



I HAVE SWORN UPON THE ALTAR OF GOD ETERNAL HOSTILITY
AGAINST EVERY FORM OF TYRANNY OVER THE MIND OF MAN
--- Thomas Jefferson

THE ARTHUR SZYK SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE RENAISSANCE
OF ARTHUR SZYK

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Newsletter

Summer 1998

Major Exhibition of Szyk Opens at Chicago Museum August 16 “Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk” to Run through February 28, 1999

(Chicago) --- He was called a “one-man army” by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and Adolf Hitler put a price on his head. Neither a general nor a statesman, artist Arthur Szyk fought heroically against forces of injustice and tyranny – with his pen – producing powerful drawings, caricatures and political cartoons during World War II and throughout his career.

The most comprehensive showing of Szyk’s cartoons and illuminated manuscripts in 50 years, *Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk*, opens Sunday, August 16 at Spertus Museum, 618 South Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Reception at 1:15 p.m.; program with exhibition curator Irvin Ungar at 2 p.m. The exhibition continues through Sunday, February 28, 1999.

Heeding the words of Talmudic sage Rabbi Hillel as the philosophical resolve for his work: “*If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?*,” Szyk’s work would become not only his artistic expression – but as the political climate grew increasingly volatile – more a matter of life or death.

“There is nothing simple or comfortable about Szyk’s art or his message,” says curator Irvin Ungar. “Szyk’s work challenges us morally and stimulates us artistically. The beauty of his images helps us to understand and appreciate life in all its fullness, while those images bring alive the concept that we have a duty to fight against injustice – a cause for which Arthur Szyk fought valiantly throughout his lifetime.

“Some lead from public office, others from the pulpit. Arthur Szyk enlightens us in our responsibility through his art.”

The Search for Arthur Szyk

by George Gooche, Founder of The Arthur Szyk Society

On September 13, 1987, I was searching for a rare USA stamp for my collection. I was in a tiny cluttered shop in Orange County, California. There were unopened boxes of stamp collections, books, pictures, and a number of other interesting artifacts. It was obvious that the owner had not moved anything for many years: there was a thick layer of dust on everything! I was walking out the door, when I saw a flash of color in one corner. Curious, I asked to see the pictures of brilliant colors. There were six beautifully detailed lithographs depicting several nations (I later learned these were a part of Arthur Szyk’s *United Nations Series*). I was captivated and could not resist buying them! I stored them behind my desk and told my spouse, “Someday, I will learn more about these paintings.”

In the following weeks the lithographs kept coming to mind. The name “Szyk” (pronounced “Shick”) seemed odd and it kept nagging at my sub-conscious. One day I said to myself, “Today, I will learn about this artist.” At the library I found a reference book titled *Current Biography*, which had a short article published in 1946. As I read, I visualized the lithographs in my mind. In that moment, I met Arthur Szyk and became fascinated. I had no idea I would devote over a decade of my life in pursuit of the awesome, inspiring story of this unusual person!

(continued on next page)



Arthur Szyk 1894 - 1951

The Search ... (continued from previous page)

During the same year in late 1987, Irvin Ungar, a rare book and manuscript dealer, was visiting relatives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania when he happened into an antique shop. There he discovered in boxes, also covered with dust, sets of six prints each of Szyk's *Holiday Series* printed in the late 1940's. Thus began his search to learn more about the artist.

Ever since these discoveries, Irv and I have followed different paths on our quest for Arthur Szyk. We have become friends sharing information and our discoveries. I asked Irv to assume responsibility for The Arthur Szyk Society last year due to my ill health. A new Board of Trustees has been formed and I am confident that The Society will flourish under its new leadership.

The Arthur Szyk Society was established in 1991, following an exhibition of Arthur Szyk's works of art at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles. The visitors were awed and inspired by what they saw --- works of art, illustrated books, magazines, and cartoons. The guest book contained the names and addresses of many visitors and it was to them that I sent my first newsletter. As when one drops a pebble into a pond of water, the results of my writing rippled around the world. Arthur Szyk has now been re-introduced in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, South America, Poland, Israel, and many unlikely places. It is my hope and prayer that The Arthur Szyk Society and its *Newsletter* will continue to promote the renaissance of Arthur Szyk and his messages.

Editor's Note: George Gooche is the Honorary President of The Arthur Szyk Society.

First Illustrated Book about Szyk *Deluxe and Trade Editions Published*

Spertus Museum and Guest Curator Irvin Ungar are pleased to announce the availability of the first illustrated book about Arthur Szyk, published in conjunction with the exhibition *Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk*.

The Deluxe Edition is limited to four hundred (400) numbered copies. It is individually bound in half leather with matching slipcase and contains ninety six pages. Date of publication is September 30, 1998. Contents: Two extensive essays (essay one: *Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk* by exhibition guest curator Irvin Ungar; essay two: *The Life and Work of Arthur Szyk* by art historian Joseph P. Ansell); over fifty illustrations, most in color; exhibition history; comprehensive bibliography.

The Deluxe Edition pre-publication price is \$300. This pre-publication offer expires September 30, 1998. The publication price will be \$350. (Shipping, handling and insurance charge of \$10 for the first copy and \$5 for each additional copy.) Add sales tax if applicable.

The Trade Edition (in softcover) may be purchased for \$29.95. (Shipping, handling and insurance charge of \$5 for the first copy and \$3 for each additional copy.) Add sales tax if applicable.

To order copies of the Deluxe or Trade editions, contact: Historicana, 1200 Edgehill Drive Burlingame, CA 94010 (Tel. 650.343.9578 / Fax 650.579.6014); or Spertus Museum Gift Shop, 618 South Michigan Avenue Chicago, IL 60605. Visa/Mastercard accepted by both Historicana or Spertus Museum.



Arsenal of Democracy. *Collier's Magazine* 12 Sept. 1942
This image appears in color on the front cover of the Trade Edition of "*Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk*."



"This damn winter is just another intrigue of Roosevelt and the international bankers"

DETOUR ON THE GLORY ROAD



THE MAP MAKER



"DECEMBER 7, 1941"



THE NEW ORDERLIES



IL DUCE . . .

**Esquire Magazine Set of Szyk Caricatures
Esky Card Set #6**

Titles:

Detour on the Glory Road

"December 7, 1941"

The Map Maker

The New Orderlies

Il Duce

Some Necks... (See back page of Newsletter)



Five extremely rare military postcards by Szyk (Measuring 5 1/2" x 3 9/16"). They are signed "Artur Schick", one of the early variant spellings of Szyk's name with which he experimented. The postcards are dated "1915, Ville de Lodz". At the time, Szyk was 21 years old. He later served in the Russian Army in WW I, and in 1919-20 he became Artistic Director of the Department of Propaganda in Lodz and served in the Polish Army as an officer in the war against the Bolsheviks. Collection of Irvin Ungar, Historicana.

The Propaganda Postcards by Arthur Szyk

By Don Preziosi

Of the scores of propaganda postcards produced in this country during World War II, none came close to the superlative artistry and vitriolic wit of the six card set of "Szyk Caricatures" that was published by *Esquire* Magazine in 1942. What many people may not know is that Arthur Szyk was also one of the few manuscript illuminators of modern times, and an extraordinary miniaturist, who turned to political cartooning as his personal contribution to defeat Nazi tyranny.

Arthur Szyk was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1894, to an affluent, scholarly Jewish family. His artistic talents were apparent at a very early age, and at fifteen he went to study in Paris for two years. He decided to specialize in the almost lost art of manuscript illumination, and also studied the works of the Moslem miniaturists.

During World War I, he fought against the Germans as a private in the Russian Imperial Army. As a prisoner of war under house arrest, his artwork was eagerly sought by the German hierarchy. A few years later, married and an officer in Pilsudski's Polish forces, he was fighting the Bolsheviks. His earlier caricatures of German leaders led him to become head of Polish art propaganda.

In 1921, the Szyks moved to Paris where he concentrated on medieval and biblical themes. He also illustrated novels, painted miniatures and produced elaborate illuminations. He moved to London in 1937 and produced what is probably his most noted work, the illustrated and illuminated *Haggadah*. This story of the Exodus took him years to complete. When it was published in 1940, the *Times* of London called it the most beautiful book ever produced by human hands.

Over the years, Szyk had been doing some cartoons and caricatures in addition to his illuminations. When World War II broke out, he began drawing cartoons for British publications, savagely satirizing the Nazi regime. He continued his direction with his artwork for good reason: his and his wife's immediate families were killed following Germany's invasion of Poland. When questioned about his turn to searing caricatures, Szyk said, "The origin of all art is what we call propaganda. The art of Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Renaissance, was the propaganda of religion. I do not say that art is my aim; art is my means."

In late 1940, he moved to New York and continued his political cartooning, primarily for *Esquire* and *Collier's* magazines. *Art Digest* wrote of Szyk, "The change in his approach from art for art's sake to use of pen as a propaganda weapon is a striking one in which all the luxury of a highly refined art suddenly becomes a prop for the depiction of barbaric evil.... And a great part of the effectiveness of Szyk's satires is due, no doubt, to the fact that seldom before has brutal invective been leashed to such consummate craftsmanship and jeweled color."

Szyk's satires proved to be popular in the United States. Other magazines, advertisers and even the War Department began to use the cartoons that one reviewer aptly described as "eloquent loathings."

After the war, Szyk, a gentle man at heart, said that his granddaughter's dictatorship was the only totalitarian regime he would ever accept. He continued working in the tradition of illuminated manuscripts, was an active Zionist, and produced an elaborate Declaration of Independence for the State of Israel in 1948. He died of a heart attack in 1951.

The Postcards

The six card *Esquire* set is Eszy Set #6, one of 14 sets of oversize cards (4 1/2" x 7") *Esquire* issued in the early 1940s that featured various contributing artists, photographers and cartoonists. They originally sold for 25 cents per set. (Other propaganda cards illustrated by Szyk include "Prisoners of War" dated 1939 and published by the Minerva Publishing Co., Ltd. in aid of the Polish Relief Fund; and a set of five military propaganda postcards, dated 1915, Lodz.) Szyk's work also appears on other postcards in the style of his illuminations, but to my knowledge, these are his only propaganda cards.

This article appeared in the Postcard Collector, December 1997 issue, and is reprinted with the permission of its author, Don Preziosi. Don has been collecting, buying and selling postcards since 1976. He and his wife Newly fled the world of Madison Avenue advertising and turned their postcard hobby into a full time business in 1980. They live in Mendham, NJ, with their two teenagers, Nick and Susanna. You may reach Don at Box 498, Mendham, NJ 07945; email: DINERDON@AOLCOM

The Arthur Szyk Society Newsletter welcomes articles and items of interest for inclusion in forthcoming issues. Send your articles to the Editor, *Szyk Newsletter*, c/o The Arthur Szyk Society, 1200 Edgehill Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010

About the Society

The Arthur Szyk Society welcomes new members and offers a wide range of services to the educator, the private collector, and the professional art world. The Society is committed to rekindling and sustaining an interest in the art and messages of Arthur Szyk. Its purpose is to develop educational programs for schools and institutions, maintain a speaker's bureau, and encourage museum exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad.

The Society is dedicated to maintaining the integrity of Arthur Szyk's works and is consulted by major auction houses, dealers, and collectors on issues of authentication. The Society is committed to the renaissance of Arthur Szyk.

For membership information, contact:

THE ARTHUR SZYK SOCIETY
1200 EDGEHILL DRIVE BURLINGAME, CA 94010
TEL. 650.343.9588

Membership Benefits

- Two newsletters per year that include newsworthy and scholarly articles
- Occasional select photocopies of documents from the unpublished Arthur Szyk Archives
- Reduced fee for evaluation and/or authentication of Szyk art
- Discounts to exhibitions and lectures
- Discounts on educational materials distributed by The Arthur Szyk Society

Membership Categories:

\$25 - students or seniors

\$35 - contributing members

\$75 - institutions or dealers

The Arthur Szyk Society is a tax-exempt, non-profit educational foundation dedicated to the renaissance of Arthur Szyk.

Established in 1991 by its founder, George Gooche, the Society is represented by Board Members throughout the United States.



SOME NECKS . . .

One of the six images of Esky Cards published by *Esquire* Magazine in 1942. Stalin, Churchill, and F.D.R. loom large while small figures of Hitler and Mussolini are held by the seat of their pants. Hirohito is poised for action, while Roosevelt tells him "wait!!", holding up two fingers. This cartoon is based on a speech by Winston Churchill to the Canadian Parliament on December 30, 1941. On January 1, representatives of 26 nations, including the U.S., signed the Declaration of the United Nations, affirming Allied cooperation against the Axis. The original work of art, in full watercolor and gouache, is in the Collection of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY, and is being shown at the Spertus Museum exhibition: *Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk*.