A Picture is Worth a Thousand Swords: The Illustrations of Arthur Szyk

In Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies, University of Hartford


The Gregg and Michelle Philipson Collection


The Modern Kalevala, 1940
George J. Sherman and Lottie K. Sherman Museum of Jewish Civilization

The George J. Sherman and Lottie K. Sherman Museum of Jewish Civilization was founded in 2003 thanks to a generous gift by Dr. William Sherman of West Hartford and other donors. It was directed by Dr. Richard A. Freund (2003-2007) and is presently directed by Dr. Avinoam Patt of the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford. The Guest Curator is DreAnna Hadash. The Sherman Museum is a teaching museum and its primary goal is to tell the story of Jewish civilization for the general and academic communities of Connecticut through exhibitions coordinated with lectures and coursework in the extensive Judaica offerings of the Greenberg Center.

The Sherman Museum’s William Singer Gallery has featured exhibits highlighting the history of Jewish interactions with Muslims and Christians; the lives of the Jews in Germany, the United States, Latin America, and ancient Israel, as well as books on and about the Jewish people worldwide and the Holocaust. The Jewish Music section features the Cantorate, highlighting the way Jews used the Arts to express their spirit, while the section on archaeology chronicles the daily and religious life of Ancient Israel and now holds the Grae Collection of Jewish Art.

The Sherman Museum is located in Mortensen Library, Harry Jack Gray Center, University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT. For docent led tours and Museum hours, please call 860.768.5729 or email mgcjs@hartford.edu.

New Britain Museum of American Art

The NBMAA, the first museum in the world to focus solely on American art, is among America’s most distinguished mid-sized art museums. Nationally renowned, the quality and scope of the museum’s holdings, some 11,000 artworks spanning three hundred years of artistic output, mean that few museums can match the depth and breadth of its collections. “Erected By the People for the Use of the People,” the Museum’s mission is to promote the value of art for the enrichment of the human experience; to preserve an evolving collection of national significance; and to present that collection in a dialogue with our community. Its vision is to be known as one of America’s most welcoming, distinguished, dynamic, and educationally ambitious art museums.

In addition to exhibiting its permanent collection, the Museum mounts upwards of 20 changing exhibitions annually, many with interpretive catalogues or brochures and a full complement of programming: from student/teacher tours and services; age-specific studio programs; to symposia, Discovery Days, gallery talks, film, music, literature, and monthly art and jazz evenings for adults.

In 2006, the NBMAA completed a $27 million Capital Campaign that resulted in a new 43,000 square foot facility, the Chase Family Building, a renovated Landers House, and increased endowment. Since then, Museum attendance has grown exponentially, with visitation last year at 90,000. The Museum is presently directed by Dr. Douglas K.S. Hyland.

The New Britain Museum of American Art is located at 56 Lexington Street, New Britain, CT. For more information go to www.nbmaa.org, email nbmaa@nbmaa.org or call 860.229.0257.
Arthur Szyk, 1894-1951

Arthur Szyk (pronounced Shick) (June 3, 1894, Łódź, Poland – September 13, 1951, New Canaan, Connecticut) was described by Eleanor Roosevelt as a “one-man army,” using art as a weapon to garner support for the social and political issues in which he believed. Szyk dedicated his work to democracy, freedom, and an end to political injustice and human suffering, saying of his work, “Art is not my aim, it is my means.”

Born in Poland to a Jewish family, Szyk left home at the age of 15 to study art in Paris. During WWI, he fought with the Russian Army in Poland, before returning to Paris in the 1920s to resume his artistic studies. After experimenting with various contemporary styles early in his career, Szyk began to focus on illumination as his main form of artistic expression. The 45-page Statute of Kalisz (1926), dedicated to the new ruler of Poland, Marshal Josef Pilsudski as an artistic plea for toleration of Poland’s Jewish minority, included miniature scenes, portraits, and symbolic border patterns. Szyk’s League of Nations illuminated charter (1931) was another clear manifestation of this distinctive style. In the early 1930s, Szyk began work on his series, Washington and his Times, for which he was ultimately awarded The George Washington Medal in honor of the Bicentennial of Washington’s birth. Szyk moved to London in 1937, where he finished work on what would perhaps become his most well-known single creation, his illuminated Haggadah, presenting the first volume to George VI, the King of England, in 1940. After immigrating to the United States in 1940, Szyk continued work on illustrated books, illuminated manuscripts, commercial art and posters, and stamps for humanitarian causes. However, it was his political cartoons, which appeared in The New York Times, The New York Post, Esquire, and Collier’s during World War II, that earned him his greatest fame. Szyk committed himself to fighting not only for the American war effort, but to actively campaigning for the rescue of European Jewry during the Holocaust. In 1941, Szyk published an anthology of his anti-Fascist caricatures in the book, The New Order, making him especially popular with young Americans in military training. After the outbreak of World War II, Szyk caricatured Hitler as a madman bent on territorial conquest and sought to buttress support for the Allied struggle against the Nazis and their
collaborators. For Szyk, Hitler, the Nazis, and their allies represented more than just politicians and demagogues; as the direct expressions of militarism and fascism, they constituted active threats to the American ideals of freedom and democracy.

Szyk’s artwork portrayed Jews sympathetically, drawing the Jewish people as a heroic nation that would eventually triumph against oppression. During and after the Holocaust, this performed an especially important function in challenging Nazi propaganda, redefining how Jews viewed themselves and were viewed by others. His works were infused with a Zionism that recast the Jews as actors who had the power to shape their own destiny.

In his advocacy of political and social causes through his work, Szyk attacked all forms of prejudice. After the war, Szyk’s outspoken views on equality brought him to the attention of Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. Arthur Szyk was under investigation by Senator McCarthy when he died of a heart attack on September 13, 1951.

Szyk was proud of his Jewish heritage, a devoted Polish nationalist, a staunch Zionist, and a loyal American. These influences converged to create his prolific and varied body of work.

“Words and pictures are bullets whose flight never ends. Their trajectory knows no down curve. They endure long after the guns are silenced.” (From Ink and Blood: A Book of Drawings by Arthur Szyk, 1946)

Selections from the collection of Gregg and Michelle Philipson

“Portrait of three artists” (Paris, ca. 1920s)

Szyk created his “Portrait of three artists,” representative of his early work in Paris, where he began his artistic studies in 1909 at the Academie Julian. After his service in the Russian army during WWI, Szyk returned to Paris in 1921 where he continued his work, illustrating several French books, such as The Book of Esther, The Temptation of St. Anthony, The Jew who Laughs, and The Well of Jacob.
In 1931, Szyk began a series of 38 miniatures dealing with the American Revolution entitled *Washington and His Times* as a tribute to the first American president and the American nation, which he presented at an exhibition at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. in 1934. Szyk celebrated the ideals of freedom and democracy he loved in America and would uniquely treasure as an immigrant to the country during WWII.

In September 1939, with the German invasion of Poland, Szyk turned his attention to anti-fascist cartoons, satires, and caricatures to fight oppression and tyranny, moving from London to Canada and then the United States in 1940. Published in July 1941, less than one year after Szyk’s arrival in the United States and five months before the American entry into the war, *The New Order* contains selections of cartoons and caricatures originally published in the New York newspaper, *PM*. Throughout the war, Szyk worked on behalf of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, becoming its “one-man art department.” In 1943 Szyk’s 70-year-old mother, Eugenia, was deported from the Lodz Ghetto in Poland and murdered, most likely at the Chełmno death camp.

“Save Human Lives”

For the Emergency Committee to Save

the Jewish People of Europe
Following the war in 1945, Szyk continued his work for a Jewish State in Palestine. In the stamp above created based on the drawing *Pilgrims*, Szyk compared the plight of Holocaust survivors seeking a home in Palestine after the war to the Pilgrims on the Mayflower, representing both as victims of British oppression. His collection of World War II illustrations, *Ink & Blood*, was published in 1946, as was his illustrated version of *The Canterbury Tales*. In 1948, he created an illuminated Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel in honor of the creation of the Jewish State.

On **July 4, 1950**, Szyk’s illuminated Declaration of Independence was dedicated in a public ceremony in his town of residence, New Canaan, Connecticut. In April 1951, he became the subject of an investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee for being an assumed member of a Communist front organization. On **September 13, 1951**, Szyk died of a heart attack at 57, possibly due to the stress of the investigation.

**Selected Szyk Bibliography:**


Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss), War Bonds Poster, 1943

Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss), 1904 – 1991

Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known to the world as Dr. Seuss, was born on March 2, 1904 in Springfield, Massachusetts. His father, Theodor Robert, and mother, Henrietta Seuss Geisel, were first-generation German-Americans and the family ran a brewery in the city. He attended Dartmouth College, where he became editor-in-chief of the Jack-O-Lantern, Dartmouth’s humor magazine. In his contributions to the magazine, he signed his work “Seuss”, which was both his middle name and his mother’s maiden name. He studied literature at Oxford University in England but soon bored of his academic studies and decided to focus on his art. After returning to the United States, Seuss began to pursue a career as a cartoonist. Some of his early work was published in The Saturday Evening Post, but the bulk of Seuss’s activity during his early career was devoted to creating advertising campaigns for Standard Oil, which he did for more than 15 years.

As World War II approached, his focus shifted, and for two years, from 1941-1943, he was the chief editorial cartoonist for the New York newspaper PM (1940-1948), drawing over 400 editorial cartoons denouncing American anti-isolationism through his work. He served with Frank Capra’s Signal Corps (U.S. Army) making training movies and developed a series of animated training films featuring a trainee called Private Snafu. The works of Seuss in the Sherman Museum’s exhibition focus on the political cartoons and anti-Nazi propaganda created by Seuss during this period. After the Second World War, Dr. Seuss would gain his fame as the author of such children’s favorites publishing The Cat in the Hat in 1957 and other classics including Green Eggs and Ham, Oh, the Places You’ll Go, Fox in Socks, and How the Grinch Stole Christmas. His 44 illustrated children’s books have been translated into more than 15 languages and sold over 200 million copies around the world. His honors include two Academy awards, two Emmy awards, a Peabody award, the Pulitzer Prize and a little-known but distinguished role in creating anti-Nazi propaganda during the Second World War.
The Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies

To launch the celebration of its 25th anniversary at the University of Hartford, the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies has organized the exhibition and lecture series on the art and illustration of the Polish-American Jewish artist Arthur Szyk, to be held at the New Britain Museum of American Art and on Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) and Arthur Szyk in the William Singer Gallery of the Sherman Museum of Jewish Civilization at the University of Hartford.

Founded in the 1984-85 academic year through the generous gift of Arnold C. and Beverly Greenberg, the Maurice Greenberg Center is a dynamic center which offers three different undergraduate degrees, maintains the George J. Sherman and Lottie K. Sherman Museum of Jewish Civilization and through a consortial agreement with the University of Connecticut offers a graduate program. The undergraduate major in the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies provides a unified and cohesive major within the College of Arts and Sciences and utilizes the established resources of two other colleges (College of Education and the Hartt School for the Performing Arts). The Bachelor of Arts in Judaic Studies allows students to focus in three pivotal areas: Judaic Studies; Judaic Studies and Elementary Education; and Judaic Studies and Pre-Cantorial Studies. Judaic Studies is an interdisciplinary program of study which focuses on the Jews and Judaism, including but not limited to, historical, linguistic, religious, sociological, political, and philosophical perspectives. The chronological scope of Judaic Studies spans the periods from the beginnings of ancient Israel through the modern Jews and modern Israel. In addition to the academic studies, the Center maintains an active community outreach division that runs teacher workshops on the teaching of the Holocaust and the teaching of Israel and the Middle East, and has an active lecture, concert, exhibition, and symposium schedule that is open to the public. In cooperation with the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, the Greenberg Center has offered an Israeli visiting professor who works both in the university and in the community during the past decade. Summer programs at our field school in Israel at Kibbutz Ginosar are a part of the Bethsaida Excavations Project Consortium and students study archaeology, Hebrew and Arabic in summer terms. The 25th anniversary celebration will culminate with a gala banquet honoring founders, Arnold and Beverly Greenberg, on September 25, 2011. For more information on the Greenberg Center, please visit:
http://www.hartford.edu/greenberg/

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