



THE ARTHUR SZYK SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE RENAISSANCE
OF ARTHUR SZYK

Vol. 4 No. 1-2

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2003

SZYK EXHIBITION OPENS IN PORTLAND MAINE, AUGUST 26

University of New England Hosts "Justice Illuminated"

BURLINGAME, CA: The Society's traveling exhibition "Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk" will premiere on the East Coast this Fall at the University of New England Art Gallery in Portland, Maine, one and one-half hours north of Boston. The exhibition which will run from August 26 through October 26, 2003, consists of 32 high resolution photo-mural panels. The images focus on three major themes in Szyk's life work: World War II, America, and Jewish Response. Viewers will have an opportunity to engage Szyk, his mission and his messages, and see how they relate not only to the challenges of the past but also to the complexities of the present.

In addition, the University of New England will also exhibit, in a separate section (under the title of "The Art and Artistry of Arthur Szyk"), original Szyk watercolor and pen and ink drawings in subject areas unrelated to "Justice Illuminated". Several of these works have never before been exhibited in the United States, and are on loan through The Arthur Szyk Society. These originals, according to Gallery Director Anne B. Zill "will provide the visitor with the opportunity to experience first-hand Szyk's brilliant colors and intricate detail. Works from Szyk's 1920s Paris period as well as his post-WWII book illustrations will be on display" (See page 6 in this newsletter for a complete listing). An opening gallery program will take place on Tuesday evening, September 9 with The Society's exhibition curator, Irvin Ungar.



Samson in the Ghetto. New York, 1945. Szyk's tribute to the resistance fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Art Gallery is located on the Westbrook Campus of the University of New England, 716 Stevens Avenue, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 1-4PM; Thursday 1-7PM. For further information and/or to arrange for group visits, contact Anne B. Zill, Gallery Director at 207-797-7261 or Annebzill@aol.com.

"Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk" can be viewed online at szyk.org. A companion Study-Guide accompanies the exhibition and can be ordered through The Society's website.

Major Funding for the creation of "Justice Illuminated" was provided by the Helen & Sanford Diller Supporting Foundation of the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation Endowment Fund.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Commemorated

Szyk's "Samson in the Ghetto" featured work of art

The Arthur Szyk Society joined with the Holocaust Center of Northern California, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco in commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Yom HaShoah program on April 28th included participation by Holocaust survivors and their children, as well as remarks by The Honorable Yossi Amrani, Consul General of Israel.

The emotion-filled event was accompanied by a showing of The Society's traveling exhibition "Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk." Szyk's image of "Samson in the Ghetto" was used to publicize the community-wide gathering.

Between 1941-1943, underground resistance movements formed in about 100 Jewish groups, the most famous of which occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto. On April 19, 1943, approximately 750 inhabitants fought against German troops and police who had entered the ghetto with the intention of deporting all the Jews there (nearly 60,000 remained). The ghetto fighters were able to defend the ghetto for nearly a month, until May 16, when the Germans were finally able to crush the resistance.

Samson in the Ghetto

For Arthur Szyk, a native son of Poland, who lost his mother and brother in the Holocaust, the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto symbolized everything

continued on page 2

Letter from Board President, Dr. Charles S. Syers



THE ARTHUR SZYK SOCIETY
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Special thanks to Lynka Adams and Alex Lauterbach for their research, translation and description of the image of the *Polish King and Grand Duke of Lithuania*. Additional appreciation to Lynka for her description of "*Samson in the Ghetto*."



Dear members and friends,

Welcome to the spring/summer 2003 newsletter. We are pleased to report that The Society's traveling exhibition program, *Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk*, enjoyed a successful run at the University of California Berkeley Hillel. We are excited about the upcoming fall 2003 exhibition at the University of New England in Maine for *Justice Illuminated*. Recent showings of the exhibit, including the Yom Ha-Shoah commemoration at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, remind us that interest in Arthur Szyk is alive and growing.

We want to thank you, our members, for your ongoing support. We believe Szyk's art and the messages inherent in his work have powerful and poignant resonance for these times. Our campaign to raise awareness about Szyk and the important themes surrounding his work — themes of activism, justice, and tolerance — continues, and we encourage you to help us locate additional venues in your community that might benefit from a showing of *Justice Illuminated*. The historically significant and politically pertinent works are ideal for museums, galleries, universities, libraries, and community centers. Please contact us if you have identified a possible venue for the exhibition.

We hope you having an enjoyable summer.

With best wishes,
Dr. Charles S. Syers

Continued from page 1

most noble and unspeakably tragic. Szyk's painfully personal evocation of "Samson in the Ghetto" (painted in NY, 1945), in honor of the victims and survivors of this stupendous act of resistance is arguably one of the most important paintings of his career. Szyk had an unshakable belief in the idea of fighting back against injustice; that to give up on the ideal of freedom was far worse than eventual death. This painting appeared on the front cover of *Answer Magazine* (New York: Answer Publishing Co., April, 1945), marking the second anniversary of the Uprising.

Szyk chose the title for this image based upon the biblical Samson, who as representative of the few against the many, "*slew 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.*" Later, though blinded and shorn of his magical hair, he killed 3000 more as well as himself — "*May I perish with the enemy*" — by pulling the temple down upon them all. Szyk shows his brave and desperate fellow Polish Jews in battle, fighting with guns, rocks, and barehands. There are young men and old, a woman and a child, sharing the last of their strength and resources to take down

as many German Philistines as possible. One German officer, an Iron Cross pinned to his chest, lies trampled beneath their feet. The centrally positioned patriot, clanking with weapons, holds up a broadside which reads [in German] "*Warsaw Ghetto, April 1943. Order for the troops to assassinate all Jews.*

Hail victory, the mark of death — Himmler, the Kingdom of Schicklgruber." Behind him flies the tattered blue and white Zionist flag, an homage to the future Jewish State as well as the sad face of Moses holding the Torah of his people. Woven into the painting's decorative border of yellow Stars of David and human skulls, Szyk has written "*To the German people, sons of Cain, be ye damned forever and ever, amen.*" This is a powerful curse, a ponderous malediction obviously meant to endure.

There is no forgiveness in Szyk for these atrocities. His aim was to force the world to remember, to acknowledge what transpired here. To never let it happen again, or in his own words: "*Every Jew now alive is the legatee of those who died to uphold the sanctity of the Name or dignity of his origin. Let us not profane their sacred memory by trying to hide the tragedy of our people.*" [Answer Magazine, April, 1945, p. 65]

"Every Jew now alive is the legatee of those who died to uphold the sanctity of the Name or dignity of his origin. Let us not profane their sacred memory by trying to hide the tragedy of our people."

— Arthur Szyk 1945

POLAND: ILLUMINATED BY ARTHUR SZYK

Paintings Characterize the Jewish Artist's Relationship to the Polish People



As a Polish Jew, Arthur Szyk was famously proud to be a son of Poland. • With his illuminated *Statute of Kalisz*, he advocated to 1930s Europe the early justice that was to be found in this Polish document, which guaranteed religious rights and civil liberties to medieval Jewry. • He dedicated his *Haggadah* as “Arthur Szyk, illuminator of Poland.” • In his *Polish American Fraternity* Szyk was committed to glorifying his fellow Poles in their contributions to America.



Statute of Kalisz Dedication Page. (Paris, ca. 1927). *The Statute of Kalisz* is Szyk's most important historic work, a 45 page illuminated manuscript that took 2 ½ years to complete. Reflecting the highest form of medieval manuscript illumination, this portfolio often has been called the “Jewish Magna Carta.” With the affirmation of civil and religious liberties and freedoms for Jews in 1264 by The Grand Duke of Poland, Boleslav the Pious, the Golden Age of Polish Jewry was initiated. In this work, Szyk illuminated the mutually beneficial relationship that flourished between Poles and Jews for hundreds of years. Szyk dedicated his portfolio to Joseph Pilsudski, the major force in the new Polish government (in the late 1920s) who pledged to integrate “the minorities” into Polish society, including the Jews. It was Szyk's hope that his *Statute of Kalisz* would remind Polish Society and the world at large of the document's original intent and the goodwill which flowed from it. Despite Szyk's exhibiting the manuscript throughout Poland, the world turned its back on European Jewry as WWII unfolded. The original paintings of the *Statute of Kalisz* are housed in The Jewish Museum, New York.



Haggadah Frontispiece Dedication Page. Lodz, 1936. *The Haggadah* is Arthur Szyk's most famous religious work consisting of 48 miniature paintings. One of the two dedication pages pays tribute to King George of England, where *The Haggadah* was published in 1940. In calligraphy, Szyk inscribes his name: “Arthur Szyk, illuminator of Poland.”

Casimir Pulaski [Father of the American Calvary during the American Revolution]. London, 1938. Exhibited in the Polish Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. One of 20 illustrations of Szyk's series entitled: “*Pictures From the Glorious Days of the Polish American Fraternity*” celebrating the contributions of Poles to America. These works were published as a series of postcards in Krakow in 1939 and were sold at the World's Fair.



***“We will not give up the land from which we came.
We will not let the Polish Nation be Germanized by force”***

In *Ink & Blood*, Szyk's 1946 book of drawings and illuminations commemorating the events of World War II, Szyk offers a number of artistic tributes to Allied countries by placing their historically significant leaders in a World War II setting. Queen Elizabeth, Joan of Arc, and Peter the Great are each shown with backdrops of planes and other modern wartime machinery.

Though it is not featured in *Ink & Blood*, Szyk's *Polish King and Grand Duke of Lithuania* shows a similar scene. The Polish King and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Wladyslaw Jagiello, who led a stirring victory of Polish and Lithuanian forces over invading German armies in 1410, strikes a pose of supreme strength, his right hand clasped around a ritualistic military shield while at his feet lies a bloody silver axe atop a German helmet. The modern airplanes in the upper right hand corner present an eerie sense of anachrony that Szyk explored with the aforementioned illuminations of symbolic cultural heroes. All of these illuminations provide proof of Szyk's deep appreciation of the free world's allies during World War II.

In the extreme upper left hand corner of his image of Jagiello, Szyk has written, in Polish, “*To the American People from the Polish Nation in a brotherhood of arms*”. Upon the red and white Eagle

shield is the inscription “*We will not give up the land from which we came. We will not let the Polish Nation be Germanized by force. We Polish Royal Piast nation.*” This text, taken from a Polish patriotic song, refers to the royal dynasty of Piast from the first half of the second millennium.

Along the handle of the axe at Jagiello's feet is written “*Polish ax, German head.*” Upon the black German eagle shield, Szyk has added in German “*You will not escape the People's vengeance.*” And nearby “*Lieold*” and “*Kreutz.*” This is perhaps a reference to the Knights of the Cross, a monastic fighting unit that led the German armies during the 1410 battle of Grunwald. (Kreutz is German for “cross”.) Hidden in the extreme lower left-hand corner is one word that provides a powerful summation to all the others: “*Thieves.*”

In this painting, Szyk uses the nobility of that historic military victory, one-half millennium earlier, as a metaphor representing the continuity of “right over might” against yet another aggressive German invasion during WWII. This image of the Polish king reflects Szyk's passion for justice as right spanning all centuries. It is currently on exhibition at the University of New England Art Gallery.



Polish King and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Original watercolor and gouache illumination. New York, 1942. Dedicated by Szyk to the American People in its World War II struggle against Germany.

**Szyk's Attitude Toward Poland at the beginning of WWII
Recorded in a January 1940 letter to the British newspaper Free Europe:**

“Polish Jews have always called the Germans ‘Amalek’, a term which requires no explanations to anyone who knows his Bible. The Jews have not always realized that the Germans are their implacable enemies. The history of the German Drang nach Osten [Drive to the east] is closely connected with the problem of destroying Jewry in Eastern Europe. The Jews, owing to their commercial abilities, have always been an obstacle on the road of German economic expansion in the East...A similar situation was observed in Poland, where, especially after the death of Marshal Pilsudski, the ruling group practiced a new type of anti-Semitism, which however was not a product of Polish origin. It was an export article from Germany, who during the last few years has pursued a policy of sapping the strength of the countries of Eastern and south-Eastern Europe by a threefold method: by encouraging the governments of so-called ‘strong men’ opposed to democratic ‘anarchy’; by organizing ‘fifth columns’ from among members of the German minorities; and by stirring up anti-

Semitism of the exterminatory brand...Under the sledge-hammer blows of their traditional enemy both the Poles and the Jews are bleeding, and from their common suffering a new spirit of mutual understanding, tolerance, and collaboration will arise...May this purgatory through which both the Polish and the Jewish people are now passing be a warning. The time of hatred belongs in the past.” — Arthur Szyk

Szyk pledged his support to the Polish government-in-exile in England, who together with the British, favored Szyk's traveling to the United States to bring the face of “War and Kultur” in Poland to the Western world. Szyk later turned on the Polish government-in-exile whose tactics, in 1943, appeared to him as anti-Semitic and fascist. [For more background on Szyk's attitudes toward Poland and its leaders, see “*Art and Politics of Arthur Szyk*”, USHMM, pp.71-76]. Szyk's deep loyalty to Poland itself likely remained the same.

Allies of America featured in *Ink & Blood*

Below are three of the illuminations which appear (in color) at the beginning of *Ink & Blood*, preceding Szyk's caricatures and cartoons, most of which are pen and ink drawings.



ENGLAND. **Queen Elizabeth.** Plate I. New York, 1942.



FRANCE. **Joan of Arc.** Plate II. New York, 1942.



RUSSIA. **Peter the Great.** Plate III. New York, 1943.

Murder, Inc. Hirohito, Hitlerhito, and Benito. Plate V, *Ink & Blood*. Originally appeared as front cover illustration for *Collier's* magazine, February 14, 1942.



they did not appear in book format until 1946, when *Ink & Blood* was dedicated as a Peace Book and not as a War Book. Arthur Szyk's *Ink & Blood* is his personal response to the German phrase "Blood & Iron."

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT SZYK

On *Ink & Blood*:

"Of all the books produced by the present war, there is no one more certain to be alive two hundred years from now. Just as we turn back to Hogarth and Goya for the living images of their age, so our descendents will turn back to Arthur Szyk for the most graphic history of Hitler and Hirohito and Mussolini. Here is the damning essence of what has happened; here is the piercing summary of what men have thought and felt about it."

— Carl Van Doren (1885-1950), American editor and author

On *The New Order*:

"I know of no other instance in which the decorative apparatus of miniature painting has been combined with the onslaught of direct cartooning to produce an instrument of such deadly effectiveness."

— Thomas Craven (1889-1969), Author and art critic

INK & BLOOD

A BOOK OF DRAWINGS

BY ARTHUR SZYK

WITH A PREFATORY TEXT

BY STRUTHERS BURT



New York

THE HERITAGE PRESS

1946

Ink & Blood, a Book of Drawings by Arthur Szyk. New York: Heritage Press, 1946. Seventy-Four color and black and white plates. Limited to 1000 copies, each signed by Arthur Szyk.

Most of the cartoons, lampooning the Nazis and Japanese, were drawn by Szyk during WWII with the hope that they would be published in a single volume giving voice and expression to the ugly face of war. While they were published in newspapers and magazines,

~ SZYK IN THE NEWS ~

“Arthur Szyk (1894-1951) was the virtuoso caricaturist of World War II”

— *The New York Times*, Dec. 1, 2002

Summer 2002

Art News review of *The Art and Politics of Arthur Szyk* exhibit at the United States Holocaust Museum which ran through October, 2002.

Excerpt: “After the war, Szyk redoubled his efforts to remind people of the horrors of the Holocaust, and continued to press for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He combined superb artistic skills and unquenchable passion. This splendid, comprehensive display underscores why Eleanor Roosevelt called Szyk a “one-man army.”

December 1, 2002

The New York Times Book Review on *The Art of Politics of Arthur Szyk* (United States Holocaust Museum).



Excerpt: “Arthur Szyk (1894-1951) was the virtuoso caricaturist of World War II. He eviscerated his prey, yet his images were curiously beautiful, like paintings by Bosch or drawings from Dürer. He rendered Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Himmler, Mussolini and Hirohito as buffoons, inflating their features into indictments of evil, yet his images are so precisely detailed that it is difficult not to be seduced by their majesty.”

atures into indictments of evil, yet his images are so precisely detailed that it is difficult not to be seduced by their majesty.”

Spring 2003

Eye Magazine (The International Review of Graphic Design) article on *The Art and Politics of Arthur Szyk*.



Excerpt: “Anyone who admires the art of satirical distortion, the power of acerbic humor, or the ferocity of anti-Nazi propaganda must hold the legacy of Arthur Szyk in high esteem... He expressed revulsion for his enemies, yet his images had a curious caustic beauty. Szyk's work was startling at the time, and today exemplifies how a committed artist can make a mark on public perception.”

March 7, 2003

The International Jerusalem Post Arts section, “*The Pen as Sword*.”

Excerpt: “Bereft of modern pigments and instruments, Szyk worked with pen and ink combined with watercolor and gouache, achieving an extraordinary richness of color and a remarkable control of the myriad figures and details in his many historic and contemporary battle scenes. Szyk, an otherwise brilliant technician, wielded his pen like a club, demonizing Axis leaders, particularly Japanese ones, while idealizing his heroes, Polish, American and Jewish. His morale-boosting posters were as popular with American servicemen as pinups of actress Betty Grable. At one point, Szyk's posters were seen in 500 servicemen's recreation centers.”

April 2003

Bible Review Magazine article on “Beasts or Bugs: Solving the Problem of the Fourth Plague” featured Szyk's illustration from *The Haggadah*.

And... A BLAST FROM SZYK PAST

The following is an excerpt from a July 20, 1941 article in the *Book Review* section of *The New York Times*. The review was on *The New Order*, a collection of cartoons by Szyk accompanied with an introduction by Roger W. Straus Jr. The book was published as part of G. P. Putnam's *Sons Current History* series and sold for \$1.50.

“Arthur Szyk, famous Polish artist, is well known in Europe and America as an illustrator and also for his work in illumination. In cartoons he continues with ferocious descriptive skill to be an illustrator, and with sad ruthlessness of veracity he subjects the New Order to the illumination of the X-ray. Here is the terrible bestiality of today's aggression, set forth with polished and relentless art...Not with the simplicity of caricature but with a medieval sedulousness of detail, these pictures portray the world's tragedy...the perfection of these remarkable drawings is the artists weapon in humanity's fight.”



WE WILL NEVER DIE PAGEANT COMMEMORATED ON 60TH ANNIVERSARY

In December 1942, Arthur Szyk, working with the Committee for a Jewish Army (an activist group headed by Peter Bergson, a Zionist emissary from Palestine), created an image representing the Jewish soldier coming to the aid of his fallen brethren in Europe. "Tears of Rage" depicts a soldier holding an American-made submachine gun above his head in a gesture of defiance and anger while cradling a dying Jew clutching a Torah in his hands, with a swastika-embazoned bayonet buried in his back. In front of the figures are a woman holding onto her murdered child, a beleaguered older woman, and a handcuffed man pleading mournfully.

This image was featured prominently in the Bergson Group's literature, including the cover of the program brochure for "We Will Never Die," a theatrical pageant that sought to raise American public awareness of the Holocaust in 1943. The pageant was authored by Academy Award-winning screenwriter Ben Hecht ("Gone with the Wind," "Scarface"), directed by Moss Hart, and featured an original score by Kurt Weill.

The two opening performances at Madison Square Garden, starring Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni, and Sylvia Sydney, were viewed by over 40,000 people. It also played to large audiences in Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, the Hollywood Bowl, and, most importantly, in Washington, D.C., where the audience included First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, six

Supreme Court justices, several hundred Members of Congress, and numerous members of the international diplomatic corps. The First Lady later wrote about the performance in her syndicated column. Thanks to "We Will Never Die," hundreds of thousands of Americans for the first time learned about the Nazi genocide.

Bringing the issue to public attention was the first crucial step in the year-long Bergson protest campaign that eventually resulted, in January 1944, in the creation of the War Refugee Board, a U.S. government agency that helped save the lives of over 200,000 European Jews by sponsoring the work of Raoul Wallenberg and other rescue activities.

[Thanks to Dr. Byron Sherwin (Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies) and Dr. Rafael Medoff (director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies), whose research provided background information for this article. On April 10, 2003, the Wyman Institute and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington commemorated the 60th anniversary of the Washington performance of "We Will Never Die" with a public program in the prestigious House Judiciary Committee meeting room. Original newsreel footage of the 1943 pageant was shown, and portions of the script were read aloud by U.S. Congressman

Robert Wexler and Peter Bergson's daughter, Prof. Rebecca Kook of Ben-Gurion University. For further information about the commemoration and about the Wyman Institute, contact: Rafaelmedoff@aol.com]



Szyk Originals on display at University of New England Art Gallery August 26 - October 26

Portrait of a Jewish Woman
[Julia Szyk]. Paris, 1926

Le Talisman. Paris, 1927

Pacte De La Societe des Nations
[League of Nations]. Paris, 1931

Polish King
[Grand Duke of Lithuania]. New York, 1942

Hello... New York, 1943

Great Claus and Little Claus
[Andersen's Fairy Tales]. New York, 1943

The Manciple
[The Canterbury Tales]. New York, 1945

Christmas and New Year Wishes. New Canaan, 1946

Sinbad's Seventh Voyage
[Arabian Nights Entertainments]. New Canaan, 1948

Bolivar and Sucre at Junin. New Canaan, 1950

Szyk Program at Northern California Holocaust Center:

As part of a community-wide day of learning about the Holocaust sponsored by The Holocaust Center of Northern California, curator Irvin Ungar of The Arthur Szyk Society led a slide-oriented workshop on the art of Arthur Szyk. The program took place on April 27, 2003 at the Jewish Community High School of the Bay in San Francisco.

Art and Politics enters third printing: The United States Holocaust Museum's exhibition book, *The Art and Politics of Arthur Szyk*, has gone into its third printing. The book includes the work shown at the museum's Szyk exhibit, which closed after a seven-month run last October. To order a copy of the book, go visit museum's website at www.ushmm.org or call The Society office at (650) 343-9588.

The Study Guide to Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk, can be purchased from The Arthur Szyk Society for \$15. Please call (650) 343-9588 or email info@szyk.org to order.

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Philip Westerman - Grand Rapids, MI

Information Sought on Ink & Blood image

Society member Eugene Seger of Detroit, Michigan is attempting to locate the newspaper or magazine in which the *Ink & Blood* plate 54 (LIV), "The Key to French Africa," appeared. The *Ink & Blood* Acknowledgements page incorrectly states that this image previously appeared in *Collier's* magazine. E-mail The Society if you can help.



Looking toward the future

Growth is crucial in order to responsibly accommodate the new demands and increased public interest in The Society and the art and social messages of Arthur Szyk. Our programs, newsletters, exhibitions, and other events need your continued support. Please join us in helping to promote public awareness of Szyk's body of work by renewing your membership. Your membership contribution is tax-deductible. And don't forget to share with us names of institutions in your community for whom you think our traveling exhibition program might be a suitable venue for future exhibits. We sincerely appreciate your ongoing support.

Visit szyk.org for links to online Arthur Szyk exhibitions

**THE ARTHUR SZYK SOCIETY
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"I am a soldier. You seldom hear of art as an army in this country. That is my purpose. There is a saying, 'If Szyk is making cartoons, that means there is a war.' When it is over, I shall go back to my miniatures, but not before. You see, I do not believe art can afford to remain neutral in these times." — Arthur Szyk