

You can participate in promoting the legacy of Arthur Szyk by visiting our website [www.szyk.org](http://www.szyk.org), and clicking on “Support Us” or the “Make a Donation” button.



# The Arthur Szyk Society

Dedicated to the 20th century master illuminator, miniature painter and activist-artist

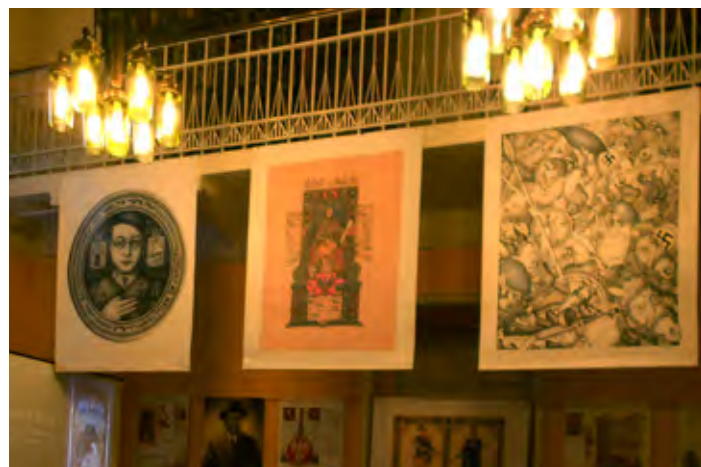
Vol. 12

Newsletter

March 2013

## On the International Front Poland, Lithuania, France, and Canada Host Exhibitions, Lectures & Symposium

Following Szyk exhibitions in 2011 in Łódź and Kraków (organized under the inspiration and guidance of Joanna Podolska of the Łódź Dialogue Center, and Dr. Aleksander Skotnicki of the Kraków Stradom Dialogue Center and Jagiellonian University), Arthur Szyk continued to reemerge in Poland in 2012. Joanna arranged her Łódź exhibition to travel to Warsaw and then on to Lviv (Lvov), and beyond Poland to Vilnius (Vilna), Lithuania. Joanna also traveled to Paris to lecture on Szyk. She additionally raised money to have the Polish exhibition catalogue “Arturas Szykas” translated into English! Aleksander expanded upon his Kraków exhibition at the Dialogue Center and opened a very comprehensive exhibition at the Palace of Art in Kraków. He is also the inspiration for the symposium and exhibition (YouTube.com/watch?v=rwndtwbqNlw) “Ink and Blood” held in Montreal, Canada, at the McLennan-Redpath Library at McGill University (Nov. 26, 2012–January 31, 2013). And following his discovery at the Jagiellonian of the Szyk presentation copy of the *Statute of Kalisz* inscribed to Prime Minister Ignacy Jan Paderewski, he arranged for publication of a facsimile edition in Kraków in December 2012. The Szyk Society provided digital images from our Image Database which made it possible to create the reproduction works of art shown in these venues and publications. The Society wishes to extend its continued thanks to our Polish colleagues in their efforts to enhance Szyk’s prestige internationally.

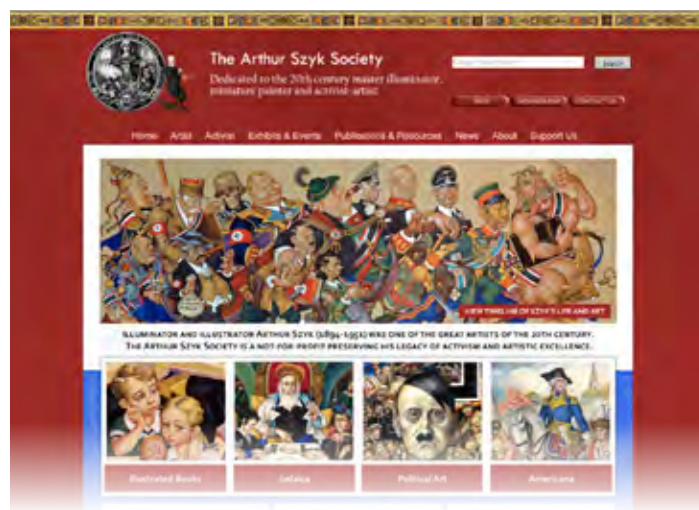


Vilnius Exhibition at Wroblewski Library

See page 14 for dates and exhibition venues in Poland and Lithuania.

## New Szyk Website Called “An Interactive Tour de Force”

More than 10 slideshows, 300 images, videos, essays, and up-to-date Szyk events



New Website Homepage: [www.szyk.org](http://www.szyk.org)

In our connected world, more than two billion people work and play online each and every day. To more effectively share the legacy of Arthur Szyk with students, educators, scholars, and art lovers around the world, The Society has invested two years to research and develop a robust, effective web presence.

Former *New York Times* art director Steven Heller has already declared the new Szyk.org “an interactive tour de force.” The website is an immersive, multimedia experience that serves as an all-in-one source for accurate information on Szyk’s life and art not found anywhere else. Visitors can view short films, explore topical slideshows, and read numerous original essays to enrich their understanding of the twentieth century’s most compelling activist-artist. Scholars and serious enthusiasts will appreciate the biographical timeline and comprehensive bibliography of books illustrated by Szyk.

Though fans of Szyk’s art will find images of many of their favorite works throughout the site, most of the images are online for the first time. Plus, in the coming years, The Society website will become home to the thousands of original artworks, photographs, and other important material catalogued in the Arthur Szyk Image Database.

As any website is better experienced than described, Society members and friends are encouraged to visit Szyk.org—and spread the word about the most comprehensive Szyk resource to date.



# The Arthur Szyk Society

A NOT-FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATION

1200 Edgehill Drive  
Burlingame, CA 94010  
Tel: 650.343.9588  
Fax: 650.579.6014  
info@szyk.org  
www.szyk.org

■

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sander L. Stadler  
*President*

Wayne Feinstein  
*Vice President*

Charles S. Syers  
*President Emeritus*

Pamela H. Stein  
*Secretary*

Irvin Ungar  
*Curator*

Allison Chang  
Alex Lauterbach  
John F. Rothmann

## HONORARY BOARD

Alexandra Szyk Bracic  
*Daughter of Arthur Szyk*

Theodore Bikel  
Reverend DeeDee M. Coleman  
Stanisław Obirek, Ph.D.  
Father John T. Pawlikowski  
Rabbi Jacob and Margie Pressman  
Art Spiegelman  
Paul Von Blum  
Elie Wiesel

## SOCIETY COORDINATOR

Jesse Boardman Kauppila

## IMAGE DATABASE MANAGER

David Chu

## NEWSLETTER STAFF

Allison Chang  
Jesse Boardman Kauppila  
Irvin Ungar  
Irene Morris Design




## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends of The Arthur Szyk Society,

The year of 2012 was an eventful one at The Arthur Szyk Society marked most significantly by the launch of our new website: [szyk.org](http://szyk.org). This Fall brought back-to-back exhibitions in Poland, Lithuania, and Canada as well as a symposium, numerous academic articles, and many lectures.

Even as we continue to promote Szyk's work we are constantly supporting others in their creation of Szyk-related activities. With our website we are able to provide an introduction to Szyk as well as pathways to the most detailed facets of his work and life. Our digital Image Database, which has been numerous years in the making, is the definitive resource for all Szyk artwork and this year, with your financial help, we hope to make it accessible to the public for free. Please support our efforts by going to [www.szyk.org](http://www.szyk.org), and click on the button that says "Support Us" or "Make a Donation" to share Arthur Szyk with the world.



— Sandy Stadler

## Staff Changes at The Society: *The best of both worlds!*



After more than four and one-half years as Society coordinator, now Szyk expert, author, and facilitator **Allison Chang** has retired to become the Executive Assistant

to the Director and Special Projects Coordinator at Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University. Her creation, design, writing, and execution of the new Szyk Society website [www.szyk.org](http://www.szyk.org) serves as the pinnacle of her accomplishments during her tenure at the Society. Allison's clarity of purpose, her attention to detail, and her ability to conceptualize all aspects of the Szyk plan made her so invaluable. She participated and served as a liaison for the major exhibitions in both Berlin (2008) at the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the San Francisco Palace of the Legion of Honor (2011). We can say that we will miss her, BUT Allison has agreed to serve on our Society Board. We now have the best of both worlds! ■ We also wish to thank **Stacey Miller**, who for close to nine months (time enough to have a baby, which she did!) for all of our work on our Image Database. Stacey brought her strong background ([www.StaceyMillerPhotography.com](http://www.StaceyMillerPhotography.com)) to her knowledge of scanning and database description. Thanks, Stacey! ■



As we continue to move forward, we are pleased to welcome aboard **Jesse Boardman Kauppila**, who has assumed the position of Society Coordinator. Having worked extremely

closely with Allison during her transition, Jesse hit the job running, fully up to date on all matters Szyk. Jesse is a graduate of Reed College where he studied Art History. He comes to us from Studio Catherine Wagner, where he managed large scale public art projects, the photographic practice, and professorial duties of this San Francisco artist and Mills College professor. He is also a practicing artist ([www.jessekauppila.com](http://www.jessekauppila.com)). ■ And finally, we are delighted to welcome **David Chu** as our new Image



Database manager. David is a graduate of Brown University. He also serves as a freelance editor of scholarly publications.



## Steven Heller on the Szyk Renaissance and New Website

**D**esign writer extraordinaire and former *New York Times* art director Steven Heller has written two articles on Arthur Szyk in 2012 for *The Daily Heller*, his column for *Imprint*, the online branch of *Print* magazine. The first of these articles provides an outstanding introduction to Arthur Szyk's career and his place within design history. The in-depth article goes on to detail the development of the Szyk renaissance. The second article calls to public attention the new Society website.

Heller writes that “[Arthur Szyk’s] World War II anti-fascist imagery was comparable to Goya’s *Disasters of War*,” a distinction, indeed, given that Goya’s series is widely regarded as the greatest anti-war art ever created. Heller goes on to describe the arc of Szyk’s career and the posthumous wane of Szyk’s fame amid the “art brut and neo-expressionistic raw-edged mannerisms” of the 70’s and 80’s.”

Heller then describes the reasons for Szyk’s recent rise in popularity. He passionately describes the vibrancy of Szyk’s “neon colors.” He also highlights Szyk’s social prescience, quoting Harry Katz, former art curator at the Library of Congress: “Rockwell and most of his contemporaries lagged behind Szyk in their awareness of and concern for social justice and civil liberties.” He also writes about the role of The Arthur Szyk Society in forging the Szyk renaissance.

Upon the launch of The Arthur Szyk Society’s new website, Heller’s second essay entitled, “*For Szyk Devotees*” enthusiastically reviews the Szyk website. Heller highlights the quality of the slideshows in particular, writing that the website is “an interactive tour de force.”

Heller’s articles can be read in their entirety at: <http://imprint.printmag.com/daily-heller/arthur-szyk-pronounced-schick/>

<http://imprint.printmag.com/daily-heller/for-szyk-devotees/>

Steven Heller is one of the leading art critics in America specializing in graphic design. Serving for over 30 years as an art director at the *New York Times* and the *Book Review*, Steve wears many hats. He serves as MFA Designer as Author program at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. For over two decades he has been contributing editor to *Print*, *Eye*, *Baseline*, and *I.D.* magazines, has had contributed hundreds of articles, critical essays, and columns (including his interview column “Dialogue” in *Print*) to numerous other design and culture journals. ■ As editor of the *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design* he published scores of critical and journalistic essays on design, and currently as editor of *AIGA VOICE: Online Journal of Design*, he continues to help build a critical vocabulary for the field. Steve is also the author, co-author, and/or editor of over 100 books on design and popular culture. ■ The Arthur Szyk Society highly encourages its readers to follow his regular blogs at *The Daily Heller* <http://imprint.printmag.com/daily-heller/>. Steve has written numerous articles about Arthur Szyk over the years, and we are grateful for his interest, insight and support!

## Notable Szyk and Goya Exhibits Appearing Concurrently at Telfair Academy

On May 12, 1943, the *Savannah News* in Georgia reported on the gala opening of two exhibits running concurrently at the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences in Savannah. One consisted of etchings, aquatints, and dry-points of the eighteenth-century Spanish artist Francisco de Goya, while the other presented the contemporary political art of Polish-Jewish master illustrator and painter Arthur Szyk. The Szyk works on display, which had been

published in 1941 as the book *The New Order*, commented on the people and events leading up to World War II. The two exhibitions at Telfair Academy shared a theme of artists’ applying their talents to examine and uncover the effects of war. The writer of the *Savannah News* article noted of the two collections, “Both groups, although very different, have the war of dictators as their theme.”



*Savannah News*, 1943.



*Disasters of War*, 1810-1820.

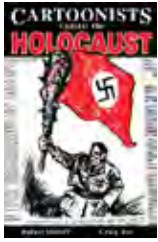


*Christ of Nations*, London, 1939.

*“Of all the works 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 descendants will turn back to Arthur Szyk for the most graphic history of Hitler and Hirohito and Mussolini.”*

— Carl Van Doren, New York art critic, 1946.

# Cartoonists Against the Holocaust



At a time when most of the world preferred to look away, a handful of political cartoonists tried to alert the American public to the horrors of the Holocaust and the need for action to rescue

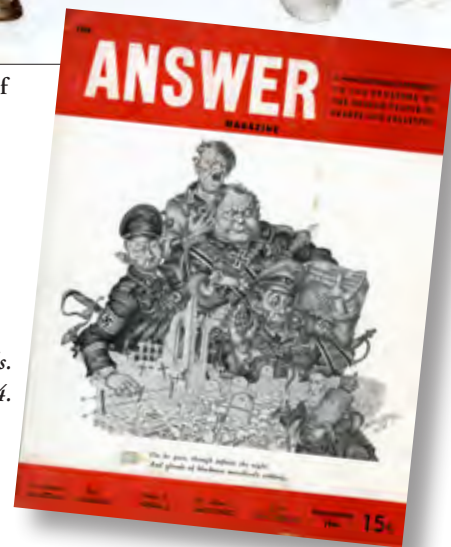
Jewish refugees from the Nazis. “Cartoonists Against the Holocaust,” to be published in 2013, will bring together more than 100 of these rare political cartoons, accompanied by historical explanations and commentary. View the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, the voyage of the refugee ship *St. Louis*, the struggle over America’s refugee policy, and other landmark events of the Holocaust—through the eyes of Dr. Seuss, Arthur Szyk, and other legendary artists and cartoonists.

Coauthors Dr. Rafael Medoff (founding director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies and author of 15 books) and Craig Yoe (noted comics historian, editor, and former creative director for Jim Henson’s Muppets) have created a remarkable book—one that will fascinate and educate the general public, while at the same time serving as a powerful textbook for high schools. Numerous works of Arthur Szyk are highlighted in this publication.

For information on sponsoring the distribution of copies to your local school, please contact: [rafaelmedoff@aol.com](mailto:rafaelmedoff@aol.com)

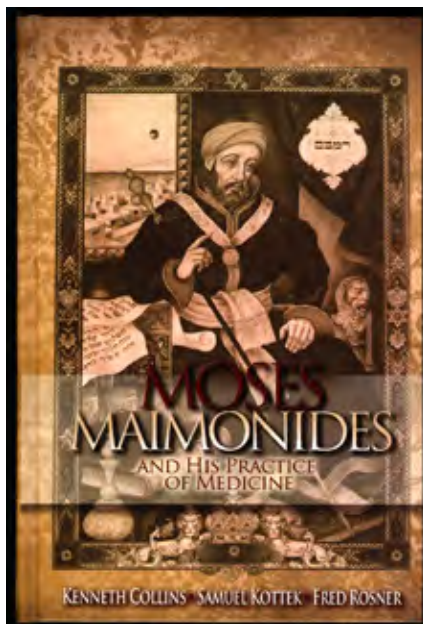


To be Shot as Dangerous Enemies of the Third Reich. PM Newspaper, December 14, 1943.



Hitler, Goering, Goebbels. The Answer, November, 1944.

## Moses Maimonides on cover of Medical History Book



The Maimonides Research Institute has published (January 2013) a contemporary evaluation of medieval scholar and physician Moses Maimonides’ medical practice. The book was edited by medical historians Kenneth Collins, Samuel Kottek, and Fred Rosner. Szyk’s 1950 portrait of Moses Maimonides graces the cover of the book. The image comes from Szyk’s series of decorative portraits of biblical and important personages from Jewish history.



Spinoza



Abravanel



Caro

*Moses Maimonides, philosopher, theologian, physician, & codifier of Jewish law, was the pre-eminent intellectual Jewish figure in the Middle Ages.*

*In addition to Maimonides, Arthur Szyk also painted the other great jurist and legal expert, Joseph Caro. Szyk also drew portraits of Jewish scholars, Issac Abravanel and Baruch Spinoza. The artist’s knowledge of Jewish history was endless!*

**World War II Magazine  
Features Szyk**



**Arsenal of Democracy II.**  
*New York, 1942.*

*World War II*, published by the Weider History Group featured a four-page illustrated spread in its November/December 2012 issue written by its editor, Karen Jensen. Entitled “Propagandist for the Allies: An artist’s one-man war against evil,” the article introduced the public to Szyk’s illustrations of a bloated Herman Goering wishing he had purchased US Savings Bonds, an American soldier and factory worker standing side by side promoting production of military armaments, and *Key to French Africa* in which Szyk portrays Hitler as a sultan to whom the Vichy French are bowing in admiration while surrounded by admirers Himmler, Mussolini, and Tojo.



**“Confidentially, Since Stalingrad,  
I Too Buy U.S War Bonds.”**  
*New York, 1943.*

The article can be read in its entirety at:  
[http://www.szyk.org/documents/  
PropagandistfortheAllies.pdf](http://www.szyk.org/documents/PropagandistfortheAllies.pdf)

**Decoding *Key to French Africa*, New York, 1942**

In *Key to French Africa* Szyk demonstrates his remarkable prowess as a political cartoonist, creating a complex image laden with meaning and aesthetic appeal. The richly colored brocade of Hitler’s tunic and the many ornamented daggers and swords, medals, jewels, tassels and fans adorning the assembled men serve to create a lush visual experience. The circular composition of figures, rising steadily from the crouching figure of Pierre Laval, and culminating in the centrally seated figure of Hitler, draws the



viewer’s eye into the cartoon where they are confronted with Szyk’s grim vision of Axis greed and corruption.

In the image, Hitler sits cross-legged and reclining on a plush pillow, wearing traditional garb typical of the North African region. Perched atop his head, a red fez with a crescent moon and swastika proclaim the swastika’s dominance over the crescent moon, which symbolizes both the Islamic faith and the North African territory. His bulging eyes and downturned mouth reveal him to be a fanatical and dangerous man. Crouched before him the Prime Minister of France, a disheveled looking Pierre Laval, bends as though kissing the ground. A bag labeled “30 silver pieces” protrudes from his pants pocket. Thirty silver pieces was the sum of money that Judas received for betraying Jesus in the Bible, and has great significance as a symbol of treachery and betrayal. On his left, a bottle of alcohol bears a label reading: “Vichy état, source Boche.” “Boche” was a disparaging slang word used to refer to German soldiers during World War I and World War II. Thus, the label can

be read as a tongue-in-cheek joke on Szyk’s part: “Vichy state: source Boche.” On Laval’s right, Marshal Pétain, the Chief of the French State and a French war hero, extends an offering to Hitler: a giant golden key. Dangling from the key, a tag reads: “Vichy Africa.” This interaction illustrates the Vichy complicity with, and subservience to, Hitler’s agenda as they hand over the key to their colonies in Northern Africa. Flanking Hitler, the ghoulish faces of Benito Mussolini and Hideki Tojo, the leaders of Italy and Japan, represent other Nazi allies and the long reach of Hitler’s power. On Hitler’s left, Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the German SS, stands with one hand pointing upwards and one palm extended to indicate Hitler. In renderings of Biblical themes throughout history, this pose is commonly used to point out a divine presence or event for the audience. Himmler gesticulates towards the heavens with his index finger, implying Hitler’s divine ordination as ruler.

Thanks to Francesca Du Brock for the decoding of this image.

## Library of Congress Exhibits Szyk's Playing Card Art



In its marvelous exhibition, “Words Like Sapphires: 100 Years of Hebraica at the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress 1912-2012” (October 25, 2012–March 16, 2013), *Heroes of Ancient Israel: The Playing Card Art of Arthur Szyk* (Historicana, 2011) is included among the many priceless gems on view from the Library’s outstanding collection. Curated by Peggy K. Pearlstein, Head, Hebraic Section, with the guidance of Dr. Michael Grunberger (Director, Collections at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) the exhibition can be viewed online at <http://myloc.gov/exhibitions/words-like-sapphires/pages/default.aspx>.

The Library’s Hebrew and Yiddish collection beginnings can be traced to Jacob H. Schiff’s gift in 1912 of nearly

10,000 books and pamphlets. In the century since Schiff’s initial gift, the Library has expanded its Hebraic holdings to nearly 200,000 works in Hebrew and related languages.

## Richard McBee on Reading Szyk’s Cards

In November, writer and artist Richard McBee’s article “Reading Szyk’s Cards” appeared in *The Jewish Press.com*. The article is a review of Arthur Szyk’s playing cards and accompanying companion volume. McBee provides an interesting formal analysis of the cards and Szyk’s depictions of these heroes of ancient Israel.

In conclusion McBee writes, “Arthur Szyk’s “Playing Card Art” is a sensitive survey of what it means to be a Jewish hero [...] the artist has presented a greatly nuanced view of Jewish leadership and its consequences, all in a format in which one can settle down to a friendly game of poker while pondering the complexity of Jewish history.”



*Heroes of Ancient Israel: The Playing Card Art of Arthur Szyk*  
by Allison Claire Chang

To view McBee’s article in its entirety, visit: <http://www.jewishpress.com/sections/arts/reading-szyks-cards/2012/11/23/>

*“I am indebted to the excellent catalogue by Allison Claire Chang on this series for background and historical perspective.”*

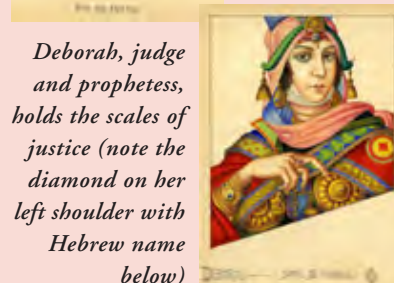
—Richard McBee

## Wall Street Journal features Szyk’s Cards

In a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* (Nov. 28, 2012), Diane Cole highlights David, the “King of Clubs” and Deborah, the “Queen of Diamonds” from Arthur Szyk’s playing card art.



*David, shown with the Star of David, holds his harp (note the club on his right shoulder next to his Hebrew name)*



*Deborah, judge and prophetess, holds the scales of justice (note the diamond on her left shoulder with Hebrew name below)*

Entitled “Reading Resilience” Cole discusses three simultaneous exhibitions featuring Jewish historic texts and illuminated treasures.

These exhibitions in New York and Washington, D.C. include “Crossing Borders: Manuscripts from The Bodleian Libraries,” at The Jewish Museum (NY), through Feb. 3, 2013; “The People in the Books,” at Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript library, through Jan. 25, 2013; and “Words Like Sapphires: 100 Years of Hebraica,” at The Library of Congress, through March 16, 2013.

Of the tens of thousands of Judaic and Hebraic historic treasures represented in these institutions, it is particularly newsworthy that Arthur Szyk and his art has received special recognition by being cited in the *Wall Street Journal*.

To view the Wall Street Journal article in its entirety, visit: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204712904578094932986256770.html>

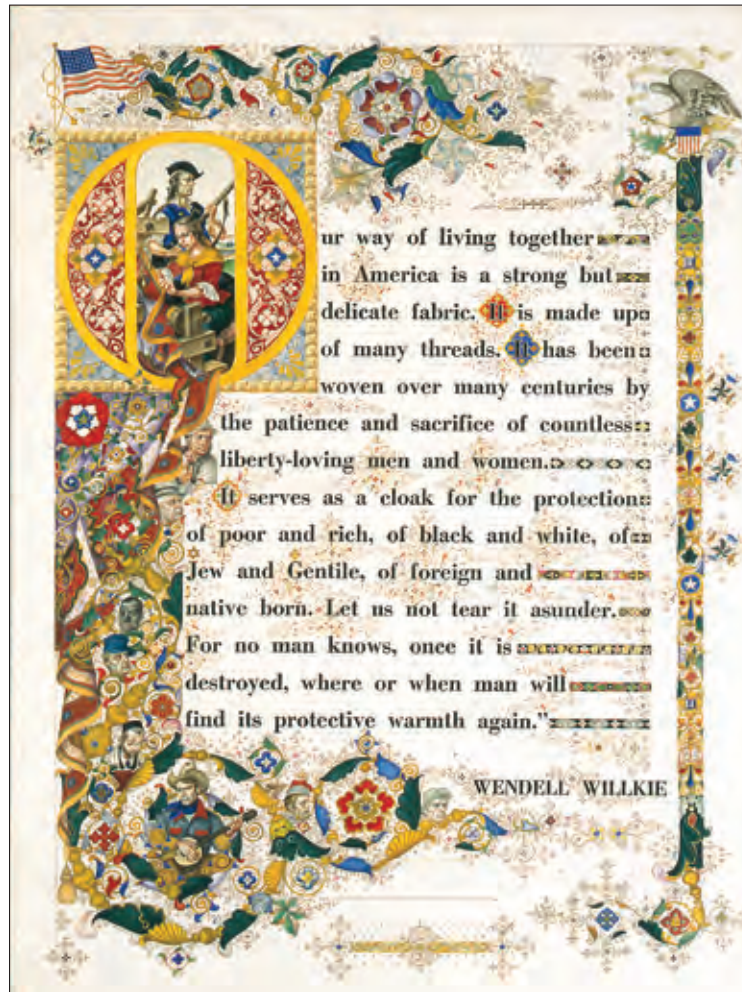
## “The Fabric of America through the Art of Arthur Szyk” presented at the Library of Congress

It is Election Day, Tuesday, November 6, 2012. While all of the nation and Washington, DC itself was preparing to select the new President of the United States, the largest Library in the world, the Library of Congress, was preparing for a talk that very day, entitled “The Fabric of America through the Art of Arthur Szyk.” Szyk, who immigrated to America in 1940 and became an American citizen in 1948, was a great lover of the United States and its ideals of freedom and justice. Surely, as a political artist and activist, he would have plenty to say about the values of America, then and now. Szyk’s visual commentary was presented in the form of a powerpoint lecture by Society curator, Irvin Ungar. Just two years ago, Irvin was invited to the Library of Congress to speak about *The Szyk Haggadah*, and in 2000, he spoke at the opening of the Library’s new millenium exhibition “Arthur Szyk: Artist for Freedom.”

The lecture, “The Fabric of America through the Art of Arthur Szyk,” featured Szyk’s art as it related to the following sections/subject areas: Cornerstones of Democracy (e.g. Declaration of Independence), Guardians of Democracy (e.g. George Washington with his Soldiers), Standing up to Tyranny (e.g. *The New Order*), Fighting Diseases: An Enemy of Another Kind (e.g. racism, cancer, venereal disease), Strengthening Alliances—Building Coalitions (e.g. Pacte of the League of Nations), Calling on Big Business as a Partner (e.g. United States Steel and Coca Cola ads), Underwritten by Ethical Teachings & Moral Instruction (e.g. Hillel and Confucius), Questioning America (e.g. McCarthyism), and Fabric of American Life (e.g. illumination of Wendell Willkie). The illustrated talk included over 75 images.

To view the Fabric of America presentation by Irvin Ungar, go to: [http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=5718](http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=5718)

To view the Haggadah presentation by Irvin Ungar, go to: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuWzOu5NVlg&playnext=1&list=PL8380E6E40784E2A&feature=results\\_main](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuWzOu5NVlg&playnext=1&list=PL8380E6E40784E2A&feature=results_main)



Fabric of American Life, *New Canaan*, 1950.

*Wendell Willkie ran for President against FDR in the 1940 election.*



Coca-Cola Ad, *New York*, 1943.

*This advertisement also appeared in Polish.*

# Szyk & America

Original essay by Allison Claire Chang written exclusively for *The Arthur Szyk Society and Szyk.org*

Though Arthur Szyk always took pride in his Polish roots and Jewish heritage, he made it clear that America best reflected his personal ideals of freedom and self-determination. As he was nearly forty before his first visit to the United States, he came to love the country by reading its history, especially that of the American revolutionary era. For Szyk, the colonies' success in their war for independence from Great Britain was a beacon of hope for all oppressed peoples and nations, and the accomplishments of civil-military leaders like George Washington set the standard for future democracies.

The artist spent two years researching and creating the series *Washington and His Times*, which was published as a set of fine art prints in Vienna in 1932. One of his largest and most ambitious portfolio works, it included 38 paintings highlighting heroes and battles such as John Paul Jones and Bunker Hill. In 1933 the Polish government and the Federation of Polish Jews in America sponsored a touring exhibition of Washington and other Szyk works to several venues in the United States, including the Brooklyn Museum and the Library of Congress.

Szyk and his wife traveled with the tour for its seven-month run, an experience that only deepened the artist's love for the country of his ideals. During Szyk's sojourn in the U.S., Columbia Pictures commissioned him to create four illustrations for the yearbook *Columbia Marches On, 1934–1935*. Since Szyk always traveled with his painting supplies, he was able to complete the commission before returning to Poland. The highlight of his first trip to America was undoubtedly his receipt of the George Washington Bicentennial Medal. Presented in Washington D.C. by Congressman Sol Bloom, the medal was a "small expression of esteem and gratification for [his] efforts" in the marking the bicentennial of Washington's birth.

Several years later, the outbreak of World War II gave Szyk reason to return to the United States. Since his youth, in parallel with his fine art career, Szyk maintained a steady output of political art for both exhibition and mass publication. (For example, the twenty-three paintings of *The Glorious Days of the Polish American Fraternity*, a series celebrating historic Polish-American relations, was a key exhibit of the Polish Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York.)

*Essay continues on page 10*



*Szyk and his wife Julia arriving in New York, December, 1933.*



*This image of Woodrow Wilson was reproduced on a postcard printed in Kraków in 1939, and distributed at the World's Fair in Flushing Meadows, New York. The verso of the postcard reads, "28th President of the U.S.A. (1912-1920), dear to Poles for whose cause he fought in the 13th of his famous Fourteen Points of the 8th January 1918."*



*The Struggle on Concord Bridge, Washington and His Times. Paris, 1930.*



*Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Glorious Days of the Polish-American Fraternity. London, 1938.*



*Columbia Yearbook Cover, 1934-35. Three more images by Arthur Szyk appear in this annual fundraising journal. The artist's Columbia Marches On (opposite) serves as the title page. Szyk also illustrated the cover for the 1935-36 Yearbook; the original artwork is in the collection of the Library of Congress.*

Szyk's anti-Nazi caricatures, created in the late 1930s, while he was living in London, strongly impressed the British government as well as the Polish government-in-exile. The two governments collaborated to provide direct yet secret support for Szyk to immigrate to North America and create art to attract American support for Europe's war against Nazi Germany. In the summer of 1940 Szyk and his family embarked for Halifax, Nova Scotia, aboard the *SS Monarch*. As Szyk's daughter recalls, the ship traveled in a convoy, as its cargo included priceless treasures of the Polish state removed from the European continent for safekeeping.

Once he had settled in New York, Szyk's artistic output was truly astonishing. He produced hundreds if not thousands of original drawings and paintings for exhibition and reproduction. Within days of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's State of the Union speech, Szyk painted his own vision of the "Four Freedoms." (Two full years passed before Norman Rockwell completed his famous treatment of the same subject.) In early 1941, a collection of Szyk's anti-Nazi caricatures entitled *The New Order* was published to critical acclaim.

In October that same year the Palace of the Legion of Honor (San Francisco) exhibited original art from *The New Order* as well as from the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* and the *Statute of Kalisz*. Numerous high profile galleries on the East Coast exhibited his work as well, raising much-needed funds for causes such as the Paderewski Testimonial Fund (Polish war relief) and the British War Relief Society.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, top American magazines such as *TIME*, *Collier's* and *Esquire* regularly featured Szyk's work on their covers and interior pages. The *New York Post* and *Chicago Sun* hired him as a feature cartoonist. The U.S. War Department used his caricatures to promote war bonds and enliven its propaganda films and publications.

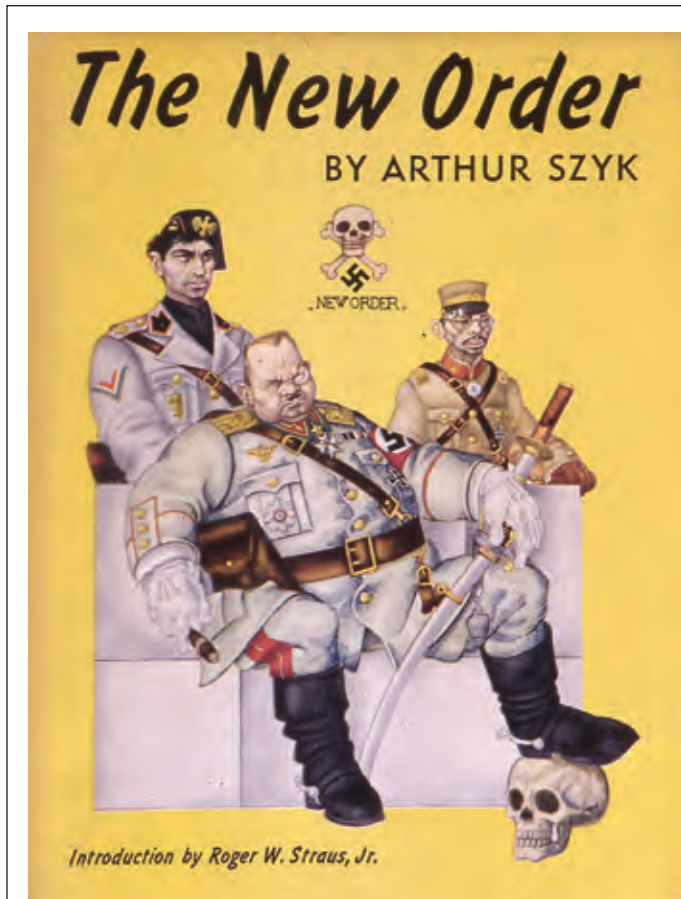


*Szyk presents the First Lady with stamps he designed to raise money for the British-American Ambulance Corps.*



*Szyk's Admiral Yamamoto, 1941.*

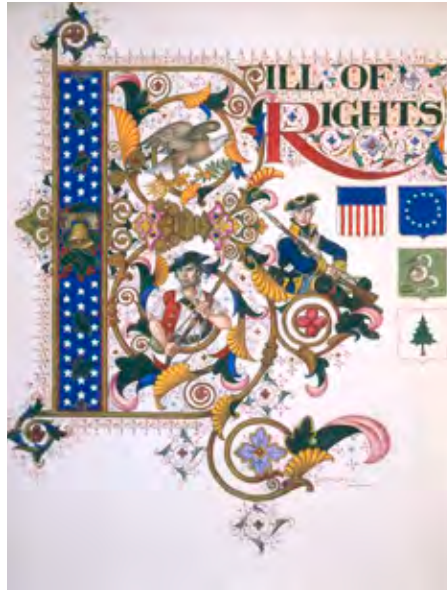
Szyk's work lampooning the leaders of the Axis Powers became tremendously popular with American soldiers after Szyk exhibitions at more than 500 USO centers. Szyk even designed stamp series to benefit numerous charities. Soon he enjoyed a reputation as a "one-man army," a self-described "soldier in art." Even Eleanor Roosevelt was a fan of his work, writing in her newspaper column that Szyk "fights the war...as truly as any of us who cannot actually be on the fighting fronts today."



*Newspaper advertisements promoting the sale of the first anti-Nazi book of its kind in 1941.*

Following the war Szyk created numerous patriotic works, including the beautiful “Four Freedoms Prayer” (New Canaan, 1949), the “Bill of Rights” (New Canaan, 1949) and the oversize “Declaration of Independence of the United States” (New Canaan, 1950). However, his patriotism did not blind him to America’s faults. He despised institutional racism against African Americans. His 1944 work “And [what] would you do with Hitler?” suggested that a fit punishment for Hitler would be to “[make] him a Negro and [drop] him somewhere in the U.S.A.” In 1949 Szyk denounced the Ku Klux Klan with “Do Not Forgive Them, Oh Lord, For They Do Know, What They Do!”, a heartrending drawing of the lynching of a black veteran. Szyk also spoke out against fear-mongering McCarthyism, noting that Congress’ rationale for suspicion—“red blood” and a “heart left of center”—was so broad as to implicate nearly every American. In fact, the House Committee on Un-American Activities went as far as to name Arthur Szyk (and other cultural luminaries such as Aaron Copland, Albert Einstein, Langston Hughes, and Frank Lloyd Wright) as a person of interest in its reports. Szyk was heartbroken and devastated.

Yet Szyk never wavered from his belief in America’s essential goodness and special role in the world affairs. Indeed, his final work before his sudden death in 1951 was a beautiful illumination of a stirring quote by president Thomas Jefferson: “I have sworn upon the alter of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.” ■



Bill of Rights, *New Canaan*, 1949.



Freedom of Religion, *The Four Freedoms*.  
*New York*, 1942.



Freedom from Fear, *The Four Freedoms*.  
*New York*, 1942.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his famous “Four Freedoms” speech to Congress, on January 6, 1941, the White House displayed Szyk’s 38 paintings of George Washington and the American Revolution.

In 1949, Arthur Szyk was named to be a member of several subversive organizations by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, joining Albert Einstein, among others, as accused of being a communist by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his hooligan colleagues. This was at a time when Szyk was creating his greatest and most patriotic Americana: the Four Freedoms prayer, the Bill of Rights, and yes, the Declaration of Independence of the United States [all 3 works of art reside now at the Library of Congress]. Never called to testify, Szyk died of a heart attack in 1951, likely due to the enormous stress of the investigation.



Pamphlet citing Szyk as a Communist.  
*Washington D.C.*, April 19, 1949.



Szyk’s 1949 “McCarthyism- A Farewell Message to the Former Attorney General Thomas C. Clark” with inscription reading: “He is under investigation ... his blood is red and his heart is left of center... to think of it we’re all in trouble...”

## Arthur Szyk's Magnificent Modern Rendering of a Viking Myth

The German fascination with Scandinavian and Viking war myths has long dominated the nation's artistic and musical traditions. Richard Wagner's operas famously employ the people and places of Asgard to tout the superiority of the Fatherland in every aspect of physical and moral life. Here Szyk's depiction of the Valkyries, shrieking as they plunge into battle for their Führer, both underscores and makes sport of the importance Nazi Germany placed upon such stories.



Ride of the Valkyries. (From "The Nibelungen" series.) New York, 1942.

In traditional Norse folklore, the Valkyries are handmaids of Odin who ride magnificent white steeds through the air, flying into combat to choose the warriors who are to be slain and taken to Valhalla. In Szyk's image the female spirits hurtle through the darkened sky alongside German fighter planes, carrying javelins, machine guns, and bombs. Swastikas adorn their armor and their shields, and they grimace in determination under winged helmets. The galloping horde recalls scenes of the apocalypse as presented in renaissance woodcuts; Dürer's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse surely informed the composition. The central Valkyrie sports a shield emblazoned with a treble clef, an homage to Herr Wagner that brings to mind the rousing leitmotif of *Die Walküre*. To die for the Fatherland and awaken again in the heaven of Valhalla—this is the blind patriotism of a generation of German soldiers, particularly the prized pilots of the Luftwaffe.

This detailed and intensely crowded drawing pulls the viewer into the frenzy, forcing one to hear the sound of the dogfight from which there is no retreat. The horses alone seem unresigned to their fate: the terrified animal at bottom right seems to escape the bounds of the drawing itself.

In so many of his works Szyk portrays the Germans as overfed louts, ignorant and sluggish. *Ride of the Valkyries* acknowledges the flipside of the stereotype: lest we forget, they were formidable enemies that fully deserved our fear and awe.

---

Thanks to Lynka Adams and Allison Chang for the decoding of this image.



Arthur Szyk: Drawing Against National Socialism and Terror, Berlin, 2008.

### Szyk Catalogue in Berlin Storefront Window

Society Curator, Irvin Ungar, recently received a note from Johannes Zechner, historian and co-curator of the 2008-2009 Szyk exhibition at the German Historical Museum (DHM), indicating that the popular catalogue continues to be featured in bookstores today in Berlin.

*Zechner and art historian Katja Widmann admiring the 1940 vellum Szyk Haggadah during a visit to The Arthur Szyk Society in Burlingame. This visit was in preparation for the opening of "Arthur Szyk: Drawing Against National Socialism and Terror" at the DHM, Germany's most prestigious museum.*



I.M. Pei Building, German Historical Museum, Berlin.



## Haggadah Book Binder Featured in *Architectural Digest*

Paul Vogel, who bound the new publication of Arthur Szyk's Haggadah was featured in *Architectural Digest*, May 4, 2012 issue. Samuel Cochrane writes, "Few finer volumes exist than those created by this master bookbinder, who uses centuries-old techniques to sheathe tomes in luxurious materials and embellish those second skins by hand." The article goes on to praise Paul Vogel's public workshop within the publisher Assouline's flagship store in New York City.



*Bookbinder Paul Vogel's new atelier in Assouline's New York Shop in the Plaza Hotel. Courtesy Joshua McHugh and Architectural Digest.*

*Paul Vogel working on The Szyk Haggadah in his East Hampton New York studio.*



*Paul, and his wife Abby, fold pages by hand.*



*Sewing the signatures by hand to form the inner spine of the Haggadah.*



*Embossing the leather spine with 22 carat gold.*

## University of Toronto and The Szyk Haggadah

Following its recent acquisition of the Deluxe Limited Edition of *The Szyk Haggadah* (Historicana, 2008), Dr. Barry Dov Walfish, Judaica Specialist at the University of Toronto Libraries, published an extremely well-written article about The Haggadah in the June 2012 issue of *The Halcyon*, the newsletter of the Friends of The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. Walfish's illustrated article quoted San Francisco Antiquarian Bookseller John Windle, who wrote: "As a dealer with forty-two years of experience in handling the finest illustrated books of all kinds, I can state without hesitation that the new edition of *The Szyk Haggadah* published by Historicana...will no doubt remain one of the masterpieces of book production of the twenty-first century." To this Walfish added, "All in all, the Haggadah is a feast for the eye, a marvel to behold. The Fisher Library is proud to own a copy of this bibliographic masterpiece."

Dr. Shalom Sabar, (Professor of Art, Hebrew University) will speak on: "*Political Justice and the Image of the New Jew: The Historical and Artistic Context of The Szyk Haggadah*"

Monday, April 8, 2013 at 8 p.m.  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library  
120 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario



*The Deluxe Edition features a half-leather binding, its sides covered in a luxurious slubbed Japanese silk and rayon cloth. Szyk's signature is stamped in gilt on an inset label on the cover.*



"He's at the end of the rope now..."  
New York, 1943.

## The Arthur Szyk Prize for Zionist Art

*"We Believe Art is Not Passive"*

A new award for "Disruptive Thought and Zionist Art" has just been named after Arthur Szyk. The prize seeks to foster Arthur Szyk's legacy of creating art that supported his people. The Arthur Szyk Society is excited to work with The Jewish National Initiative and Artists 4 Israel in the administration of this award. As Szyk so eloquently stated, "I do not say that art is my aim; art is my means." The Arthur Szyk Prize will be awarded to an artist whose work has and meets a purpose. In addition to being considered on aesthetic merit, entries will be considered based on their "ultimate advocacy goal and their ability to achieve it." These goals may include a "pro-Israel message or counteracting anti-Israel attempts and/or sparking dialogue." The founders of this prize, the Jewish National Initiative and Artists 4 Israel go on to state, "We believe art is not passive."



Artists 4 Israel is a community of creative individuals working together in an ongoing, collaborative project expressing Israel's right to exist in peace and security.

The Jewish National Initiative is a forum for new ideas on Israel and the Jewish people.

See [www.arthurszykprize.com](http://www.arthurszykprize.com).

## Society Traveling Exhibition in Long Beach, California

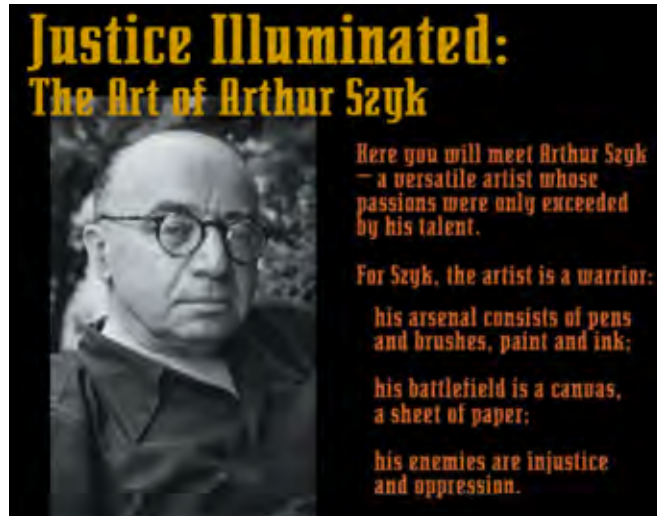
The Alpert Jewish Community Center is exhibiting the Society's Seymour Fromer traveling exhibition, "Justice Illuminated: The Art of Arthur Szyk" from March 1 to April 21, 2013, coinciding with *Yom HaShoah*. The exhibition is particularly appropriate given its focuses on World War II and the Holocaust, America, and Jewish Response. We are pleased to work with Eve Lunt, the Adult and Gallery Director of the Alpert Jewish Community Center, in the presentation of this exhibition.

March 1–April 22, 2012

Alpert Jewish  
Community Center  
3801 East Willow Street  
Long Beach, CA 90814

*Text (right) by  
Rabbi Byron Sherwin*

*Contact The Arthur Szyk  
Society at (650) 343-9588  
to bring this exhibition to  
your community, or visit  
the website to learn more.*



*continued from page 1*

## 2012 Szyk Exhibitions in Poland/Lithuania

<b>March</b>	Kraków	Palace of Art Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych in Kraków
<b>June/July</b>	Lviv	Gary Bowman Gallery, Ukraine
<b>August/September</b>	Warsaw	The Ester Rachel Kaminska and Ida Kaminska Jewish Theater in Warsaw
<b>October/December</b>	Vilnius	The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

## Upcoming Talks by Irvin Ungar on Arthur Szyk

### CALIFORNIA

Valley Beth Sholom  
March 21, 2013

15739 Ventura Blvd, Encino, CA

**"Freedom Illuminated:  
Understanding *The Szyk Haggadah*"**

March 23, 2013

**"The Fabric of America through the Art of Arthur Szyk"**  
[Reproductions of *The Szyk Haggadah* are on exhibit]

Temple Beth Hillel  
April 7, 2013

801 Park Central, Richmond, CA  
YOM HASHOAH COMMEMORATION

**"To the Hallowed Memory of Europe's Martyred Jews:  
The Holocaust Art of Arthur Szyk"**

### NEW YORK

Kosciuszko Foundation  
April 9, 2013

15 E. 65th Street, New York City

**"Building Bridges: The Legacy of Polish-Jewish Artist  
Arthur Szyk, Fighter for Justice and Freedom"**

## College Student Writes Senior Thesis on Szyk

The Arthur Szyk Society is receiving more and more requests from college students for images and research guidance for MA theses and senior projects. This past Spring, Bard College student Monica Semzyk chose to examine the art of Szyk's illustrated book *Le Livre D'Esther* [*The Book of Esther*], published in Paris in 1925, for her senior thesis. She describes her encounter with Szyk's work and the research she conducted for her senior project.



Banquet for King and Haman,  
*Le Livre d'Esther*. Paris, 1925.

Walking through the Bard College Campus Center in early September 2011, I noticed a colorful flyer that stood out amidst the rest of the back-to-school advertisements. It was an announcement for a lecture on Arthur Szyk. On the flyer was an intricate depiction of a man dressed in medieval garb and caught in a moment of looking up from writing a manuscript. But he was shown in a contemporary setting. Intrigued, I decided to keep the lecture in mind.

I had spent the fall semester of my junior year in London and the spring semester in Poland. Studying in Poland helped me connect with my roots in that country, and I gained exposure to some of the most compelling art that Europe has to offer. At the time I was trying to decide on a subject for my senior project. I had many ideas running through my mind, but I knew that I wanted to focus on work created by a Polish artist. When Professor Susan Aberth, my adviser, proposed research on Arthur Szyk, I followed her suggestion. This decision led me to survey a wide range of topics in a new light. Not until later did I appreciate that what had caught my eye was the way in which Szyk reimagined what it means to be Jewish and Polish through the iconography of his art.

In my project, I seek to present Arthur Szyk's work from a more international perspective. He is best known for his anti-Nazi political cartoons, which he published during World War II. Today, his book illustrations tend to be less well established in the public's awareness. This history of his reception does not do justice to his contributions to art.

I chose to focus on Szyk's illustrations for *The Book of Esther*. His work portrays a powerful female figure, a savior of the Jewish people. As an illustrator, Szyk surpassed the publication methods of the modern era and created his own unique style based on traditional manuscript illumination techniques. In his images, Szyk blends ancient Sarmatian, Assyrian, and Oriental influences to tell the story of Esther. By combining these influences he reimagines both Polish and Jewish identity.



Queen Esther, *The Book of Esther*.  
*New Canaan*, 1950. (Published in  
1974 in Israel).

### Szyk's two versions of The Book of Esther

Arthur Szyk illustrated the *Book of Esther* twice – in two entirely different styles: once in the 1920s during his Paris period, and secondly in 1950 in New Canaan, CT, one year before his death. The first responded to the age-old prejudices against the Jewish people and their attempted annihilation by the Persians according to the biblical narrative of Esther; the second responded to the extermination by the Nazis, Szyk placing swastikas on the evil Haman.

---

For more on these two versions, see Irvin Ungar's article published in Hadassah magazine <http://www.hadassahmagazine.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=twl6LmN7IzF&b=5810609&ct=8016479>

---

If you enjoyed reading this Newsletter, visit [www.szyk.org](http://www.szyk.org) and click the button or “Support Us” to promote the legacy of Arthur Szyk.

[Make a Donation](#)

## Szyk-Inspired Music and Video Art Premier in Los Angeles



Wagner, New York, 1942.

Thanks to Katja Widmann for the decoding of this image which appeared in the DHM catalogue "Arthur Szyk: Drawing Against National Socialism and Terror."

Recently, Los Angeles filmmaker Jim Ruxin and LA based composer Richard Friedman collaborated on an original score and accompanying video art. Their short documentary premiered at a series of concerts devoted to New Jewish Music organized by Cantor Phil Baron. The concerts were hosted by the Helfman Composers Group in Los Angeles at Valley Beth Shalom and the Wilshire Boulevard Temple on January 25 and 27, 2013.

For these concerts Jim Ruxin created an extended, four segment montage exclusively devoted to Szyk's work. This video illustrates the historical and emotional themes examined in Richard Friedman's score: "Hymn to America," "Nazis on Parade," "De Profundis," and "Rebirth." As Jim Ruxin states, "*Words will never replace Szyk's art, high or low, profound or outrageously funny. There is not a single word in the 9 minute piece!*"

### Decoding Wagner

Hitler was deeply impressed by Richard Wagner's (1813–1883) operas, and by his worldview, which was characterized by a yearning for redemption and by antisemitism. The annual Wagner festivals became propaganda events, with Hitler's attendance as the orchestrated high point. Tens of thousands of soldiers, SS members, and arms industry employees travelled to Bayreuth in special excursion trains during the war. Wagner's music also accompanied numerous NS events.

Szyk points out the significance of Wagner for the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* and propaganda by having the composer personally accompany the theater of war. In this image, Szyk also interprets the historical motif of the dance of the dead. Death, however, is not a godly power, but rather a representative of Prussianism marked with a spiked helmet and an eagle.

## “Satan Leads the Ball” Caricature on reddit

Reddit describes itself as a “source for what's new and popular online.” It's most prominent feature, however, is not the items themselves, but user's exhaustive comments. Recently Arthur Szyk's famous piece of WWII propaganda, “Satan Leads the Ball,” which is also the centerpiece of our website, appeared on reddit.

At first, viewers attempted to identify the various figures in the image. They quickly realized some of the figures were not historic, but personifications of industry, evil, or death. They even delved into miniscule details of the image, one viewer pointed out “Mitsubishi” written on the sword of the Japanese soldier. This led to a discussion of Mitsubishi's role in WWII. Other comments led to discussions of Scandinavia's role in WWII.

**The Szyk image on reddit received 16,540 views as of February 18th, 2013.**

One viewer explained that the Jack-in-the-Box is Goebbels' “holding a Jew with a sickle and hammer because in Nazi propaganda ‘Bolshevism’ is basically a Jewish plot.”

This fascinating discussion demonstrates Arthur Szyk's timeless ability to inspire dialogue in every generation.



Satan Leads the Ball, New York, 1942.