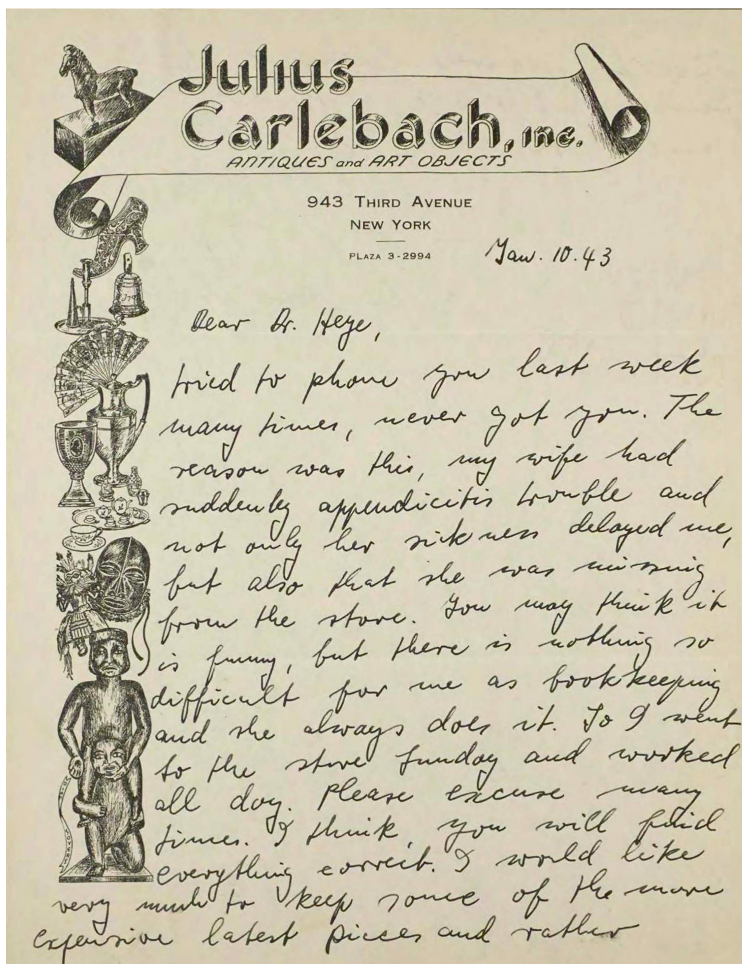

Julius Carlebach, inc.
ANTIQUES and ART OBJECTS

943 Third Avenue
New York
Plaza 3-2994

Jan. 10.43

Dear Dr. Heye,

tried to phone you last week many times, never got you. The reason was this, my wife had suddenly appendicitis trouble and not only her sickness delayed me, but also that she was missing from the store. You may think it is funny, but there is nothing so difficult for me as bookkeeping and she always does it. So I went to the store Sunday and worked all day. Please excuse many times. I think you will find everything correct. I would like very much to keep some of the more expensive latest pieces and rather

128 Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, January 10, 1944. Washington, DC, National Museum of the American Indian.

Julius Carlebach (1909–1964) and the Trade in So-Called "Primitive" Arts

Florence Duchemin-Pelletier

"A chubby, affable little gentleman"[1] whose taste mainly leaned toward old German chinaware and quaint curios:[2] surviving accounts by the surrealists and their friends do not sketch a very flattering portrait of dealer Julius Carlebach (1909–1964). When not describing this character's crafty simplicity, such descriptions are short on details, offering only meager scraps to feed a researcher's appetite.[3] In short, Carlebach acquired the features of a ghostly name: disembodied, but recurring. Claude Lévi-Strauss recalled that even after the surrealists set Carlebach down his path, the antiques dealer clung to a culpable attraction to everything old-fashioned.[4] Worse, after a felicitous digression into modern art, he abandoned those things that had appealed to the group in order to invest in the African art market, with no consideration for his more modest clients. "[N]o new Eskimo masks—he is now venturing into Negro items, having just bought an entire collection of them," wrote Enrico Donati to André Breton in 1947. "Carlebach himself increasingly drips with sweetness and smiles as his prices climb—all nonsense."[5]

This picture may seem too extreme, given Carlebach's closeness to the surrealist group in New York. Above all, however, it generates two sur-

1 Claude Duthuit, "Esquimaux ou des Arts Derniers," in Claude Duthuit, ed., *Les Esquimaux vus par Matisse: Georges Duthuit, Une fête en Cimmérie*, exh. cat. (Le Cateau-Cambrésis/Paris: Musée Matisse/Hazan, Paris 2010), p. 14. Although this description comes from Claude Duthuit, it certainly reflects the view of his father, Georges Duthuit. Dorothea Tanning, meanwhile, described Carlebach as a "small, shiny man, soft-spoken but politely adamant." Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives: An Artist and Her World* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 65.

2 Private communication in 1974 from Claude Lévi-Strauss to Edmund S. Carpenter. See Edmund S. Carpenter, *Two Essays: Chief and Greed* (North Andover, MA: Persimmon Press, 2005), p. 116.

3 As witnessed by his obituary in the *New York Times*, October 14, 1964, "Julius Carlebach, of Gallery Featuring Primitives, Is Dead."

4 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

5 Letter from Enrico Donati to André Breton, May 7, 1947. Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris (hereafter cited as BLJD), BRT C 1806–1814.

prises: first, descriptions of the dealer are relatively rare, which has the effect of bringing just a few annoyed comments to the fore; next, they are not remotely like accounts by other collectors, from Morton D. May to Nelson A. Rockefeller, which are much more favorable. If the two versions have rarely been correlated, that is because the fragmentary nature of accounts complicates any biographical task. To which should be added the probable disappearance of archives of Carlebach's gallery,[6] and the discredit long attached to financial activities—it should be recalled that dealers in ethnographic objects do not enjoy the same symbolic favor as gallery owners. Whereas the former make deals with looters, the latter work with and for artists, which spares them the opprobrium of commercialism. Finally, we must factor in the narrative role played by "Carlebach the novice" in tales of surrealist discovery, since it was indeed Max Ernst who convinced the antiques dealer to break up a set of spoons by homing in on one Haida spoon, thereby demonstrating Ernst's superior eye—a convenient occasion for surrealism to perform its revelatory function.[7]

There is obviously no question of denying André Breton, Georges Duthuit, Robert Lebel, Roberto Matta, Isabelle Waldberg and several other initiates the merit of their accomplishment, namely their ability to transform our view of things. Furthermore, there is little doubt that Carlebach's interest in non-Western objects was reinforced by the enthusiasm of his new buyers, and even less doubt that his curiosity about modern art was triggered by contact with them. But the character also needs to be fleshed out, in terms of both his personality and his business and curatorial practices. Carlebach, who formed an efficient team with his wife, Josefa, was not a simple purveyor of artifacts, devoid of enthusiasm and intelligence. He had an early career before emigrating to the United States, and he continued to occupy a place in the world of primitive arts long after the surrealists departed. We shall see, for example, that while it is true he was initially drawn to older periods—and after all, Charles Ratton didn't share Breton's tastes, either—he was in no way ignorant of ethnographic matters.

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6 In contrast to the archives of Charles Ratton's gallery, which were preserved by his successor and thus enabled Philippe Dagen to conduct significant research into Ratton's life, Carlebach's personal archives do not appear to have survived. The author has nevertheless identified over twenty-five collections that contain some of his correspondence with collectors, study of which may shed light on details of his business activity. See Philippe Dagen and Maureen Murphy, eds., *Charles Ratton: L'invention des arts primitifs*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Quai Branly, 2013).

7 An account given by Dorothea Tanning is typical in this respect: "There ensued an argument like a tug-of-war for the goat-horn beauty (the shopkeeper thought it was seal tusk), and Max found himself talking of the great and wonderful art of the so-called primitives … while the other listened in utter fascination, putting in a question now and then. … In the end, [Carlebach] sold the spoon." Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 1), p. 69. Marie Mauzé's research is a rare example of serious documentation into Carlebach's relationship with the surrealists. See, in particular, Marie Mauzé, "Les esprits du silence," in Duthuit, *Les Esquimaux vus par Matisse* (note 1).

The essential thing ultimately entails grasping the highly particular figure of Carlebach, whose wide range of activities and experiences shaped his relationship to objects. What were his affinities for series and corpuses of items? How much expertise did he have? What was his relationship to the various players in the art world? To what extent did he serve as pivot between the gallery sphere and the museum sphere? It is indeed Carlebach's reflexiveness with respect to his trade—his specific position within a chain of cooperation and his agile moves beyond his normal fields of competence—that distinguish this atypical, slightly rebellious figure from his more sensible counterparts.

Describing Carlebach, about whom we know so little, nevertheless remains a tricky exercise: it's a question of digging up scraps. Written accounts, for a start, are an invaluable resource. While most of them bear on the post-surrealist period (to be briefly discussed here), they supply useful information on the dealer's personality and the kind of links he sought to maintain with collectors and artists. Colorful anecdotes and grateful acknowledgments are all aids in correcting our picture of Carlebach, even if caution is required, given the fragility of memories. Next come institutional archives, which provide key elements. Carlebach's correspondence with George G. Heye, held in the archives of the National Museum of the American Indian, provides details on material and human exchanges between the two men, as well as their different approaches to objects. Then, drawing up a list of other archive collections, even when they could not be consulted, helps to trace the extent of Carlebach's social circle. Finally, press clippings, the tool most suited to this biographical essay, make it possible not only to establish a chronology for his antiques shop and gallery, via its various moves and exhibitions, but also to observe Carlebach's media strategies and their impact. Placed all together, these fragments help to fill gaps in the dealer's previously known career, from his early contacts with non-Western objects to the firm establishment of his New York gallery via his encounter with the surrealists and modern art. Carlebach's path will thus be followed sequentially here, dwelling on his methods, strategies, and convictions in order to shed further light on his contribution to the history of the trade in so-called primitive arts.

First steps in Lübeck, Hamburg, and Berlin

At a young age, Joseph Hirsh Zwi (Julius) Carlebach became familiar with ancient arts and non-Western objects, both ritual and secular, as well as ethnology as a tool of knowledge about societies. As a child he eagerly visited the ethnology department in the museum of Lübeck

Cathedral, even getting to know its curator, Richard Karutz.[8] He soon began studying art history and ethnology at the universities of Berlin, Vienna, and Hamburg, which he financed by offering his services to regional museums.[9] He was notably behind the founding of a Jewish department in his home town's museum in 1931–32, an experience that shaped his future vision of the profession of dealer—Carlebach had come across an orphan collection in the Lübeck museum, stripped of all connections to the practice of Jewish worship, whether at home or in the synagogue. He therefore sought to copy the methods employed in other departments of the museum devoted to non-Western fields, making a strong effort to contextualize things. He avoided rare items or curios in favor of sets of objects. He introduced a comparative dimension by diversifying places of origin and cultivating a more complex view of Jewish societies, stressing both their unique and their shared developments down through history.[10] The apprentice curator thus became profoundly convinced of the need to educate the general public. "In order to combat anti-Semitism, we want to explain Jewish customs at the museum."[11]

In 1933, Carlebach left the museum world and moved to Berlin to begin dealing in art.[12] At the time he favored antiquities, classical European art, and old furniture, but he was not insensitive to folk art. Visitors to his shop were liable to come across peasant earthenware as well as Sumerian votive tablets, Egyptian jewelry, Flemish primitive

8 The ethnographic department of the Lübeck museum opened in 1893, but its collection is older, part of it coming from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cabinets of curiosity. Richard Karutz was appointed head of the department in 1896 and helped to enlarge the collection considerably. Although he left Lübeck for Stuttgart in 1921, Karutz continued to head the department, from a distance, until 1928. Under his guidance, the collection grew from 4,000 to 20,000 objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Americas, Indianoceania, and Europe. Ancient artifacts, notably Egyptian, were also part of the collection and could have been seen by Carlebach.

9 Meyer Levin, "Pensacola Jail Now Art Gallery; Typifies Growth of Local Museums," *Tampa Bay Times*, October 6, 1957, p. 42.

10 City of Lübeck, "Ausstellung über jüdisches Leben - Sammlung Julius Carlebach," *Lübeck Fenster*, 2002, http://www.luebeck.de/aktuelles/presse/pressedienstarchiv/view/2002/11/020846rk/, accessed November 2018.

11 Tobias Kühn, "Von der Rolle. Bad Segeberg: Gemeinde erhält Sefer Tora aus dem Museum zurück," *Jüdische Allgemeine*, 2007, http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/3839, accessed November 2018.

12 Itzhak Shoher dates this move to the late 1920s. His assertion must nevertheless be treated cautiously, since Shoher was a close friend of Josefa Carlebach and relied basically on her memories. He is mistaken, for example, about the year the couple left for the United States, and about the New York gallery's first address. To which it might be added that such an early move would have required many back-and-forth trips between Lübeck, Hamburg, and Berlin. Finally, in 1953 Carlebach celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his career in the art trade. See Itzhak Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach, a personal recollection," in *African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art, Including Property from the Lerner, Shoher and Vogel Collections*, sale catalogue, Sotheby's New York, Friday, May 11, 2012, pp. 178–79; and "Carlebach celebrates 20th anniversary as dealer in Ethnic Art," 1953, Smithsonian Institution, archives, Box 290, Folder 7, Julius Carlebach, 1955.

paintings, and Japanese netsuke.[13] In 1934, Carlebach placed an advertisement in *Palästina Nachrichten* magazine stating that he bought and sold "exotic arts," especially from Africa and the South Seas.[14] This new tack was probably prompted by his new assistant and thereafter partner, Josefa Silberstein (1901–2000).[15] The young woman had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, frequented the Ethnological Museum, and in fact took a particular interest in non-Western ritual items.[16] According to Josefa's close friend Itzhak Shoher, she was the one with anthropological expertise, and provided the necessary connoisseurship on such items in both Berlin and New York. It is of little importance whether Carlebach was immediately convinced of their artistic value or whether he let Silberstein manage that section. By agreeing to display such pieces, he was recreating the large collections he had seen since childhood in ethnographic museums, steadily educating his eye. This experience would moreover be described later by Carlebach as decisive to his career.[17]

The assembling of thematic groups aimed at specialized trades and businesses was also a crucial step in his career as a dealer.[18] While this angle may have had a financial motive, it reinforced Carlebach's penchant for series—for aesthetic or thematic sets. Tracing the history of shoes or decorative practices down through the centuries not only developed his skills as a connoisseur, which could be transposed into other realms of art, but also raised the question of continuity and change on a transcultural level. Carlebach would retain these enthusiasms in New York, induced to further extend his approach when it came to major businesses, investors, and museums.

13 *Weltkunst* VIII, no. 14 (January 28, 1934), p. 3; *Weltkunst* VIII, no. 27 (July 8, 1934), p. 5; Fritz Neugass, "Die Julius-Carlebach-Galerie in New York," *Weltkunst* XXIX, no. 12 (1959), p. 8.

14 *Palästina Nachrichten* 1, no. 11 (September 6, 1934), p. 8.

15 Josefa and Julius were married in 1936.

16 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12); Bernard de Grunne, "Statuette en ivoire, Lega," *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*, sale catalogue, Sotheby's Paris, December 14, 2011, http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/arts-dafrique-et-docanie/lot.65.html, accessed November 2018.

17 In 1953 Carlebach stated that his career in "ethnic art" began in Berlin. Extending the period of his involvement further back was obviously useful to his business by way of legitimizing it, yet this short biographical note, written by Carlebach, could also be seen as an introspective effort to identify the origin of his interest in these objects as a dealer. Press release, 1953.

18 *Weltkunst* VIII, no. 14 (April 8, 1933), p. 3; *Weltkunst* VII, no. 46 (November 12, 1933), p. 3.; *Weltkunst* IX, no. 35–36 (September 8, 1935), p. 5; Neugass, "Die Julius-Carlebach-Galerie" (note 13), p. 8.

Exile in New York

The rise of anti-Semitism in Germany forced the Carlebachs into exile. In 1937, Julius emigrated to the United States, boarding *La Normandie* in Southampton, England, on November 3. He told immigration services that he was a professional architect—perhaps out of cautiousness, since he is not known to have studied architecture.[19] Several sources state that Josefa arrived in the months that followed, but it appears that she did not make the crossing until February 15, 1939.[20] She might have remained with her father in Berlin before heading to Le Havre, France, where she boarded the *Ile-de-France* for the United States. On official documents she stated that she was a fashion designer and listed her husband's address as 161 East Fifty-Sixth Street in New York. She had only $40 with her, but her luggage contained six pieces of Meissen porcelain for which she hoped to get some money.[21] Julius, prior to leaving, had sold two Dutch paintings at auction in order to put a little capital together.[22]

Despite these arrangements, the Carlebachs' financial circumstances in New York were straitened. Shoher states that Julius did not open his own antiques shop right away. He first went into business with a rich German industrialist who had arrived in America with his entire collection. We know almost nothing about this partnership, not even the date it ended. Shoher claims that the rent required for the Fifty-Seventh Street premises was too high for Carlebach, who wound up investing in a place that was smaller, but at least his own. His historic shop apparently only opened in 1942—a date later than the one given by Edmund Carpenter, 1939.[23] Getting close to the right date probably means negotiating between those two assertions. The "Exhibitions in New York" section of *Parnassus* magazine helps to connect the dots.

19 In the same document, Carlebach stated that he would be housed in New York by a friend, a Mr. Bachvaier living on Third Avenue (no trace of whom has been found elsewhere). See "List or manifest of alien passengers for the United States immigrant inspector at port of arrival," November 3, 1937, list no. 16. Posted by the family on the internet, https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272063& and https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272061&, accessed September 2017.

20 It is hard to imagine that Josefa made a return trip between France and the United States because she declared that she had never previously been to the United States. See "List or manifest of alien passengers for the United States immigrant inspector at port of arrival," February 15, 1939, list no. 4. Posted by the family on the internet, accessed September 2017, https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272063&, and https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272061&.

21 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12). Edmund Carpenter also mentioned that the Carlebachs arrived in New York with porcelain and furniture. See Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

22 Sale at the Rudolph Lepke Kunstauctionhaus, April 9–10, 1937. See the online *Datenbank Kunst- und Kulturgutauktionen 1933–1945*, http://www.lostart.de/Webs/DE/Provenienz/AuktionBet.html?cms_param=ABET_ID%3D14480, accessed November 2018.

23 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12); Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

Between November 1939 and May 1940, a show of Egyptian, Roman, and Greek sculpture, including terracottas from Tanagra, was listed at Julius Carlebach, 104 East Fifty-Seventh Street. This address corresponds to the one given by Shoher, so it must be the first New York premises, which involved a partnership but already carried Carlebach's name.[24] In October 1940, the address changed to 142 East Fifty-Seventh Street, two hundred yards away.[25] The November issue confirms the move, listing an exhibition of old Bohemian glass.[26] Then, strangely, the historic address of 943 Third Avenue appeared fleetingly in December, only to vanish forthwith: between January and May 1941, Carlebach's shop was once again listed as number 142 East Fifty-Seventh.[27] Two hypotheses merit consideration. Work might have begun on Third Avenue in early 1941 and the former premises thus briefly re-occupied, or else Carlebach was able—or obliged—to continue renting the East Fifty-Seventh Street premises. Whatever the case, he decided to remain in a neighborhood known for its antiques stores—a famous photograph by Berenice Abbott shows that Native American objects were already found on the street in 1936.[28] The opportunities that this antiques shop offered Carlebach in the early years were nevertheless limited. Not content to be a shopkeeper, he adopted several lines of attack, promoting himself simultaneously through the written press, radio, and external events. He devised an exhibition titled "5,000 Years of Beauty," first held in 1940 in "a Fifth-Avenue salon" then in 1941 at the Museum of Science and Industry in Rockefeller Center. The event attracted some attention, and a review by journalist Alicia Hart was published in over twenty papers in the United States and Canada.[29]

This attraction, which brought together a Babylon cosmetic kit of alabaster, Egyptian unguent jars and pots, Chinese hair tweezers and mascara bowls, combs, brooches, and hairpins of various origins, plus

24 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 11, no. 7 to 12, no. 5 (Nov. 1939–May 1940).

25 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 6 (Oct. 1940), pp. 39–40.

26 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 7 (Nov. 1940), pp. 37–39.

27 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 8 to 13, no. 5 (Dec. 1939–May 1941). The magazine ceased publishing in May 1941.

28 The photograph shows the Sumner Healey Antiques Shop at 942 Third Avenue. The premises were nevertheless put back up for rent in 1938. Nancy Tousley and Berenice Abbott, *The Berenice Abbott Portfolios* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1982), p. 21. The photo can be seen on the website of the New York Public Library, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-dfe2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99, accessed November 2018.

29 Alicia Hart wrote for the *New York World-Telegram*. The original review must thus have appeared there. It was republished between July and September 1940 in several dailies under various titles: "Cosmetic Uses Old As World: Ancient Women Used Costly Perfumes," *Pittsburgh Press*, Pittsburgh, July 19, 1940; "Glorifying Your Self," *Daily Times*, Salisbury, July 20, 1940; "Makeup Really an Old Custom, It's Shown By Relics," *Muncie Evening Press*, Muncie, July 20, 1940; "Cosmetic History Dates Back Ages," *Lansing State Journal*, Lansing, September 26, 1940, and so on.

toothpicks, ear cleaners, and other toiletries, conveys Carlebach's strong penchant for collecting things based on an ethnographic approach.[30] More than series themselves, it was the everyday activities of individuals that captivated him, the very activities that revamp our vision of ancient or remote societies. Carlebach was obviously disinterring a subject that had already been unearthed, and which he hoped would pique the curiosity of the general public, yet the stress on the universality of practices thought to be exclusively European and modern already rang—with respect to his earlier concerns—like a call to revise dominant presuppositions.

Meeting the surrealists

The story of Max Ernst's discovery of Carlebach's shop in 1943 is well known. Robert Lebel recorded it in one of his notebooks:

> "Max Ernst, exiled in New York, entered a little second-hand shop run by a German refugee, Julius Carlebach. He noticed an Eskimo spoon and asked how much it cost, but Carlebach replied that it was part of a collection of spoons from various places and he couldn't break up the collection by selling just one item. Finally, when Ernst revealed his identity, a highly surprised Carlebach agreed to sell the Eskimo spoon for five dollars, but asked Ernst why he was interested only in that one."[31]

Accounts of what happened next vary. Did Ernst keep the location secret? Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote, "Max Ernst told us about it."[32] Dorothea Tanning reported that Ernst immediately thought of his associates. "And I have friends who are also interested," he allegedly said to Carlebach. "Let me know if you get something else."[33] But Carpenter asserts that Ernst refused to reveal where he made his find: Kurt Seligmann offered to reveal his source of witchcraft illustrations in exchange for the address, but Ernst judged the swap unequal. A determined André Breton nevertheless swiftly managed to locate the store.[34] The details of

30 Some of the items came from South America, Africa, and the Pacific. Illustrations were published on May 14, 1941 in the *Eau Claire Leader* ("Who Said Beauty Culture Was Something New?") and on May 23, 1941, in the *Asbury Park Evening Press* ("Beauty Culture Aids of Yesteryear on Exhibition"). In addition, on June 6, 1942, Carlebach was a guest on Dave Elman's KWKH radio program, "Hobby Lobby."

31 Notebook of various entries, Robert Lebel collection, Musée du Quai Branly Archives, Paris.

32 Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Éribon, *De près et de loin* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1988), p. 51.

33 Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 1), p. 66.

34 That, at least, is what Carpenter wrote, but it is also possible that Ernst informed only his close friends, including Lévi-Strauss and Breton but not Seligmann, with whom he had less in common. Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 115.

whether or not Ernst's lucky find was passed on is not merely anecdotal, for it reflects a certain competitive attitude within the group. While the surrealists didn't hesitate to pass objects among themselves, they also sometimes snatched things from under the others' noses. It should be noted in this regard that, for a certain number of collectors, getting the scoop and making privileged contact with the work—as concretized by the act of purchase—was often more important than possession itself, made intellectually impossible by the transformation of the object into subject.[35] Acquisition could thus be understood as a symbolic transaction that seals a pact of joint connivance rather than captive domination, making the stakes behind Ernst's discovery clearer.

It should also be kept in mind that the surrealists had been interested in indigenous arts from North America since the 1920s,[36] and that during their exile they tirelessly sought opportunities to activate—to reaffirm—their movement. Far from abandoning the concerns of the 1930s, they invested them with more intense powers: native artifacts, which stemmed from animist and totemic conceptions of the world, would thus become engines of a deeper exploration of processes and values such as hermeticism, black humor, and the marvelous. It is not surprising that Carlebach's gallery managed to become a key location of surrealist life in New York. Whereas the apartment of Bernard and Rebecca Reis, where the surrealists could eat French cuisine, was "a great retreat,"[37] the shops and museums where they got right among objects stood out as realms of great exaltation, of release from growing suffocation.[38] "We have thrown ourselves into the poetic atmosphere of Eskimo masks, we breathe Alaska and dream in Tlingit and make love among Haida totem poles," wrote Isabelle Waldberg. "Carlebach on Third has become the confluence of our desires. For which we pay. Robert has a fine collection. Dolores is spending all her money and André has done his utmost to acquire two of them."[39]

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35 On the discourse of collectors, notably their relationship to money and their moral stance, see the fascinating analysis by Brigitte Derlon and Monique Jeudy-Ballini, *La Passion de l'art primitif: enquête sur les collectionneurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).

36 See Mauzé, "Les Esprits du silence" (note 7) and Florence Duchemin-Pelletier, "Surréalisme et art inuit: la fascination du Grand Nord," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 2, no. 1 (2008), pp. 64–94.

37 William McNaught, "Oral history interview with Rebecca Reis, 1980," *Archives of American Art*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1980, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/-11939, accessed November 2018.

38 Robert Lebel wrote, "Yes, night-time in New York had little to offer. During the day, at least, we spent much time on 'uncivilized' objects, especially the recently discovered Eskimo masks that three or four of us bought, to the point of finding ourselves penniless." Letter from Robert Lebel to Patrick Waldberg, October 29, 1943, BLJD, Ms Series, Ms 41934 to 41953.

39 Letter from Isabelle Waldberg to Patrick Waldberg, October 14, 1943, in Isabelle Waldberg and Patrick Waldberg, *Un amour acéphale, correspondance 1940–1949* (Paris: La Différence, 1992), p. 105.

The surrealists shopped at other stores in New York. Claude Lévi-Strauss referred to loads of pre-Columbian objects at Macy's, Inca jewelry at Gimbels, and "knickknack shops" on Madison Avenue that concealed treasures in the back of the store. He also mentioned a German baron on Sixth Avenue whose chests were full of Peruvian antiquities.[40] But it was the Carlebach gallery where the members of the group and their friends acquired the rarest items, notably Yup'ik. Indeed, Carlebach had decided to approach one of the most prolific collectors in town in order to fulfill the surrealists' heady demands, namely the founder of the Museum of the American Indian, George Gustave Heye (1874–1957).[41] Thus began a long collaboration between the two men, resulting in access to an unprecedented collection of items (fig. 128).

This is not the place to dwell on Heye's life, amply discussed elsewhere, but it should be recalled that Heye had rapidly assembled a prodigious number of artifacts. For that matter, his demanding passion earned him various labels as an "obsessive" and "rapacious" collector, a "monomaniac" and "buccaneer" who amassed merchandise by the "boxcar."[42] By 1916 he already owned nearly 58,000 items. That was when he decided to create his own museum and to surround himself with a keen team of specialists who searched, prospected, and analyzed for him.[43] The death of his two main backers and the Great Depression obliged Heye to let part of his staff go and to sell a large number of items. He thereby accumulated savings that enabled him to begin buying again in 1935, benefiting from the misfortune of his counterparts who sold their collections cheaply.[44] Ultimately, Heye systematically sold off items considered to be duplicates and bought only "specimens that have never been duplicated."[45] He therefore opened his warehouse

40 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Regard éloigné* [Paris 1983], p. 349, translated by Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss as *The View from Afar* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985); letter from Claude Lévi-Strauss to his parents, January 22, 1942, in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *"Chers tous deux": Lettres à ses parents 1931–1942* (Paris: Seuil, 2015), p. 502.

41 It was after encountering Ernst that Carlebach probably decided to get in touch with Heye.

42 Ann McMullen has shown that Heye was obviously not driven solely by a pathological urge to collect but more probably by a sense of mission to preserve. See Ann McMullen, "Reinventing George Heye: Nationalizing the Museum of the American Indian and Its Collections," in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 65–105.

43 The museum did not open until 1922, and hardly encouraged attendance: its opening hours were inconvenient and the number of items on show was very limited. As to conservation work, it seems that Heye himself drew up the catalogue and numbered every object.

44 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2); Ira Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," *American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 2006), pp. 511–42.

45 The practice of swapping "duplicates" among museums has been attested since the nineteenth century, but Heye took it to another level. See McMullen, "Reinventing George Heye" (note 42), p. 77.

129 Photographer unknown, entrance to the Bronx Annex, 1926. Washington, DC, National Museum of the American Indian.

to dealers and art lovers, and was particularly ready to get rid of Yup'ik masks, which he held in low esteem and described as "jokes."[46]

At that time, most of the collection of the Museum of the American Indian was stored in an annex warehouse in the Bronx (fig. 129). Carlebach regularly went there to select objects that he bought on approval. He took delivery of them the next week and alerted his buyers according to their respective penchants.[47] If a selected item didn't sell, he would return it to Heye and be reimbursed.[48] Another approach entailed the organization of

46 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 131. Heye was already selling objects by the late 1930s; Wolfgang Paalen bought a Yup'ik mask from him in 1939. It should also be mentioned that the surrealists had already come across pieces from Heye's collection at Charles Ratton's gallery in 1935 and during the exhibition titled "Ancient Masks and Ivories of the Northwestern Coast of America."

47 Carlebach never offered Yup'ik masks to Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was not inclined to possess such fragile artworks which would thereby make him feel responsible for conserving them for future generations. See Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks: Agayuliyararput = Our Way of Making Prayer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), p. 215.

48 Claude Lévi-Strauss told Edmund Carpenter that Carlebach never had more than two or three pieces of "tribal art" in his shop at a time—while payments were often deferred, it is clear that these purchases on approval were still transactions, and that Carlebach did not yet have the funds to build up a specific stock. Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

convoys to the annex, providing the surrealists with an opportunity to be in direct contact with the objects and choose from among countless specimens. As Roberto Matta reported, "The next morning we left in two taxis—Breton, Duthuit, Lebel, Max Ernst, Lévi-Strauss, and myself—and gathered in the Aladdin's cave. If you so wished, with a little tact anything could be bought for between 140 and 200 dollars."[49] The fans were met at the warehouse by Charles O. Turbyfill, a former Heye assistant who was curator of the annex.[50] Turbyfill noted the inventory number of the selected objects and Heye would draw up a bill for Carlebach.[51] The items then went to Carlebach's premises before being finally delivered to the buyer. Heye scrupulously kept accounts, but the degree of trust between the two men was such that mutual favors were soon being accorded: Heye allowed the surrealists to go on their own to the annex, without Carlebach, and to dispose of items for which no deal had yet been made. "In case my customers pick out anything more at the annex besides the Eskimo masks," wrote Carlebach, "just let it go, till I am back."[52]

Officially, the pieces collected by George G. Heye could not be sold, because they had become the property of the museum. Unofficially, however, administrative subterfuge was easy, since the transaction could be authorized as an "exchange." The museum's annual report for 1942–43 thus states that Carlebach had received "Northwest Coast duplicate specimens" in exchange for Peruvian textiles, Mexican archaeological pieces, northwest-coast ethnological items, and South American archaeological and ethnological specimens.[53] In 1944–45, it was stressed that, thanks to these exchanges with Carlebach, "the Museum has been

49 Germana Ferrari, *Matta: entretiens morphologiques: Notebook no. 1, 1936–1944* (London/Lugano: Sistan, 1987), p. 149.

50 Although Charles O. Turbyfill had no academic training, he carried out excavations for the museum from 1923 onward. His field notes were apparently as meticulous and "scientific" as those by other members of staff. As his health declined, he was appointed curator of the annex warehouse in 1926. He lived on the premises in a small apartment. Jacknis, "A New Thing?" (note 44), p. 538, note 31; Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 36; Jennifer O'Neal and Rachel Menyuk, "Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation Records, 1890-1989," *Finding Aid, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center*, 2012, p. 188, http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/archivecenter/AC001_maiheye.pdf, accessed November 2018.

51 All the drafts are archived in the National Museum of the American Indian (hereafter cited as NMAI Archives), Box 290, Folder 2–7 Julius Carlebach.

52 Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, September 1, 1943. NMAI Archives. Everything suggests that the members of the group and their associates were unaware of this relationship. Whereas, in later interviews, Rebecca Reis and Enrico Donati assumed there was "some kind of arrangement" with the Heye Foundation, Roberto Matta and Dorothea Tanning thought instead that Turbyfill was culpably complicit. See Ferrari, *Matta: entretiens morphologiques* (note 49), p. 149; Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 1), p. 70; McNaught, "Oral history interview with Rebecca Reis" (note 37); and Forrest Selvig, "Interview with Enrico Donati," *Archives of American Art,* 1968, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-enrico-donati-12035 accessed November 2018.

53 Among Turbyfill's rare comments written on draft documents are the words "archaeology" and "ethnology," reflecting Heye's preferences. Annual Report for the period from April 1, 1942, to April 1, 1943 of the Board of Trustees, NMAI Archives.

able to fill in with adequate specimens some regions not before represented in its collection."[54] It was probably through this channel, and subsequent negotiations over the value of the objects, that Carlebach managed to make some money. In fact, it looks as though he did not speculate on items he bought for the surrealists—the amount he billed them was the same as the one given by Heye.[55] In contrast, Heye didn't hesitate to raise his prices in the face of the new buyers' enthusiasm. As Marie Mauzé has pointed out, in a matter of months similar items doubled in price. A so-called swan and white whale mask was sold to Breton for $42.83 in August 1943, but its twin cost $86.77 in October when Georges Duthuit decided to buy it.[56]

Returning to the moment when the surrealists first arrived in the United States in the early 1940s, their resources were very limited and all were obliged to find a way to make a living. For a while, Peggy Guggenheim paid Breton a salary of $200 in exchange for his aid in acquiring artworks.[57] But it was Patrick Waldberg who obtained work for Breton—as well as for Duthuit, Lévi-Strauss, and Lebel—as a newsreader for Voice of America radio.[58] Ernst, meanwhile, found himself in a somewhat different, more comfortable situation, having just married Peggy Guggenheim, who met all his needs. The little he earned from his paintings went straight into Carlebach's pocket, to Guggenheim's great annoyance:

> "Max got hold of a little man called Carlebach, or rather Carlebach got hold of Max. He let him have his collection on credit and Max paid him whenever he sold a painting. I was very much annoyed that Max refused to contribute to the household expenses. … Finally, Max reached the point where he would not even put aside money to pay his income tax. Carlebach used to phone Max almost every day to come around to his shop on Third Avenue to see some new things that he had found for him. … There was no end to his ingeniousness

54 Annual Report for the period from April 1, 1944 to April 1, 1945, of the Board of Trustees. NMAI Archives. Note that the rules changed in 1948: Heye told Carlebach that specimens could no longer leave the museum without the approval of the Board of Trustees. Letter from George G. Heye to Julius Carlebach, August 25, 1948, NMAI Archives.

55 The prices mentioned by Isabelle Waldberg for Yup'ik masks correspond to the ones listed in the NMAI Archives. Waldberg, *Un amour acéphale* (note 39), p. 278.

56 The story of these twin masks is useful in understanding the surrealists' financial situation during their exile. A conflict apparently arose between Breton and Duthuit because the former wanted to own both masks but the latter foiled him. It might seem surprising that Breton waited so long to buy the second mask, allowing his friend to snatch it up, but that would be forgetting Breton's limited resources. See Mauzé, "Les esprits du silence" (note 7), p. 51; letters from Heye to Carlebach dated August 12, 1943, and October 12, 1943, NMAI Archives.

57 Fabrice Flahutez, *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe – Mutations du surréalisme, de l'exil américain à l'"Écart absolu" (1941–1965)* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2007), p. 12.

58 Robert Lebel, *Le surréalisme comme essuie-glace, 1943–1984 – Œuvres complètes*, ed. Jérôme Duwa (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2016), vol. 1, p. 240

> and his activities. … Once he found out that I collected earrings, [he] immediately got together a large quantity and began to work on me. But I did not succumb. Of course Max did, and bought me a beautiful pair with Spanish baroque pearls. But I resisted any further efforts on Mr. Carlebach's part, as I considered him sufficiently dangerous with his totem poles and masks."[59]

When the couple separated, Ernst was again destitute. As Lévi-Strauss recalled, "One day Breton phoned to ask me if I had a little money to buy one of Max Ernst's Indian objects, since he no longer had a cent."[60] In general, "someone who had a few dollars would buy a desired object, then tell the others when he was broke."[61] All means were valid to raise some cash—the sale of one's own works, the swapping of fur coats, or trade in old objects.[62] Sometimes items would circulate from one individual to another in order to compensate for missed opportunities—Breton bought a mask from Donati, Lebel loaned another to Isabelle Waldberg to decorate her apartment. Ultimately, it was Duthuit whose situation became the most comfortable in New York. Thus in 1944, "he snapped up primitive and other objects, some of which must have been very expensive,"[63] reported Waldberg, and even "bought Christmas presents" at Carlebach's.[64]

There is not enough space here to list all the objects these people bought from Carlebach, but it should perhaps be pointed out that many of them were frequent visitors to his shop. Ernst, as we have seen, was the first to go there. In addition to his famous kachina dolls, he bought a small group of Yup'ik and Native American items that are now in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Breton and Lebel also bought numerous Yup'ik and Inupiaq masks, some of which are now in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. A sketchbook of drawings by Lebel makes it possible to attribute most of the purchases of Alaskan masks. Several other collections have been dispersed, notably Dolorès Vanetti's in 1961, Isabelle Waldberg's in the 1960s, Maria Martins's in 2004, Enrico Donati's in 2010–11, and those of Bernard Reis and Roberto Matta at unknown dates.[65] Only Duthuit's collection has remained

59 Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: The Informal Memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim* (London: André Deutsch, 2005), p. 262.
60 Lévi-Strauss and Éribon, *De près et de loin* (note 32), p. 49.
61 Ibid., p. 51.
62 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 115; Flahutez, *Nouveau monde* (note 57), p. 314.
63 Letter from Isabelle to Patrick Waldberg, October 16, 1944, in Waldberg, *Un amour acéphale* (note 39), p. 277.
64 Duthuit, "Esquimaux ou des Arts Derniers" (note 1), p. 14.
65 The circumstances in which Dolorès Vanetti's and Isabelle Waldberg's collections of masks were sold are unknown, but the former was bought by Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1961. The sale of the latter can be inferred from exhibition catalogues, since objects in the exhibition "Le Masque" at

intact. Also worth underscoring is Yves Tanguy's less well-known interest in Alaskan masks—in a 1946 letter to Breton he mentioned that he was "increasingly delighted with the Eskimo mask."[66] For that matter, a few years later Tanguy's partner, Kay Sage, did a watercolor based on a twin of a mask later bought by Breton; her work conveys the evocative power that indigenous art from North America held for the surrealists (fig. 130).[67] Members of the group finally paid Carlebach back by recommending him to their friends and offering him advertising space in their magazine *VVV* (fig. 131).

130 Kay Sage, *No Title*, 1941, ink and watercolor on paper, 35.5 × 26 cm. Houston, TX, Collection of Roy and Mary Cullen.

the Musée Guimet in 1959–60 still belonged to Waldberg yet were listed as "formerly Waldberg collection" in the Galerie Jacques Kerchache's show of "Art primitif d'Amérique du Nord" in 1965. Maria Martins's collection was sold at Sotheby's on June 24, 2004 (*American Indian Art Including Property from the Estate of Paul Peralta-Ramos*). Meanwhile, some pieces in Enrico Donati's collection were dispersed on May 14, 2010, by Sotheby's (*Important American Indian, African, Oceanic and Other Works of Art from the Studio of Enrico Donati*), while others were sold by the Donald Ellis Gallery after the Winter Antiques Show of 2011. Note that the gallery also owns a Yup'ik mask that once belonged to Roberto Matta.

66 Letter from Yves Tanguy to André Breton, January 31, 1946, BLJD, BRT C 1593. Upon Kay Sage's death, this mask was acquired by Pierre Matisse, then bought by Eugene and Clare Thew and donated to the Fenimore Art Museum. Note that José Pierre already suspected Tanguy of having been influenced by Inuit art, seeing Tanguy's hand in the 1929 *Surrealist Map of the World* in which Alaska, Baffin Island, and Greenland are allocated a lion's share. See José Pierre, "L'art des Eskimo de l'Alaska au regard des surréalistes," in Jean-Pierre Rousselot, ed., *Les masques Eskimo d'Alaska*, (Saint-Vit: D. Amez, 1995), p. 95.

67 The mask in question is a fish mask, Heye inventory number 12/909 (left side—Breton had the right side, inv. 12/910). Since the watercolor is dated 1941, it is highly probable that Sage and Tanguy saw it that year in the exhibition titled "Indian Art of the United States" at MoMA, New York.

131 Advertisement for the Julius Carlebach Gallery, in *VVV*, issue 2–3, 1943.

The modernist digression

At the end of the war, most of this group of French friends left New York. Carlebach's business flagged. Although in 1945 he could still count on Christmas sales to keep him afloat, by 1946 his finances were sinking.[68] Carlebach no longer bought masks from Heye, limiting himself to small objects such as kachina dolls and pre-Columbian items, which were sure things. In September, he asked for advances on payment from the director of the Museum of the American Indian, ultimately selling more to Heye than he bought from him.[69] In 1947 he confessed his woes, hoping that business would pick up after the summer.[70]

If Carlebach found himself in such tightened circumstances, that was obviously because he had lost several of his best clients. But it was also because he had just made a bold gamble: he opened a gallery of modern art (fig. 132). Since November 1946 he had been asking for Breton's opi-

68 Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, December 8, 1945, NMAI Archives.
69 Carlebach to Heye, September 18, 1946, NMAI Archives.
70 Carlebach to Heye, January 11, 1947, and June 28, 1947, NMAI Archives. See also Carlebach's letter to André Breton, September 23, 1947, BLJD, BRT C Sup 163.

nion on who were "the most representative" artists in France.[71] Breton immediately thought of Hans Bellmer, whom he convinced in turn of Carlebach's merits. "I continue to feel, my friend, that Carlebach being thus disposed, he could do a great deal for you in New York—no other dealer over there could better serve your interests."[72] This is one of the rare traces of a balanced exchange between Carlebach and the surreal-

132 Vivian Maier, *Untitled*, New York, September 1953. Alta Loma, CA, The Maloof Collection.

ists—better, of recognition of Carlebach's talent and skill. In a letter to Breton dated February 1947, Carlebach moreover proved that he had learned the modernist lesson by comparing copper birds by the Mound Builders (on whom he hoped to organize a show) to Isamu Noguchi's aesthetics. He also acknowledged his admiration of Bellmer's works.[73] The dialogue continued as Breton introduced Carlebach to Mme.

71 Letter from André Breton to Hans Bellmer, November 22, 1946, in *Collection René Alleau: Première partie et à divers*, sale catalogue (Paris: Drouot Hôtel des Ventes, 2009), p. 58.

72 Breton to Bellmer, February 13, 1947, in *Collections I.B. et G.L.,* sale catalogue (Paris: Drouot Hôtel des Ventes, 2007), p. 26.

73 Letter from Carlebach to Breton, February 8, 1947, Atelier André Breton archives. Note, however, that Bellmer complained about not being paid by Carlebach several months after he sent him his drawings. Letter from Hans Bellmer to André Breton, June 19, 1947, BLJD, BRT C 113.

133 Advertisement for a sale of sculptures by Jacques Lipchitz by the Carlebach Gallery, in *The Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1955.

Loeb and continued to advise him on purchases of artworks—notably Seurat's drawings—for which the dealer thanked Breton with a gift of kachinas.[74] Donati and Tanguy, having remained in New York, followed these transactions closely—Donati served as a go-between—as well as the opening of Carlebach's new gallery at 937 Third Avenue.[75] Donati felt that the premises, for which "he helped out as much as possible," were very good—the space was spare, far from the "jumble" described by Tanning.[76] Donati nevertheless complained about the proliferation of African objects and the rise in prices. "I fear that the gallery has gone to [Carlebach's] head, and that he is no longer affordable." Tanguy also commented that little seemed extraordinary, whereas "prices have become ridiculous."[77]

74 "Mme. Loeb" must have been Silvia Luzzatto, Pierre Loeb's wife. Letters from Carlebach to Breton, February 28, 1947, and May 16, 1947, BLJD, BRT C Sup 163.

75 The opening probably took place in April 1947, since Carlebach had people write to him c/o Murray's Antiques from January to March, while waiting for renovation work to be finished. NMAI Archives.

76 Letter from Enrico Donati to André Breton, May 7, 1947. BLJD, BRT C 1806–1814.

77 Letter from Yves Tanguy to André Breton, August 18, 1947, BLJD, BRT C 1595.

Did Carlebach merely seek to enhance the reputation and profitability of his gallery by displaying modern art, or was he acting out of conviction?[78] These two possibilities are not incompatible, and given the number of artists he showed between 1947 and 1951, his intellectual commitment can hardly be doubted (fig. 133).[79] Although certain artists came from the Peggy Guggenheim gallery, such as Peter Busa and Charles Seliger—who met Herbert Read during his show at Carlebach's in 1948—most were new talents being offered their first solo show.[80] Such was the case with Roy Lichtenstein in 1951, as well as with less famous names such as Alan Wood-Thomas, Bernice Markowitz, Tom Ingle, Oscar De Mejo, and Hilde Weingarten (fig. 134). Some

134 Photographer unknown, installation view of the Hilde Weingarten exhibition at the Carlebach Gallery, January 1949.

78 This question might seem surprising insofar as several New York galleries were in financial difficulty and the profitability of Carlebach's scheme was far from certain. He was nevertheless a novice in the modern art world and it is not unreasonable to think he had not assessed all the risks involved, notably weaker sales once the surrealists left. Furthermore, this move was part of the process of the transforming of the antiquarian into a gallery owner. The alteration of his premises, the new practices required by dealing with living artists, and the regular program of exhibitions were all factors that effaced the ambiguity of his calling, and subsequently nurtured his work in the realm of so-called primitive arts.

79 Appended here is a non-exhaustive list of exhibitions held at the Carlebach Gallery.

80 Francis V. O'Connor, Melvin P. Lader, and Thomas M. Messer, *Charles Seliger: Redefining Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2003), p. 44. Peter Busa decided to show at Carlebach's at that time because he was interested in indigenous art from North and South America. See Dorothy Seckler, *Interview with Peter Busa*, Archives of American Art, 1965, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-peter-busa-11686, accessed November 2018.

people recalled that Carlebach was "more interested in an enthusiastic response than wealthy clients, and he had at least as much time for alert young artists."[81] Others referred to his benevolent, cheerful disposition. To Joan Mitchell, who unsuccessfully sought a New York gallery in the early 1950s, Carlebach confessed, "Gee, Joan, if only you were French, male, and dead."[82]

This development in the late 1940s, despite its brevity, is crucial to an understanding of Carlebach's approach in later years, because that was when the dealer began to establish strong ties with the New York art scene. His job of promoting young artists gave him a broader vision of what remained to be accomplished in terms of winning recognition for ancient and non-Western as well as modern art. It should be remembered that he never entirely abandoned modern art, since his gallery was divided into three distinct spaces—one devoted to modern art, the second to "primitive" arts, and the third to ancient items.[83] Indeed, in 1949 Carlebach tried to transcend this division by organizing a show of contemporary Native American painting.[84] More surprisingly, from October 1948 onward Carlebach's premises hosted the Haitian Art Center headed by Selden Rodman. This move certainly betrayed the influence, if not the recommendation, of Breton, who had traveled to Haiti several years earlier. Artists such as Philomé Obin, Wilson Bigaud, and Castera Bazile were thus exhibited at 943 Third Avenue, for the Center's mission was to "extend Haiti's painting movement into the United States."[85] It is interesting to note, from a historiographical standpoint, that Rodman claimed credit for Carlebach's encounter with the surrealists, writing that it was he who introduced the dealer to them—as obviously contradicted by dates and by other accounts.[86]

The boom years

The 1950s were the years of the inexorable rise of Julius Carlebach as a dealer and public figure. Thanks to his ambitiousness, the small antiques merchant on Third Avenue became a key player on the Ame-

81 Theodore Allen Heinrich, *The Painted Constructions 1952-1960 of Sorel Etrog* (Bern: Staempfli, 1968), p. 74.

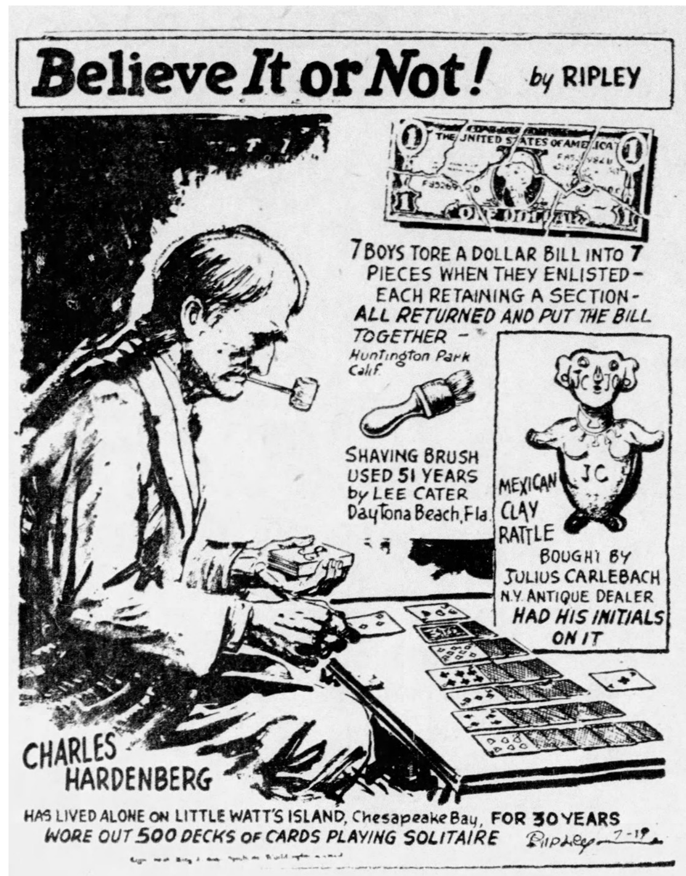
82 Quoted in Patricia Albers, *Joan Mitchell: Lady Painter, A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2011), p. 144.

83 "New Modern Gallery," *Arts Digest* 21, no. 6 (1947), p. 31.

84 On this occasion Carlebach asked Heye if he had some works he could lend, notably sand paintings. Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, August 3, 1949.

85 On this subject see Carlo A. Célius, *Langage plastique et énonciation identitaire: l'invention de l'art haïtien* (Quebec: Presse de l'Université Laval, 2007), pp. 34–36.

86 Selden Rodman, *Artists in Tune with Their World: Masters of Popular Art in the Americas and Their Relation to the Folk Tradition* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), pp. 22–23.



135 Newspaper cartoon mentioning Julius Carlebach, in *The Clarion-Ledger*, July 19, 1946.

rican market for so-called primitive arts (fig. 135). Major collectors beat a path to his door. It was with Carlebach that collectors Jay C. Leff and Emily A. Wingert got their start, as did dealers Merton Simpson and James Economos. Like many gallery owners, Carlebach established friendships with his buyers—mutual trust is essential in the collecting business, especially in a field where authenticity is regularly at issue.[87] Thus Heye himself ultimately took things from Carlebach without seeing them, and sometimes played the role of banker.[88] Josefa Carlebach, meanwhile, became a key interlocutor for prestigious people such

87 See accounts such as those by Irene Roth and Ezekiel Schloss. Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982), pp. 184–85. See also Gary Graffman, "The Man with the Last Word," *Connoisseur* 212, no. 848 (1982), pp. 90–91.

88 Charles Ratton did the same with the surrealists. Philippe Dagen, "Ratton, objets sauvages," in *Charles Ratton: L'invention des arts primitifs*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Quai Branly, 2013), pp. 119–46. See also the September 1952 correspondence between Heye and Carlebach, now in the NMAI Archives, which reveals the two men's close ties, going largely beyond the professional sphere.

136 Advertisement for Miller High Life beer, 1954.

137 Frame still from the film *Bell, Book and Candle*, 1958, directed by Richard Quine.

138 Photograph featuring, left to right, Jack V. Sewell, Julius Carlebach, and Morton D. May. "Exhibition and sale of oriental art at the Famous Barr Co. department stores," article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 16, 1964.

as Helena Rubinstein, Eleanor Ford, and Nelson A. Rockefeller (who described her as one of the major sources of his collection).[89]

Julius's media profile rose in 1955 when he gave a lecture at the Plainfield Public Library on the influence of primitive arts on modern art.[90] Simultaneously making himself known to the wider public by linking his name and his artworks to Miller High Life beer (fig. 136), then lending his collection for Richard Quine's 1958 movie, *Belle, Book, and Candle* (fig. 137), Carlebach became the leading figure on the market for non-Western arts.[91] His actions should be seen in the context of broader considerations on making artworks more accessible to the general public, which he sought to spearhead. By trying to convince his most important buyers to give their pieces to under-endowed museums, and by advocating the grouping of smaller establishments into cooperatives, Carlebach hoped to see every shopping mall host a museum (fig. 138).[92]

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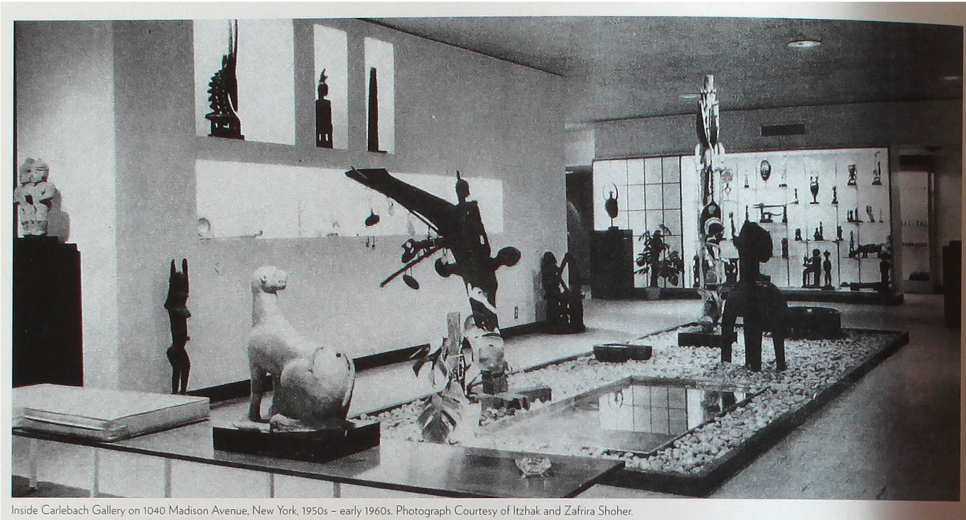
89 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12). The date when Josefa and Rockefeller met was roughly 1949: the first year of correspondence with the gallery is held in the Rockefeller Archives, New York.

90 The library was then hosting an exhibition of Allen Alperton's collection of African art. "Primitive Art Lecture Heard," *Courier-News*, October 21, 1955, p. 2.

91 He lent a set of eighty-one objects valued at $75,000, of which the press made a big deal.

92 In 1957, Carlebach addressed the fourth annual Mountain-Plains Museum Conference (University of Oklahoma) on these subjects. Mountain-Plains Museum Conference, *Newsletter* 215–216, 1958. See also Julius Carlebach, "Museum 'Co-Ops,'" *Museum Journal* 1, no. 3 (1958), pp. 67–69.



139 1040 Madison Avenue, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 1959.

More could be said on these boom years and Carlebach's dynamism, whose new premises on 1040 Madison Avenue, near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, drew crowds (fig. 139).[93] But the main point is the path he had paved since his first New York shop. Carlebach's popularity could be measured not only in terms of profits and media events, but also by his newly acquired influence in the art world—museums, collectors, and companies that wanted to start a collection would no longer reckon without him, thereby validating his status as a connoisseur. The development of his activities via the increasingly complex space of his gallery, and the heightened pace of curating projects, testify to his twin determination to embrace the profession of gallery owner without limiting himself to it; he thereby evolved into a crucial intermediary in the museum system. It was by building bridges between different players and milieus that Carlebach ultimately managed to carve an original place for himself on the so-called "primitive" scene.

Conclusion

Carlebach's career was based on strong commitments and convictions. It was punctuated by oscillations between his past and current activities, which helped his approach to mature. His concern to assemble objects

93 The move took place in 1958. The gallery was designed by Slovak architect Ladislav Leland Rado, and drew 700 to 1,000 visitors every Saturday. Meyer Levin, "Primitive Art in Non Primitive Setting," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 1959, p. 8.

along highly varied thematic lines, far from being anecdotal, shaped not only his taste for collecting but also his curiosity with respect to overlooked narratives. It was hardly to be expected that one day Carlebach would become a specialist in peasant art, the history of beauty, and chess games. Yet opportunism is too easy an explanation: Carlebach was drawn to challenges and had a thirst for learning that led him to develop a degree of theoretical as well as visual expertise in a successive series of fields. When Carlebach met Max Ernst, it was not solely for financial reasons—which should not be excluded, yet not viewed as exclusive—that he leapt into the realm of native ritual objects, but because it offered a new field of art and knowledge to be grasped. Similarly, his reticence to break up the set of spoons was due not to an antiquarian's obsessiveness but his reluctance to surrender his efforts at comparative analysis to the first person who came along.

In the museum, Carlebach learned to seek, categorize, and document. In his shop, then his gallery, his buyers' demands spurred him to cultivate a discriminating eye. That was where the surrealist lesson must have been particularly effective—why one mask rather than another? What evocative power, based on what values, did an object hold when considered on its own? This criterion of aesthetic judgment, specific to the modernist paradigm, supplemented the criteria on which he judged ethnographic collections. Ultimately, Carlebach set works apart for their "artistic qualities" alone, independently of their origin, to Heye's great displeasure.[94]

What characterizes the unusual figure of Julius Carlebach, once and for all, is the way he cumulatively deployed his experiences. The more his shop became a gallery, the less he limited himself to the role of gallery owner—his displays moved further afield, into the movies, into department stores, through loans and philanthropic activities.[95] There is every reason to acknowledge his social skills and his ability to feed off his encounters in order to constantly forge new relationships among artistic spheres, to the extent of adopting the stance of intermediary between worlds. Like his last gallery, which underscored correspondences between a heterogeneous group of artworks—not unlike surrealist practices—his many functions and affinities generated productive overlaps. In the end, we should probably revise those accounts left by a few members of the surrealist group in exile (which are partial in both senses of the word), and allow ourselves to view Carlebach as a

94 Letters from Heye to Carlebach, May 14, 1953, and from Carlebach to Heye, April 16, 1954. NMAI Archives.

95 In 1960 Carlebach set up the United World Arts Foundation, "dedicated to the exhibition of art treasures from the cultural and industrial productions of the world's peoples, past and present." "New Gallery-Foundation," *Art Journal* 21, no. 1 (1960), p. 60.

140 Enrico Donati,
Totem (Hommage à Julius), 1945,
wood hat blocks, leather, metal,
and rope, 139.7 × 24.1 × 36.8 cm.
San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum
of San Francisco.

close collaborator and valid interlocutor who accomplished more than many other people did. An anecdote about Enrico Donati and his *Totem* (1945) is enlightening in this respect: the artist passed off one of his own sculptures to Carlebach as an authentic Native American work. After successfully fooling the dealer, Donati announced the hoax with a grin. The sculpture was subtitled *Homage to Julius* (fig. 140). More than just pulling off a hoax, the primitive-art-loving artist probably sought to encourage healthy competition among connoisseurs. Through this amicable rivalry, Donati clearly elevated Carlebach to the status of an expert worth challenging, which implies yet another balanced relationship: there is no point in fooling the ignorant.