

Elyse: Our first story investigates how an immigrant artist woke America up to the horror of Hitler's death camps. September, 1939. Germany invades Poland. Over the next five years, the Nazis carry out Hitler's final solution. Dissidents, gypsies, and millions of Jews are imprisoned in filthy ghettos and death camps. From his apartment in New York City, a Polish immigrant fights back with nothing more than a pencil and a paintbrush. Political cartoonist Arthur Szyk savages Hitler, and America responds with action. Today, over 60 years later, a man in California thinks he may have found works that could shine new light on the life of this extraordinary artist. Polish-American collector Adam Lubitz couldn't believe his luck when he found these four paintings on the Internet.

Adam Lubitz: What made me decide to get them is, they were signed in Polish, and they were signed "Szyk." I did some checking on the Internet, typed in "Szyk," and found out that he was a famous political cartoonist during World War II. And I put my bid in on all four and won all four.

Elyse: I'm Elyse Luray. I've come to Glendale, California, to investigate. As an art historian, I'm fascinated by Adam's story. Could these illustrations be the work of Arthur Szyk, perhaps the greatest political cartoonist of the 20th century? Okay, show me what you have.

Adam: Here they are.

Elyse: Oh, nice, so these are the pieces that you bought on the Internet.

Adam: That's -- that's it.

Elyse: Oh, very nice. Okay, so they're four soldiers. They're all dated 1915 or 1914.

Adam: Yes.

Elyse: And each of them are signed "A. S-z-y-k?"

Adam: Szyk, and I hope it means Arthur Szyk.

Elyse: Okay. And they all also say "l-o-d-z."

Adam: Wozh.

Elyse: Wozh.

Adam: Yes, that's a city in Poland. Americans pronounce it "Lodz;" in Polish, it's "wozh."

Elyse: So tell me, Adam, what do you want to know? What can I help you with?

Adam: I would like to know if those could be original works by Arthur Szyk.

Elyse: And do you have any more information for me to go on?

Adam: That's pretty much it.

Elyse: That's it. All right, well, we have a little bit of information just by looking at the illustrations, but I think I might need to take them with me.

Adam: Please.

Elyse: Is that okay?

Adam: Sure.

Elyse: Back in my hotel room, I'm taking a closer look at the illustrations. Okay, let's see what we got. It looks like it was done in pen and watercolor. Oh, this is interesting. This is a stamp that comes from the dealer or the person who framed the piece. And it says "Lodz" on here, which is exactly what it says on the front of all these, so that makes sense. Now, the interesting thing here is that these signatures are completely different. The "A's" are different, the "S," and the "Z." This one has a line underneath it. And "Lodz" looks different in both of these. Okay, there are some inconsistencies in these signatures that I can't explain. I need some more information on Arthur Szyk. To find out more about the artist and his work, I'm headed to the library at the University of California in San Francisco. I can't find any references to Arthur Szyk in 1914 and 1915, the dates on Adam's drawings, but I do find some articles on Szyk during the 1940s. Ha, look at this. This is from *Click* magazine from 1942, and the title of the article is "one-man war against Hitler. Arthur Szyk fights the dictators with pen, brush, and venom." It says here that he's Jewish, he was born in Poland, and that he lived in Lodz. So that all checks out. It says that Szyk studied art in Krakow and Paris, where he became well-known as an illustrator for books and manuscripts. Szyk produced beautiful works for children, like his Hans Christian Andersen's "fairy tales;" Jewish themes, like the "Passover Haggadah" and the "Book of Esther." He was even known in America for his series on the life of George Washington. In 1940, Szyk moved to America, and from his New York apartment fought fascism with paper and pencil. But Szyk faced an America reluctant to enter the war. Isolationist groups like America first enjoyed wide support, so Szyk demonized his enemies to change public opinion. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "This is a personal war of Szyk against Hitler, and I do not think Mr. Szyk will lose." Just look at these covers: *Time*, *Colliers*. His work is in all the biggest magazines. If we have original art, it's a major find. But the style of these drawings is very different from Adam's four soldiers, and the inconsistencies in the drawings bother me. I want to make sure Adam's illustrations are not counterfeit. I'm taking them to Deborah Evans, director of the Paper Conservation Laboratory at the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco. I'm trying to figure out if the paper or the piece is period.

Deborah Evans: Well, let's first take a look at the framing. I'm thinking it was once white and now it's discolored to a yellowish color. Let's look at the back of it. Well, we've got some board here that looks old. We have an antique-looking hanger that's rusted.

Elyse: Right.

Deborah: Oh, look, we've got some old cylinder glass. Can you see the – the bubbles and streaks?

Elyse: They don't make that anymore, huh?

Deborah: Nope, that hasn't been made since the '50s, so we know we've got an old piece of glass there. Now, I'm looking at the edge of this. This mount board was covered by the edge of the frame.

Elyse: Right.

Deborah: And that stayed dark, its original color, and it's faded right next to it, which indicates to me that this has been in this frame for a long time to have faded that much. Now, probably the most interesting thing to me is this foxing spot. See that brown spot? That's a mold spot that happens to paper when it's been

exposed to a high humidity over time.

Elyse: Okay.

Deborah: But that would be something that would be difficult to induce.

Elyse: Mm-hmm.

Deborah: And I -- I'd like to take a look at this signature under the microscope.

Elyse: Okay. And what are you looking for when you're looking at the signature?

Deborah: I'm looking at this ink, and I suspect this is an ink that was used a long time ago. It's called iron gall ink. And what this ink does is corrode the paper gradually over time. If you want to look over here at the monitor, you can see that dark edge of the ink.

Elyse: Mm-hmm.

Deborah: And then this area where it's bled, that's really indicative of this corrosive-type ink. And again, that kind of process happens over time.

Elyse: So, in your opinion, do you think these illustrations are period?

Deborah: When I look at the paper, its condition, the type of framing, it's entirely consistent with something of this age.

Elyse: The illustrations seem to be from the early part of the 20th century, but Szyk's work is generally known to be from the Second World War. Could Adam's paintings really have been painted by Arthur Szyk? I've come to Washington, D.C., and the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. In 2002, the museum mounted a comprehensive retrospective on the life and work of Arthur Szyk. Perhaps they can identify our drawings. While I'm waiting for the curator, I walk through the museum. The permanent exhibition tells of the suffering of the estimated 11 million Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and others who perished during the holocaust. In one gallery, there's an exhibit on Lodz, the same town identified on our drawings and Arthur Szyk's hometown. Under Nazi occupation, the Jews of Lodz became targets for beatings, robbery, and seizures of property. I'm meeting with Steven Luckert, who curated the Museum's Szyk exhibition. He tells me that Szyk was driven by his own family's suffering at the hands of the Nazis.

Steven Luckert: in 1942, his mother was rounded up and deported to the Chelmno Killing Center and murdered. So it was very deeply personal to him.

Elyse: Okay, Steve. Here are the illustrations I told you about, and I would love to get your opinion.

Steve: These are fascinating. These date from the First World War, looks like it's 1915 from Lodz, which was where Szyk was located during the war.

Elyse: Steven has never seen these images.

Steve: When we were doing the exhibition, we didn't have anything from the World War I era.

Elyse: And he soon spots the curious signatures.

Steve: What's interesting, I note about the signatures, that it's not the full signature. It's the "A" initial and then the last name. It's very different from what we would see in Szyk in the 1930s or 1940s.

Elyse: So do you think these could be fakes?

Steve: It's difficult to know. Szyk's work was often copied by art students and others so that there are a number of fakes and copies that are out there. So, when you examine these, you always have to be careful.

Elyse: Okay, so a leading Szyk expert has never seen these images and can't tell me if they're authentic. I need to approach this from another angle. What about the uniforms? What army wore them? Back in the archives, I'm checking out some military books for the years 1914 and 1915 to see if I can identify the uniforms. At first, I have no luck. But then...this hat...matches that hat. Here's a bedroll...an identical bedroll. The boots ...the same boots. It's a match. These images are of Russian soldiers from World War I. But I'm stumped. If the artist is polish, why is he drawing Russian soldiers? And what about the signatures? Is this Szyk the real Szyk? I want to find an expert on Szyk's earliest work, so I'm taking our illustrations to Irvin Ungar, curator of the Arthur Szyk society in Burlingame, California. Immediately, he zeros in on the inconsistent signatures.

Irvin Ungar: these signatures are not typical of Arthur Szyk. I mean, these are not signatures that one would typically associate with Szyk.

Elyse: Mm-hmm.

Irvin: In fact, let me show you. I have one book here. This is a book, 1919. It's "Revolution in Germany," okay, Szyk's first illustrated political work of art. So here, I mean, here's "1919." There's "Szyk," but the "a" is almost like over the "s."

Elyse: Right, looks like a dollar sign.

Irvin: A dollar sign, looks exactly like a dollar sign. But if you look at Another Place, the illustration just before that, what do you see here?

Elyse: Oh, "Artur Szyk" spelled out, 1919.

Irvin: Yeah, totally different.

Elyse: Irvin then shows me Arthur Szyk's personal scrapbook from 1913, when he was a student at the academy of fine arts in Krakow.

Irvin: Look, when you flip this over, and on the other side, what do you also see?

Elyse: Ah, two different signatures.

Irvin: Two different Szyk signatures, but within an inch apart. I mean, here is "a. Syk," but there's no "z" after the "s," but you see a "z" like a "zorro," whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, above -- you know, above it. So, here you look at the signature, so I would not validate Arthur Szyk's art, you know, based on signatures.

Elyse: So I can't authenticate these by the signature, so then I probably have to look at the subject matter and the style for some comparables. What do you think?

Irvin: First of all, in terms of subject matter, these are Russian soldiers.

Elyse: Right.

Irvin: And, in 1914, 1915, the time these were done, Arthur Szyk was in the Russian army.

Elyse: Really!

Irvin: Yeah.

Elyse: Irvin says that during World War I, Poland was a battlefield. At first, Szyk fought alongside Russians against the Germans. After the Russian revolution in 1919, he fought against the Bolsheviks, so he had ample opportunity to make portraits of Russian soldiers. Oh, so these make sense.

Irvin: It makes sense in terms of the subject matter, but what I have to tell you is, is that we should also look at the style.

Elyse: Sure, sure.

Irvin: I -- I went back to some postcards which I have. These are from 1915. Check this out; look at this.

Elyse: Look at that. I couldn't believe what Irvin showed me next. I have my answer for Adam. I can't wait to tell him. You know, Adam, I had a really hard time authenticating these pieces. To be quite honest, they really don't look like other Szyk work that's out there on the market.

Adam: Mm-hmm.

Elyse: Then I told Adam about the postcard. Look at that. That's a dead ringer.

Irvin: I have no doubt. You look at the style, you look at the hat, you look at the weapons, which were totally accurate, and there is no question in my mind that the pieces that you have are absolutely by Arthur Szyk.

Elyse: I can tell you that they're genuine.

Adam: Really? Fantastic.

Elyse: They were made by Arthur Szyk, and they're some of the earliest known examples of his work.

Adam: Really? That's -- that's fantastic. That's great news.

Elyse: You know, these illustrations represent a turning point in Szyk's life. He was a young soldier then, and he would soon turn in his gun for much more potent weapons: his pen and his paintbrush.

Adam: I'm ecstatic. This is -- this is great news.



Episode 3, 2005: Szyk Drawings Glendale, California

Elyse: Arthur Szyk became a United States citizen in 1948. In 1950, he unveiled his final masterpiece: the illumination of the "Declaration of Independence" of the United States. He said, "there is no other place on earth that gives one the freedom, liberty, and justice that America does." The next year, Szyk's left-leaning views on racial and social justice caught the attention of the house un-American activities committee. Arthur Szyk was under investigation when he died of a heart attack on September 13, 1951.

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