Child (page xx), and in painting his own admirable murals. The most important of these ^{mural} are: a single-wall fresco (1937-38) for the community center of a Federal housing development for garment workers at Roosevelt (formerly Jersey Homesteads), New Jersey, where the painter himself still lives; thirteen large ^{done} fresco panels, in collaboration with his wife, Bernarda Bryson, for the lobby of the Bronx Central Annex postoffice in New York (1938-39); and murals for the main corridor of the Federal Security Building, Washington, D.C., (1940-42). No one, I think, can properly estimate Shahn's contribution to the American art of his time without making a careful study of these three ^{large-scale} mural commissions in which monumentality is so convincingly blended with poetic detail.

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During World War II Shahn was extremely active as a graphic artist, and his posters for the Office of War Information and the Congress of Industrial Organizations are among the most distinguished works produced in this country in this difficult and usually much too casual medium. But he never ceased being an easel ~~artist~~ ^{artist}, and in 1946 ~~he~~ ^{was} included in the exhibition of American ~~painting~~ ^{was} painting at the Tate Gallery, London, where began his steady ~~ascent~~ ^{ascent} to ~~some~~ ^{a certain} fame in European art circles. From the closing years of the war date ~~some~~ ^{of} his most compelling images, sometimes unashamedly poignant, as in his scenes of the war-torn Italy on which his ~~compassion~~ ^{pathy} focussed, sometimes ferociously ~~explicit~~ ^{brutal}, as when he depicts death on the ~~Pacific~~ ^{South Pacific} ~~island~~ ^{islands} ~~pebbled~~ ^{mountain} beaches. This changeability of mood has always characterized Shahn's art and given it a variety which never seems forced or deliberate. His laughter and anger are ~~equally~~ ^{to each} equally deep, and he gives each ~~its~~ ^a full and appropriate ~~expression~~ ^{place} in purely visual terms.

In The Shape of Content Shahn wrote: "The moving toward one's inner self is a long pilgrimage for a painter." He himself has made the pilgrimage with increasing frequency ~~during~~ ^{since} the early 1940's, ten years after his Sacco-Vanzetti and Mooney series were completed. The greater part of his art in recent years has been meditative and introspective, whereas once its impetus had ~~come from~~ ^{needed} ~~the pressure of~~ ^{the pressure of} sociological causes. He makes the matter clear: "I was not the only artist who had been entranced by the social dream, and who could no longer reconcile that view with the private and inner objectives of art...The change in art, mine included, was accomplished during World War II. For me it has begun during the late thirties when I worked in the Resettlement Administration. I had then crossed and recrossed many sections of the country, and had come to know well so many people of all kinds of belief and temperament, which they maintained with a transcendent indifference to their own lot in life. Theories melted

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before such experience. // My own painting then had turned from what is called 'social realism' into a sort of personal realism. I found the qualities of people a constant pleasure... There were the poor who were rich in spirit, and the rich who were also sometimes rich in spirit. There was the South and its story-telling art, stories of snakes and storms and haunted houses, enchanting; and yet such talent thriving in the same human shell with hopeless prejudices, bigotry, and ignorance."

Thus it is ~~concerned with~~ apparent that Shahn's humanism has deepened and become more concerned with ^a universals of ~~human existence and conduct~~ since his early years as ^a polemicist / Kline of exceptional talent and sincerity. But this is not to say that even now he often, though his "alphabet" drawings are nearly as abstract as the pictures of is/willing to let esthetic shape ^{obscure} ~~overpower~~ content, His stubborn faith that ~~form and meaning~~ ^{can be reconciled}, as they were so often by great artists of the past, ^{some of} ~~the~~ ^{advanced leaders} ~~of our time~~, has naturally brought him into conflict with the ~~of our time~~ painters of our time, Many of the the best of whom he admires. / ~~of our time~~ younger artists, on the other hand, are beginning to applaud and emulate in their own way his valiant attempt to break the impasse between objectivity and the hard-won ^{as such} ~~autonomy~~ of painting ~~itself~~. He is not alone in the attempt, of course, and some of the leaders of what we unsatisfactorily call abstract-expressionism have at times followed a parallel course, as when Willem de Kooning painted his series of "women" ^{at the beginning} ~~in the early years~~ ^{early in} of this decade. ^{so I could not offer very specific direction.}

outer
inner

3000
annex
school

At the very beginning of this piece I called Shahn "unique." It is a word which has lost much of its ^{intended} original power. It regains it in the case of Shahn's ~~work~~ work, as in the case of all art which is more than likely to hold the interest of future generations.

make posterity's steak grab.



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Mr. James Thrall Soby
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Connecticut

here or there, and I've just replied to most of them that it would be almost too difficult to get such a show together.

But I have just received two requests from Milan which seem so in earnest that I feel again (and how many times have I felt that way!) that perhaps something might be done with the assistance perhaps of one of the cultural relations agencies.

I've replied to the ^{modern}Galleria dei Re Magi in Milan that perhaps the Museum might help in arranging such a show as the one they request. (Am I being presumptuous?) Certainly I could never do it personally. I suggested also that they write to you expressing their ideas and that they communicate with the Museum of MA. That about exhausts my resources as of the present.

I did mention to them that a show is to go to the Stedlijk Museum in Amsterdam, and that perhaps this exhibition might go on to Italy. But actually I do not know when the exhibition is planned nor how extensive it will be, so I could not offer very specific suggestions in that direction.

Anyway I am enclosing copies of the two letters that have come from them. Why they have been so long in getting here I cannot guess, but I note that they are dated as of May. It seems possible that they may have come through official channels. Actually I don't even know who is responsible for the translations.

Have you any ideas re all this?

The bibliography is almost incredible; I will bring pressure on George Braziller not to delete even if he has to use diamond point type. 4pt.

Best, as always,

Ban

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B E N S H A H N R O O S E V E L T N E W J E R S E Y

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B E N S H A H N R O O S E V E L T N E W J E R S E Y

August 26th, 1959

Mr. James Thrall Soby
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Connecticut

Dear Jim,

I have had my annual rain of requests from people in various places in Europe to have exhibitions here or there, and I've just replied to most of them that it would be almost too difficult to get such a show together.

But I have just received two requests from Milan which seem so in earnest that I feel again (and how many times have I felt that way!) that perhaps something might be done with the assistance perhaps of one of the cultural relations agencies.

I've replied to the ^{modern}Galleria dei Re Magi in Milan that perhaps the Museum might help in arranging such a show as the one they request. (Am I being presumptuous?) Certainly I could never do it personally. I suggested also that they write to you expressing their ideas and that they communicate with the Museum of MA. That about exhausts my resources as of the present.

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GALLERIA DEI RE MAGI
Milano
Via Boito 8

Translation

Milan, May 27, 1959

Dear Sir:

Since we plan to organize only high-level exhibits, both national and international, in our gallery during the coming years, we would be extremely glad to present a one-man exhibit of your paintings which would certainly draw the greatest interest of the public and the most qualified criticism, also because no important exhibit of your works has been seen in Italy for a long time.

Our gallery is composed of four rooms in which about fifty middle-size canvasses can be easily exhibited. Because of its growing importance, our gallery's activities are constantly covered by critics of the most qualified Italian dailies and weeklies.

We wish to call to your attention that because an exhibit of your works is of exceptional importance, another art gallery is also getting in touch with you directly and would be pleased to set up on their premises an exhibit of your graphic works, contemporaneously with our exhibit of your paintings.

If, however, the exhibit assumes a retrospective and cyclic character for which an American cultural agency might give its sponsorship, we could study the possibility of a larger and more convenient exhibit area, such as the Galleria d'Arte Moderna or the Permanente.

We will be extremely grateful if you accept our proposal and we place our Gallery at your disposal for whatever period you wish.

In anticipation of your kind reply, we extend our most cordial greetings.

Sincerely yours,

Galleria dei Re Magi

/s/

Lia Barbaroux

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GALLERIA DEL DISEGNO
Via Andegari 12
Milano

Translation

Milan, May 27, 1959

Dear Sir:

It is our great desire to be able to present a series of your drawings, gouaches and water-colors in our Gallery.

Our Gallery has as its specific purpose the exhibition of drawings and it is the only one in Italy with this particular interest.

We have presented exhibits by Carra, Sironi, Buffet, etc., and we always had the most favorable reaction from the critics, above all because no gallery in Italy has thus far given any serious consideration to drawings.

We are eager to develop our activity as much as possible, and therefore we would be honored if you would allow us the possibility to present your graphic works to collectors and black-and-white amateurs.

In waiting for your kind reply we extend our most cordial greetings.

Sincerely yours,

Galleria del Disegno

/s/

Tita Vismara

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August 12, 1959

Mr. George Braziller,
215 Fourth Avenue,
New York 3, N.Y.

Dear George:

I am enclosing the really superb bibliography which Miss Sylvia L. Hill of the Museum of Modern Art's library staff has done for our book on Ben Shahn. This is by far the most complete and informative bibliography on Shahn that has yet been made, and I feel strongly that Miss Hill should have a credit line in our book; I'm sure you will agree.

As I wrote you before, it may be that you haven't this much space available to print the entire bibliography, though I think it would make a valuable and permanently useful addition to the book, in fact assure sales far into the future. But if you have to cut, let's by all means refer the bibliography back to Miss Hill and let her decide what can be taken out with minimum damage to the bibliography's documentary value.

I think that completes my part of the book except that I will send you tomorrow or Friday the minor changes in the text which Shahn has suggested. These will be very simple to make, I can assure you.

Best to you and let me know as soon as possible what your maximum length for the bibliography is.

Sincerely,

James Soby
P.O. Box 830
Southampton, L.I., N.Y.

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SPECIAL DELIVERY



James T. Soby
PO Box 830
Southampton L.I.
New York

capital soon being changed to Kaunas (the Lithuanian pronunciation). It remained an independent country until after the second world war. In 1945 or 1946 it was again annexed by Russia along with Estonia, Latvia etc. In return for for Lithuania's ~~own~~ eagerness to be annexed (sic) the Russians allowed it to keep its language (if nothing else) and consequently the capital of Lithuania is now called Kaunas.

Now can you tell me where I was born?

The ballet U.S. Export - Ballet Jazz was created by Jerome Robbins and as you said for the "Festival dei due Monde" at Spoleto. I agree it would

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BEN SHAHN

ROOSEVELT

NEW JERSEY



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an independent country until after
the second world war. In 1945 or 1946 it was
again annexed by Russia along with
Estonia, Latvia etc. In return for
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Dear Jim. [envelope postmarked
July 18, 1959]

On the Kaunas - Kovno Kontroversy.

I was born in 1898 - in Russia in the city of Kovno, capital of the province of Kovno. In 1919 the Province of Kovno (and surrounding area) received its independence and became known as the country of Lithuania with its capital Kovno being changed to Kaunas (the Lithuanian pronunciation). It remained an independent country until after the second world war. In 1945 or 1946 it was again annexed by Russia along with Estonia, Latvia etc. In return for Lithuania's ~~easy~~ eagerness to be annexed (sic) the Russians allowed it to keep its language (if nothing else) and consequently the capital of Lithuania is now called Kaunas.

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be only fair to give credit to the Festival
and to Jean Carlo Menotti.

I do so regret holding you up so long on this
but I've been working day and night on
a sketch for another mosaic for a
temple in Nashville Tenn.

Best from Bernard too

Ban

If you haven't already seen
it I'll send you Boston 1954
bibliography, biography and
general notes on Shahn notes
until Apr 1957. I'll add
whatever is pertinent on page 3
(over)

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Shahin



postmarked
1958

J.T. Soby
 P.O. Box 830
 Southampton

L.I.
 City.

feel 35 years young - made
 me want to get right out
 to the shop to work!

no errors! 2 typos on pp 5 and 13.

P.S. I'm getting a copy of the
 of Modern Art on p. 5 - it's 1938 instead of 1948
 will obviously be a typo. I'll correct it. I'll also
 but I want it for my own files. I'll
 on p. 13 it's 1950 " " 1956.
 get a copy for you, of course.

P.P.S. I find
 a chronology
 the Museum's
 but I want
 articles from
 your stay in
 no way to
 If you haven't already seen
 it I'll send you Boston's I.C.A.
 bibliography - biography and
 general dossier on Shahin valid
 until Apr 1957. I'll add
 whatever is pertinent - on page 3.
 (over)

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[Envelope postmarked
July 6, 1959]

Dear Jim.

Thank you for the text. Generally such a thing makes me feel 35 years dead. This made me feel 35 years young - made me want to get right out to the shop to work!

no errors! 2 typos on pp 5 and 13.

P.S. I'm getting Sylvia Hill, a copy of Modern Art Library, its bibliography will obviously be with too long for George Breitman's purpose but I sent it for the Modern Library you filed. I'll get a copy of course.
on p. 5 - it's 1938 instead of 1948
on p. 13 it's 1950 " " 1956.

P.P.S. I don't see my concern with reading this or with a bibliography of the Museum's (1947) in U.S. but I sent it for the Modern Library you filed. I'll get a copy of course.
If you haven't already seen it I'll send you Boston's I.C.A. bibliography - biography and general dossier on Shahn valid until Apr 1957. I'll add whatever is pertinent - on page 3.
(over)

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may I keep the text? If not
 a word on a post card will
 get it back pronto.

Ben

Dear Jim
 Thank you for the text. I've
 seen a thing which we feel
 is yours but this makes me
 feel - 32 years young - made
 me want to get right out
 to the shop to work!
 in error! 2 tapes on pp 2 and 3.
 on p. 2 - to 1932 unless after
 on p. 13 to 1930
 If you haven't already seen
 to the one you posted I.C.A.
 bibliography - probably under
 please browse on your video
 until Apr 1927. I'll call
 whatever is pertinent on page 3.
 (over)

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

July 1, 1959

Dear Ben:

Herewith the copy of the text for the Braziller-Pocket Books at last. As usual, I'll be grateful for your suggestions, factual corrections, etc. And do be frank.

This time I tried to write about a great number of specific pictures. I did this on the theory that Pocket Books' enormous audience should be forced or at least cajoled into looking at as many of the plates as possible. I also thought this sort of approach would help avoid repeating things I've said about you in the Abrams book and elsewhere. Well, anyway it's been a pleasure and excitement to do and I naturally hope you'll think it's adequate.

Very best, love to Bernarda,

As ever,

P.S. I'm getting Sylvia Hill, a crack bibliographer in the Museum of Modern Art's library, to do a very complete bibliography. This will obviously be much too long for George Braziller's purposes, but I want it for the Museum Library and for my own files. I'll get a copy made for you, of course.

P.P.S. I find that my contract with Braziller calls for me to supply a chronology as well as a bibliography. The chronology I did for the Museum's Bulletin (Summer, 1947) is O.K., I think through 1947, but I need now to add the past twelve years. Could you possibly scribble down some outstanding facts for me, such as the dates of your stay in Colorado and Harvard. Sorry to trouble you, but I have no way to check without your help.

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

July 1, 1959

Mr. George Braziller,
215 Fourth Avenue,
New York 3, N.Y.

Dear George:

Herewith the Shahn text at last. I naturally hope you'll think it will do the trick.

I've sent a copy to Ben Shahn, and I'll get his suggestions and corrections to you as soon as possible.

Sylia Hill, a crack bibliographer on the Museum of Modern Art's staff, will have the bibliography ready in a month at very most. This won't cost you anything, as I said on the 'phone, since I want it for the Museum and for my own files. But it will be too long for your purposes, and you and I can whittle it down - an easy job. I will either do the chrology myself or get Miss Hill to do it, probably the former.

Best to you, mailtime haste,

Sincerely,

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Shahn
Roosevelt
N.J.



James T. Soby
Bourky Ridge Rd
New Canaan
Conn

marked
59]

answering
then I'm
I was.

had

one and we've ransacked the house - without
luck. I've even asked some of the
book shops in our area - without
luck. And still I'm sure we have it -
but God knows where it's hidden.

The bronze mural ^{negative} photos. I seem to
remember knowing them all over to
Dorothy Miller when you were arranging
the show at M M A in 1947. Or was
it Edith? Have you tried her? I know
I don't have any negatives.

I feel bad being so unhelpful
and uncooperative

as ever (sic)
Ban

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[envelope post marked
June 1, 1959]

Dear Jim.

Please forgive me for this long delay in answering you. I try not to look at mail when I'm in the middle of a picture - which I was.

The Ohio Guide - I was sure we had one and we've ransacked the house - without luck. I've even asked some of the book shops in our area - without luck. And still I'm sure we have it - but God knows where it's hidden.

The bronze mural ^{negative} photos. I seem to remember knowing them all over to Dorothy Miller when you were arranging the show at M M A in 1947. Or was it Edith? Have you tried her? I know I don't have any negatives.

I feel bad being so unhelpful and uncooperative

as ever (sic)
Bar

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

April 27, 1959

Mr. George Brasiller,
215 Fourth Ave.,
New York 3, N.Y.

c. to Mrs. Halpert

Dear George:

Herewith the complete list of both color (marked with an asterisk) and black-and-white plates for the Shah book. The list comes to 79 rather than 80 items, and I would like to add in black and white the picture called Fourth of July Crater of 1943. This picture happens to belong to me, but should be listed as "Private collection." The reason I want to add it is because its background shows the housing development in Roosevelt, New Jersey, where Shah lives, and this will give me something extra to write about.

I have no photograph left of Fourth of July Crater, but I'll ask Edith Halpert to order one and send it to me.

As I said on the 'phone this morning, I've put on the list all the information as to collections, dimensions, etc., which I have. Some information is still missing but, as we agreed, your office can get it from Edith Halpert's files so that I can start working on the text as soon as possible. I'll try my best to meet your June 1st deadline, and unless I get snowed under again, I think I can.

As I also said on the 'phone, I now have almost all the photos of pictures on the list, the main exception being the photos of the murals in the Bronx Central Annex post office. I had a full set of these, but must have lent them to someone. If they don't turn up, I'll have new ones made by Susan at my expense and give the negatives to the Museum of Modern Art which should have them anyway.

Best to you,

Sincerely,

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

April 25, 1959

Mr. George Braziller,
215 Fourth Ave.,
New York 3, N.Y.

Dear George:

I have just learned from Ben Shahn that the entire superb series of border illustration for the Hagaddah (1931-32) have been sent by the Jewish Museum in New York to Paris, where a pochoir album in color is being made.

It seems to me too complicated to try to have color transparencies made at that distance so, contrary to the list of color plates for our book which I sent you yesterday, I think we should substitute Demonstration in Paris from the Sacco-Vanzetti series of 1931-32.

This picture belongs to Elmer Rice, and I'm sure he would let us make a color plate in New York.

Very best,

Sincerely,

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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK 19

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

THE LIBRARY

April 20, 1959

Dear Jim:

Confirming our telephone conversation of Friday, I've checked our records on the availability of a photograph of Shahn's Textile Mills, plate 10 of your Penguin book, (Bronx Post Office mural) and find we have a copy negative and can supply you with the number of prints you need.

The print from which the copy negative was made came from a photographer named Moyer in Trenton, N.J. who has since sold the business to Mr. and Mrs. Bates, 130 East Hanover Street, Trenton, (tel. EXport 6-9211). I recall speaking to them a year or so ago and they were most cooperative, and I have here in my notes that Moyer should be credited for the photograph.

Perhaps you will want to get in touch with them as a courtesy. We shall be glad to have prints made and sent wherever you wish.

Very best,

Sincerely yours,

Pearl

Pearl L. Moeller
Supervisor of Rights and Reproductions-**

Mr. James Thrall Soby
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Connecticut

** -C'est seulement moi - comme toujours!

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THE DOWNTOWN GALLERY

EDITH GREGOR HALPERT, Director
Consultation service by appointment

32 EAST 51 STREET
NEW YORK 22, N. Y.
Telephone: PLaza 3-3767

April 17, 1959

Mr. James T. Soby
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

Dear Mr. Soby:

We received your list today of Shahn works to be used in the Braziller Book, list dated 4/16/59.

Sometime ago, early in March, I gave you a group of Shahn photographs; in most cases two prints each.

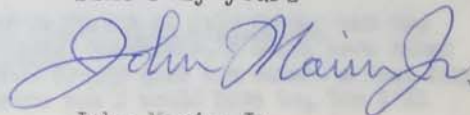
I note the following on your ~~present~~ ^{also of March} list appear on your 4/16/59 list. Would you like me to order prints on these as well. They are as follows:

1. Three Doors, 1933, Coll. Dr. & Mrs. Irving Levick
2. Scott's Run, West Virginia, 1937, Whitney Museum
3. Sunday Painting, 1938, Coll. Bernarda Shahn
4. Seurat's Lunch, 1939, Coll. Mr. & Mrs. Earle Ludgin
5. Vacant Lot, 1939, Coll. Wadsworth Atheneum
6. Handball, 1939, Coll. MMA

"Sunday Football" 1938, Coll. Estate of Herman Shulman Stamford, Conn. we do not have any photo ~~image~~. Is there any way possible you could get some one in Stamford to photograph the painting.

I will place orders on those, today, the balance of list 4/16/59 and wait on the six above until I hear from you.

Sincerely yours



John Marin, Jr.

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

April 16, 1959

Dear Ben and Edith:

I'm enclosing a tentative list of pictures done before 1940 which might be used in the Braziller book. The three marked with an asterisk are possible color plates. I thought we should have one very early one - the superb border illustration for the Haggadah - one from the Mooney series and an easel picture from the late 1930's such as the American Sculpture which I remember as being very fine in color. But you may have other suggestions, and I'd love to have them.

The difficulty is to avoid duplication with the plates in the Abrams book, and only two pictures on this list are being used in that book. A number of the others have been reproduced often, but perhaps that isn't so important as having a representative choice in a book which will sell for \$1.50. Here the only conflicting factor, which I didn't know about until today, is that my little Penguin book, which was out of print for a long time, has now been reissued, and that, too, sells for a low price.

Anyway do please ponder this list and let me know your reactions. We are to have 80 plates in all, including 16 in color. Also, Edith can you fill in the missing names of collectors. My files on these early works are pretty antiquated, and I've never had time to fill in missing information. There may well be important pictures of the 1930's of which I haven't photographs any longer. I've lent a number of these photographs to various people over the years and sometimes I get them back, sometimes not.

Well, that's a start, and I'll keep plugging at the later lists. The proportion of 20 early works to 60 later ones seems to me about right. I especially want to reproduce the very recent works from Ben's last show for which I wrote you (Edith) yesterday. These are mostly not in the Abrams book and are superb in color.

Very best,

P.S. to Ben: The ladies from Katonah picked up Fourth of July Crater and the two drawings (Girl Skipping Rope and Three Heads) yesterday. I would have liked to lend them Liberation, too, but I think that lovely girl has earned a rest long since. Sorry to miss the opening, as I wrote you I would have to, but I'll get up to see the show, of course.

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J. T. SOBY
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

April 15, 1959

Mrs. Edith Halpert,
The Downtown Gallery,
32 East 51st St.,
New York 22, N.Y.

Dear Edith:

I must begin work on the Braziller-Pocket Books monograph on Shahn, and I need photographs of the following works in your recent Shahn show:

- No. 2 Lute and Molecules
- No. 5 Conversion
- No. 6 Helix and Crystal
- No. 9 Hard Alphabet
- No. 11 Folk Song
- No. 13 Maimonides
- No. 16 Chicago

I also need a photograph of the mosaic for the Grady High School in Brooklyn, and if one doesn't exist could you have one made at my expense.

I'm trying hard to avoid duplication with the plates in the Abrams portfolio, but since there will be 60 plates in the Braziller book, there will have to be some duplications with either the Braziller or the little Penguin booklet I did some years ago. I'll try to work up a list this week and send it to you and Ben for your suggestions.

Sorry to pester you again about photographs, but my deadline is June 1st, which I'll never make, and I must get the ~~seventeen~~ sixteen color plates chosen at once.

Very best, haste,

Sincerely,

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JAMES THRALL
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

George Braziller, Inc.

215 FOURTH AVENUE · NEW YORK 3 · N. Y.

OREGON 4-6004

March 23, 1959

Mr. George
215 Fourth
New York

Mr. James Thrall Soby
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

Dear George

Dear Mr. Soby:

for the
stacks of
and return

I enclose the signed contract for your book on BEN SHAHN and a check for \$375.- which is half of the outright sum of \$750.- due you for the book.

jammed at

Although we do not expect the MS until the date specified in the contract, we would very much appreciate receiving the list of color reproductions you want just as soon as possible.

I'll do
and we're
eager to
O.K.
not/

As you know in many cases we have to have plates made and this is a very slow process. I hope I am not asking too much but I only wanted to tell you what the situation was.

Sincerely yours,

Katherine Richardson

Katherine Richardson

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JAMES THRALL SOBY

Brushy Ridge Road

New Canaan, Conn.

George Braziller, Inc.

Mar. 6, 1959

Mr. George Braziller,
215 Fourth Ave.,
New York 3, N.Y.

Dear George:

I have recently returned from Florida to find ~~the~~ two contracts for the Shahn book. Unfortunately, in the rush of trying to wade through stacks of mail, I've forgotten which copy came first. I'm therefore signing and returning both copies and you can send one back to me.

I'll try to get at the list of color plates very soon, though I'm jammed at the moment with the Miro show at the Museum, which opens soon.

I understand the importance of meeting the June 1st deadline, and I'll do my level best. But I really can't promise to be ready before July 1, and we must both be clear on that point. I work very slowly and I'm especially eager to/repeat what I've written before about Ben. Let me know if this is not/
O.K.

Very best,

Sincerely,

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Copyright

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Material

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George Braziller, Inc.

215 FOURTH AVENUE • NEW YORK 3 • N. Y. OREGON 4-6004

August 7, 1957

Mr. James Thrall Soby
Brushy Ridge Road
New Canaan, Conn.

Dear Mr. Soby:

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd returning the corrected galleys. We will use the subtitle as you suggested.

One more question, please. There are some drawings which Mr. Shahn has done which have no titles, as for the Louis Armstrong movie, "Ambassador Satch," and for various Charm magazine stories. We thought the best way of listing these would be to say, for example:

Illustration for the story "Still Waters" by
Charles Jackson, published in Charm magazine,
July, 1955. Drawing, 9 3/4 x 6.

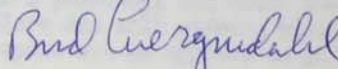
Does this seem all right to you? The ones for the Armstrong film will be done in the same way, giving the film production credits.

Is it all right to list the width of the drawing before the height? I realize the paper measurements are usually given with the height preceding, but the Gallery lists all of his with the width first. I'm not sure if there is a hard and fast rule on this. We would start the notes by saying how the measurements are listed and that they are in inches.

For the frontispiece we are going to use the drawing "Artist", unless you have some other ideas.

I shall appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,



T. E. Mergendahl Jr.
Production Manager

TEM:ah

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Brayller

Brayller
Correspondence
1959

[1957-1959]