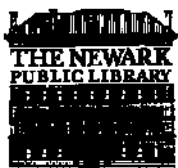


Shahn Estate Collection ca. 1951 - 1976



Special Collections Division
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- Extent:** One oversize print and three boxes
- Processed:** Nadine Sergejeff, April 2014.
- Abstract:** The collection consists of various works by and related to artists Ben Shahn and Bernarda Bryson Shahn.
- Provenance:** Gift of Jean and Jonathan Shahn, 2011.

Restrictions on Access

Access Restrictions

Available by appointment only.

No materials may be photocopied without permission from library staff.

Use Restrictions

Researchers wishing to publish, reproduce, or reprint materials from this collection must obtain permission.

Preferred Citation

Shahn Estate Collection, Special Collections Division, Newark Public Library.

Collection Call Number: MG S 1

Scope and Content

Collection of posters, lithographs, record covers, facsimiles (works reproduced in books/journals), and print plates. *Note: Special Collections also acquired a separate collection of miscellaneous items and publications donated by the Stephen Lee Taller Ben Shahn Archive in 2000.*

Processing Note

All material is stored in three boxes except for one matted print, filed in an oversize "S" drawer.

Biographical Note

Ben Shahn (1898-1969), American painter, graphic artist, and photographer, was devoted to the figurative tradition. He was one of the most significant social critics among painters of the 20th century.

Born in Kaunas, Lithuania, Ben Shahn emigrated with his family to the United States in 1906. From the age of 15 to 18, Shahn was apprenticed to a New York lithographer. In 1919 he enrolled at New York University, completing his studies at the City College of New York in 1924. After 2 years studying at the National Academy of Design, Shahn traveled in Europe and North Africa. Returning to America, he had his first one-man show in 1929.

Shahn's mature style and his emphasis on specific social themes date from the 1930s. His art was influenced by photographer Walker Evans, with whom he shared quarters. In 1931-1932 Shahn painted 23 gouaches and 2 mural panels based on the Sacco and Vanzetti case. The best known is the *Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*; executed in tempera, with elongated bodies and slight caricature of the faces, the work is a masterpiece of understatement. This style remains consistent throughout his work. Fifteen gouache studies (1932-1933) dealing with labor leader Tom Mooney aroused the interest of Mexican mural painter Diego Rivera. Shahn became Rivera's assistant on the murals for the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center, New York City.

Shahn used techniques learned from Rivera in murals and panel paintings commissioned by numerous Federal agencies. The eight paintings on the theme of prohibition for the Public Works Arts Project are good; the one titled *W.C.T.U. Parade* (1933-1934) is best known. His mural for the Community Center of the Federal Housing Development in Roosevelt, N.J. (1937-1938), is the most typical. Shahn's themes were a variety of topical problems--from anti-semitism to unfair labor conditions; he framed them into a continuous wall plane that is subdivided by architectural devices. Though he borrowed the organizing motifs from Rivera, Shahn's murals are generally more readable and less crowded. Less well known are his photographs for the Farm Security Administration; typical is the one titled *Arkansas Share Cropper's Family*.

During the 1940s Shahn executed graphics for the Office of War Information and, later, for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). *Register, Vote*, a 1944 employment poster for the CIO, shows his concern with social equality and his ability to integrate language and visual form in a coherent design. He had a retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1947.

After the 1940s Shahn moved from what he called "social realism" to a "personal realism." He also increasingly turned to tempera painting and graphics. Yet his iconography was never "personal" or autobiographical. Rather, he reached a universal expression through the devices of symbolism and allegory, the stylized line, and the colorful palette, which are hallmarks of his style. Whether his subject was music or a theme after the Spanish artist Francisco Goya, he could evoke worlds with a single pen stroke or color overlay. *Blind Botanist*, a drawing for a painting (1954), demonstrates Shahn's ability to express the poignant, often tragic, state of mankind.

Shahn's *Lucky Dragon* series (1960-1962) visualizes the tragedy of the Japanese fishing vessel that sailed into an atomic testing area in 1954. Perhaps his greatest honor was his appointment as Charles Eliot Norton professor of poetry at Harvard University (1956-1957). Shahn then continued to work prolifically and with social responsibility. He taught and lectured at a variety of educational institutions.

Shahn passed away in March of 1969 following gall bladder surgery in Mount Sinai Hospital. He is interred at the Roosevelt Cemetery in Roosevelt, NJ.

Source:

"Ben Shahn." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Biography in Context*. Web. 23 Apr. 2014.

"Funeral for Ben Shahn in Roosevelt, NJ, Today." *New York Times*. 16 March 1969, p. 92.

BERNARDA BRYSON SHAHN (1903-2004)

The artist/activist/author/teacher Bernarda Bryson was born in Athens, Ohio, on March 7, 1903. She attended Ohio University; Ohio State University; Western Reserve University; the Cleveland School of Art, where she studied painting, and lithography; and the New School for Social Research, in New York.

The first prints made by Bryson date to her 1928 association with Russell Limbach at the Cleveland School of Art. In addition to urban views of Cleveland, she drew the *Side Show Series*, drawings of the performers of the visiting Hagenbeck and Wallace Circus. Beyond the empathy shown for these extraordinary subjects, Bryson used an exceptional two- or three-color lithographic method. The figures are rarely outlined, but silhouetted against densely drawn areas. Lines and shading create mass.

During 1929/31 Bryson worked in Columbus at the Columbus Southside Advocate, and the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts School.

Bryson visited New York in 1933 to interview the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera for the Ohio State Journal. He was painting a mural (now destroyed) for Rockefeller Center, and one of his assistants was artist Ben Shahn. Shahn, Bryson's future husband, had been hired on the strength of the exhibition of his 1931/32 Sacco and Vanzetti series.

In 1934 Bryson moved to New York. She made lithographs on the Graphics Division of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). At this time she was a founding member, president, and spokeswoman of the Unemployed Artists Association, later the Artists' Union. With Shahn and the modernist artist Stuart Davis, she was an editor of the newspaper, Art Front. The couple's son, the sculptor Jonathan Shahn, recalled a conversation with the artist Raphael Soyer in the 1970s in which he expressed continued amazement at Bryson's ability to captivate a crowd of thousands at a Union Square rally.

In the mid-1930s Bryson and Shahn moved to Washington, DC, where they worked for the Resettlement Administration documenting farms and rural areas. Shahn was a photographer, and Bryson made drawings and prints in the lithography shop she established. Her series, *The Vanishing American Frontier, 1935/36*, is a result of this project.

It is in this period that Jersey Homesteads was developed. The New Jersey, New Deal town now known as Roosevelt, had as its goal the relocation of garment workers from New York tenements. In 1936/37, Ben Shahn, with the assistance of Bryson and others, made a forty-five foot fresco mural in the public school. Later, in 1939, when houses were offered to a wider public, Bryson and Shahn themselves moved to Roosevelt. Also in this 1938/39 period Bryson and Shahn worked together on the Bronx Post Office Murals, in the Bronx Central Annex.

Over several decades, beginning in the 1940s, and into the 1970s, Bryson made illustrations for magazines such as *Fortune*, *Harper's*, and the *Scientific American*. In the mid 1950s she started illustrating books such as *The White Falcon*, 1955, and *Wuthering Heights*, 1963. In the 1950s she began to write and illustrate her own books: *The Twenty Miracles of Saint Nicolas*, published in 1960, *The Zoo of Zeus*, 1964 (#20), and *Gilgamesh*, 1967 (#21). Following the death of her husband in 1969, she wrote the monograph, *Ben Shahn*, published in 1973.

In the 1960s Bryson and Shahn formed an association with the Skowhegan (Maine) School of Painting and Sculpture and often spent summers there. After Shahn's death Bryson returned to painting. She produced a body of work with mannequins shown in desolate isolation, or hooded figures in wooded landscapes inspired by New Jersey or Maine forests. Other works from the period have a surrealist message: eggs balance on hills, caryatids people the streets. In both paintings and works on paper she explored the Goddess of Malta theme in the 1980s.

Bryson was on the Board of Governors of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She was a recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts Award from the Women's Caucus for Art, 1989, and of an honorary doctorate from Ohio University, Athens. She died in 2004.

Access Points

The entries below represent countries documented in this collection.

Subject Topics:

Activism
Illustrators—United States
Lithography
Posters
Printmakers—United States
Prints
Sketches

Sound Recordings—Album Covers

Document Types:

Posters

Lithographs

Facsimiles

Print plates (10)

Records (14 covers designed by Ben Shahn)

Box	Item No.	Title/Description	Medium	Sheet Size	Date	Note
	Sh-1	Boston Arts Festival	Gouache, cut and pasted papers	24 x 30 in	1962	Variant design for a poster (never published). Stored in oversize matted drawer "S"
1	Sh-2	O Lord Our Father	Photo-offset lithograph	17 x 22 in	1964	2 copies
1	Sh-3	Say No to the No-Sayer: Vote Johnson, 1964	Photo-offset lithograph	22 x 28 in	1964	5 copies
1	Sh-4	Ghandi and The Mysterious Stranger	Photo-offset lithograph	11 x 17 in	1965	3 copies
1	Sh-5	A Year of Growth		20 x 26 in	1966	4 copies. Poster illustrated by Shahn (Wheatfield, serigraph) for <i>A Report of the Activities of the NJ State Museum from 10/16/1965-6/30/1966</i>
1	Sh-6	Alphabet of Creation		13.5 x 22 in	1954	Conceived and illustrated by Ben Shahn. Multiple copies of some pages. Loose plates
1	Sh-7	Fogg Art Museum	Photo-offset lithograph	14 x 10 in	1956	7 copies
1	Sh-8	And Mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears	Photo-offset lithograph	9 x 12 in	1965	2 copies. Item is an invitation to a gala for the benefit of "Women Strike for Peace."
1	Sh-9	The Graphic Work of Ben Shahn – The American Institute of Graphic Arts	Photo-offset lithograph	6.25 x 9.25 in	1957	2 copies. Item is an invitation to an exhibition preview.
1	Sh-10	An illustration from <i>A Boy of Old Prague</i>		11 x 14 in	1963	2 copies

1	Sh-11	Abraham Lincoln	Photo-offset lithograph	12.25 x 16 in	1955	
1	Sh-12	O Lord Our Father donation poster		11 x 17 in		4 copies. One of s series of Messages for Peace.
1	Sh-13	A Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year		14 x 10.5 in	1960	fascimile
1	Sh-14	"The First Day of Christmas"				Painting reprinted from <i>Charm Magazine</i> , December, 1951
1	Sh-15	[Unidentified]				Loose plate, "Plate 25," from a portfolio. Fascimile.
1	Sh-16	The Sight and Sound of Children and God	Photo-offset lithograph	8 x 7.23 in	1962	Book with record. 2 copies.
1	Sh-17	[Unidentified]				Fascimile. View of a circus with unicyclists.
1	Sh-18	[Unidentified]				Fascimile. View of a pool and a bather.
1	Sh-19	Dove	Photo-offset lithograph	13 x 10 in	c. 1960	3 copies. On bottom: "Greetings from the Shahns"
1	Sh-20	Voltaire	Photo-offset lithograph	10.5 x 14 in		2 copies
1	Sh-21	[Unidentified]	Photo-offset lithograph	10 x 13 in		3 copies. Image of a hooded figure.
1	Sh-22	Jester on a horse	Photo-offset lithograph	8.5 x 11.5 in		
1	Sh-23	J.B.'s God, for "J.B.: A Play in Verse"	Photo-offset lithograph	10.5 x 14 in	1958	2 copies
1	Sh-24	Pleiades	Photo-offset lithograph	14 x 10.25 in	1960	11 copies
1	Sh-25	[Unidentified]	Photo-offset lithograph	10 x 13 in		3 copies. View of a figure
1	Sh-	[Unidentified]	Photo-offset	13 x 10 in		8 copies. View of a face and a wolf &

	26		lithograph			words: "Lupus, Corona, Indus,..."
1	Sh-27	Left panel for Roosevelt Mural		20 x 14 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-28	Ram's Horn and Menorah		20 x 14 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-29	For the Sake of a Single Verse...		14 x 20 in in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-30	Wheatfield		20 x 14 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-31	All That Is Beautiful		20 x 14 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-32	Phoenix		14 x 20 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-33	Bookshop: Hebrew Books, Holy Day Books		14 x 20 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-34	Branches of Water or Desire		14 x 20 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-35	Triple Dip		14 x 20 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-36	I Think Continually of Those Who Were Truly Great		14 x 20 in		Poster from Ben Shahn Retrospective Exhibition Japan 1991
1	Sh-37	Overlays and sketches for "The Quiet Battle"				Multiple sheets in one folder.
2	Sh-38	Record Album Covers Designed by Ben Shahn				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Side Story 			1960	Previn/Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs. Features Shahn's <i>Handball</i> .
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Diamond/Symphony #4 & Peter Mennin/Symphony #7 			1976	New World Records. Features Shahn's <i>Forest</i> .
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robert Prince's N.Y. Export: Op. Jazz from Ballets U.S.A. 			1958	Warner Bros. Records. Features a backdrop by Shahn.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weill/Brecht/Lenya Die 			1958	Columbia. Features Shahn's <i>Threepenny Opera</i> .

		Dreigroschenoper				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wagner/ Prelude and Love Death; Strauss/Death and Transfiguration; Leinsdorf/Los Angeles Philharmonic 			1962	Capitol
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince/Ballets: U.S.A.. Events, N.Y. Export: Op. Jazz 			1961	RCA Victor. Inscribed to Shahn by composer Robert Prince.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berlioz Te Deum 			c.1954	Columbia.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicago Style Jazz 			1955	Columbia. Record is missing.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schweitzer/Bach Organ Music 			1955	Columbia
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persichetti/Concerto; Creston/Sonata 			c. 1974	Columbia
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carter/Concerto for Orchestra; Schuman/In Praise of Shahn. NY Philharmonic 			c. 1970	Columbia. Features Shahn's <i>Hand of Creation</i> . Unopened.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glazer/ Music for 1's & 2's 			1972	CMS Records
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeger/Love Songs for Friends & Foes 			1956	Folkways Records
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summers/Hymns and Carols Early American 			1951	Folkways Records
3	Sh-39	Print Plates				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Fieldplay</i> 		18 x 15 in		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Back Road to Waterville</i> or <i>The House on the Upper Road</i> 		20.25 x 16 in		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Gigantia</i> 		10 x 8 in		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Conversation Between Two Plaster Casts</i> 		5 x 7.75 in		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Goddess of Malta or Sleeping Beauty 9</i> 		5 x 8 in		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>S.Guli</i> 				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Three Scoundrels or Witnesses or Thieves</i> 		12 x 8 in		"small size"
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Sleeping Goddess of Malta version A</i> 		8 x 10 in		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, <i>Sleeping Goddess and Temple</i> 		8 x 10 in		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ben Shahn, <i>Wheatfield</i> 		5.75 x 9 in		