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Robert Fishko, *Director*

JACK LEVINE

(1915-2010)

1932 (In Memory of George Grosz), 1959

oil on canvas

64 x 56 inches

signed lower left "J Levine"

signed and inscribed verso

"Jack Levine / 2 West 15th Street"



Provenance

The Artist

(The Alan Gallery, New York, NY)

Mr. and Mrs. Dalton Trumbo, Los Angeles, CA

(Greer Gallery, New York, NY, c.1977)

Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Topol, Mamaroneck, NY, c.1977

Private Collection, Harrison, NY (by descent)

Exhibited

Jack Levine, The Alan Gallery, New York, NY, December 1959 - January 1960

The Pasadena Museum, Pasadena, CA, 1960 (loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Dalton Trumbo)

The Theater Collects American Art: Fourth Loan Exhibition by the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, April 10 – May 16, 1961

Jack Levine Retrospective Exhibition: Paintings, Drawings and Graphics,
The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, November 8, 1978 – January 28, 1979

Boston Expressionism: Hyman Bloom, Jack Levine, Karl Zerbe, Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, January 9 – February 25, 1979 (loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Topol, Mamaroneck, NY)

Art from Private Collections, New Rochelle Public Library, New Rochelle, NY, June 1980

Literature

Canady, John. "Art: Stylistic Poles Apart: Phil Guston, Abstractionist, and Jack Levine, Satirist, Have Shows Here," *The New York Times*, New York, NY, December 30, 1959

Levin, Meyer and Eli. "Painter Levine Retains Critical Social Perspective," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, PA, February 14, 1960, Illustrated.

"'1932' (in memory of George Grosz) by Jack Levine is an oil in which the central figure is German President von Hindenburg. In Levine's words the action is a 'transference of power,' with von Hindenburg's lenience enabling Hitler to assume a position of power."

O'Doherty, Brian. "Art: Notable Collectors," *The New York Times*, New York, NY, April 10, 1961, Illustrated.

"One of the finest things on view is Jack Levine's powerful satire, "1932," lent by Mr. and Mrs. Dalton Trumbo. Hindenburg, spotlighted, hands the baton of power to a bowing Hitler; an attendant figure opposite mimics his bow, with hands clasped solicitously, a violent parody of the Fascist as a white-collared little man. The setting is vaulted, underground, Germanic. As always, the paint is a rare delight, in glowing fragments it splinters on the points of focus with a brilliant lacery. It is a powerful and moving work."

Getlein, Frank. *Jack Levine*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, NY, 1966, pg. 25, Reference, pl. 118, Illustrated and pl. 120 Illustrated as a detail.

Prescott, Kenneth W. *Jack Levine Retrospective Exhibition: Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, 1978, pg. 22, Reference.

Boston Expressionism: Hyman Bloom, Jack Levine, Karl Zerbe, Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, 1979, p. 15, Illustrated and p. 23, Listed.

Allara, Pamela. *Artnews*, New York, NY, 1979

Sutherland, David. *Jack Levine: Feast of Pure Reason*, The Artists Foundation, Boston, MA, 1986, reproduced in the documentary

Brown, Milton W., introduction, and Jack Levine, commentary. *Jack Levine*, Rizzoli, New York, NY, 1989, pg. 11, Illustrated in black and white and pg. 87, Illustrated in color.

Martin, Steve. *In the Bird Cage: Finding Out What Funny Is*, The New Yorker, October 22, 2007

“The Trumbo house was modern, built on a hillside, and extended down three floors into a ravine. The walls in the living room gave me my most vivid memory of the house, for they were covered with art. I had never seen real paintings in a house, and this might have been where my own inclination toward owning pictures began. In the dining room was a William Gropper, depicting members of the House Un-American Activities Committee grotesquely outlined in fluorescent green against a murky background. There was a Raphael Soyer, a Moses Soyer and a Jack Levine painting of Hindenburg making Hitler chancellor. These artists are obscure today but not forgotten. Gropper’s art depicted politicians as porcine bullies, and Jack Levine’s well-brushed social realism had a biting edge that fit the politics of the family perfectly.”

Note

Jack Levine was born in the Boston’s South End slums in 1915. He began drawing at the age of eight at the community art center as did his friend Hyman Bloom, who would also go on to be a well-known artist. By 1929, Levine was studying with Dr. Denman Ross of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard. In 1935, Levine became employed as an artist in the Work Progress Administration (WPA). This endeavor supported him through the Depression; the vignettes of street life at that time filled his mind and would appear on his canvases as biting social commentary for the rest of his life.

Jack Levine’s *The Feast of Reason*, 1937, was created for the WPA and catapulted the artist into national prominence when it was acquired by The Museum of Modern Art. Levine was only 23 years old at the time. In 1939, he had the first of 3 one-person exhibitions at New York’s legendary Downtown Gallery owned by Edith Halpert.

Jack Levine’s social satire reflected the frustrations and injustices of the 1930’s. Many of his best paintings embodied his hatred of war, inequality and the hypocritical aspects of our society, thereby securing his position as one of America’s greatest Social Realists.

Moving to the Alan Gallery in 1953, he continued his satirical direction with the completion of *The Gangsters Funeral*, 1952-53, oil on canvas, purchased by the Whitney Museum of American Art. After his second exhibition at the Alan Gallery, Levine began work on “1932”. The painting became the centerpiece of his next exhibition at the gallery in December, 1959.

“1932” is one of a small number of Jack Levine’s works relating to Nazism. When asked about these works Levine said:

“I think an artist should paint his life, and I try to and I am a social realist painter to the degree that society or the body politic impinges on my life. The gas ovens were too horrible for me to face. Now, with Hitler and Hindenburg that was an aspect I could face. Somebody showed me a book about Germany, and a line caught my eye about Hindenburg being a giant of a man and that set me off.

In my painting, the senile stupid figure of President Hindenburg is handing over the baton of power to Hitler, a creepy little man with an expression like the face of a shark. (Hitler is named

chancellor of Germany in 1933). Hannah Arendt's phrase 'the banality of evil' applies here. The figure on the left behind Hindenburg, rubbing his hands together in anticipation, could be Franz von Papen who was instrumental in this particular chapter of Hitler's rise to power. I painted the background as a military museum. Up on a pedestal right behind Hindenburg is an equestrian figure in full armor, including an emblazed shield and the windows are Gothic. The title was an afterthought. George Grosz, who was one of the few 20th century artists who I admired, had just died; and as he had frequently chosen to attack the perversity of German fascism through his art, I thought it would be a fitting tribute." (George Grosz had come to New York to teach at the Arts Student League in the Summer of 1932.)

Jack Levine takes this episode from history and invests it with theatrical drama, inviting the viewer to witness the chilling picture of Hitler bowing to Hindenburg as he assumes power.

It is interesting to note that his painting was purchased from the Alan Gallery exhibition in 1960, by the award-winning author and screenwriter, Dalton Trumbo. A decade earlier, Trumbo and nine colleagues refused to testify before Congress regarding their suspected Communist ties and became known as the "Hollywood Ten". Dalton Trumbo was fined, imprisoned, and blacklisted for more than ten years; he wrote 30 scripts under pseudonyms. But in 1960 the New York Times carried the story that Otto Preminger had hired Dalton Trumbo to write the script for *Exodus*. The same year, Kirk Douglas announced in *Variety* that Trumbo had written the script for *Spartacus* under an assumed name. It is against these extraordinary events that Dalton Trumbo bought this painting and, according to our research, held it until he died in 1976.