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Robert Fishko, *Director*

RAPHAEL SOYER
(1899-1987)

Train Station (Soldier's Farewell), 1943
oil on canvas
26 x 20 inches
signed and dated lower right "*Raphael Soyer 1943*"

Provenance

The Artist
[Associated American Artists Galleries]
Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Bobker, South Orange, NJ
Private Collection, Waretown, NJ
[by descent from the above]



Exhibited

Social Art in America 1930-1945: Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition, ACA Galleries,
New York, NY, November 5 - 28, 1981, no. 58

Raphael Soyer's New York: People & Places
Traveling exhibition

Arthur A. Houghton Jr. Gallery, The Cooper Union, New York, NY,
October 3 - November 9, 1984
Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, MA, November 15 - December 9, 1984

Raphael Soyer: Twenty Great Paintings
Forum Gallery, New York, NY, January 19 - March 4, 1995

Raphael Soyer: Finding America
Forum Gallery, New York, NY, January 28 - March 5, 2005

Literature

Raphael Soyer, American Artists Group, New York, 1946, monograph no. 19, p. 51, Illustrated, as “Soldier’s Farewell” [Associated American Artists Galleries]

Goodrich, Lloyd. *Raphael Soyer*, H.N. Abrams, New York, NY, 1972, p. 148, Illustrated and p. 348 Listed. [Collection Mr. and Mrs. Wilber Bobker, South Orange, NJ]

Hills, Patricia. *Raphael Soyer’s New York: People & Places*, Arthur A. Houghton Jr. Gallery, The Cooper Union, New York, NY, 1984, no. 27, p. 11, Illustrated. [Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Bobker]

Raphael Soyer: Finding America, Forum Gallery, New York, NY, 2005, Listed. [Collection of Margie and Wilbur Bobker]

Note

Raphael Soyer is remembered for his dedication to the simple and direct depiction of a person, placing the emphasis on character, humanity, and individuality. He created paintings that probe and explore the depths, feelings and complexities of each subject, each genuine person. Perhaps Soyer’s greatest gift was the ability to capture the emotion and personality of everyday people, and along the way, he captured the spirit of a century of challenge and change through the image of its living inhabitants.

Soyer’s ongoing interest in the life of New York’s working class engendered a number of thematically related paintings in the 1940s including some painted when the United States entered World War II. It is a testament to the apolitical nature of his art that Soyer made very few paintings on the subject of World War II, but those he did paint are informed by Soyer’s dedication to describing the human experience. As the country organized to send its young men to war, Soyer spent days at New York’s Pennsylvania Station at 34th Street observing emotional scenes of soldiers saying goodbye to wives, sweethearts, and mothers.

Train Station (Soldier’s Farewell), was painted in 1943. It is a complex composition and heartrending portrayal of three young couples embracing as the young men head off for service and most likely action in World War II. The beloveds cling to one another, arms flung about necks, or standing intimately holding one another as each expresses love for the other, he perhaps telling her that he will be okay. The poignancy of these moments are accented by a grief-stricken young woman in the foreground who covers her face with a handkerchief as she stands now alone, mopping up her tears. Soyer’s lifelong admiration and respect for women is emphasized in his choice to feature front and center the portrait of a soldier in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), the women’s branch of the United States Army converted to active duty status on July 1, 1943, the same year Soyer completed *Train Station (Soldier’s Farewell)*.

As Germany swiftly invaded France in the Summer of 1940, popular support grew for bringing back the Draft, waived at the end of the first world war. Conscription was officially reinstated on September 16th in the form of the Selective Training and Service Act. By November, the very first recruits (ages 21-35) began entering military service, whereas widespread conscription occurred after December 7th of the following year, Pearl Harbor Day, when the inductee age was lowered to 18. Soyer painted *Train Station (Soldier's Farewell)* just as substantial numbers of young men were being deployed to Europe and to the Pacific. During this time, Soyer also painted *Wives, Sweethearts and Mothers, Waiting at the Station*, and his memorable lithograph, *Farewell* *.

“During World War II I spent many hours at the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in New York watching American soldiers go to war in Europe. I witnessed many moving scenes of soldiers bidding their mothers, wives, and sweethearts farewell.”
[Raphael Soyer to Ellen Landau, March 15, 1982; published Landau, Ellen G., *Artists for Victory*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1983, p. 109]

Soyer was not alone in representing young American soldiers bidding farewell to their sweethearts as they departed for war. The theme had been given considerable artistic attention during World War I, though not all painters shared Soyer's doleful tenor. Portrayals varied greatly, ranging from lament to jingoism. In J.C. Leyendecker's 1917 *Woman Kissing Soldier Goodbye* a virile American warrior grasps both his rifle and his woman, a lover and fighter in a single propagandistic display. On the other hand, Alfred Eisenstaedt's touching photograph, *A Soldier's Farewell, Penn Station* [1944], is commensurate with Soyer's sentiment.

In *Train Station (Soldier's Farewell)*, and in another work chronicling these tender farewells, *Waiting at the Station*, Soyer's presentation of his subject evokes tenderness and affection both for the men who leave as well as for the women who stay. In his Penn Station farewell scenes, Soyer left heroics for the battlefield and kept humanity center stage on the platform.

“A woman has bid farewell to a loved one enrolled in the armed forces. At the moment of departure, the woman becomes a future survivor of months of silent prayers that may stretch into years of agonizing fears of uncertainty.”
[Henkes, Robert, *World War II in American Art*, McFarland Publishing, Jefferson, North Carolina, 2001, p. 43]

Train Station (Soldier's Farewell) has been owned by the same family since it was first purchased from the Artist.

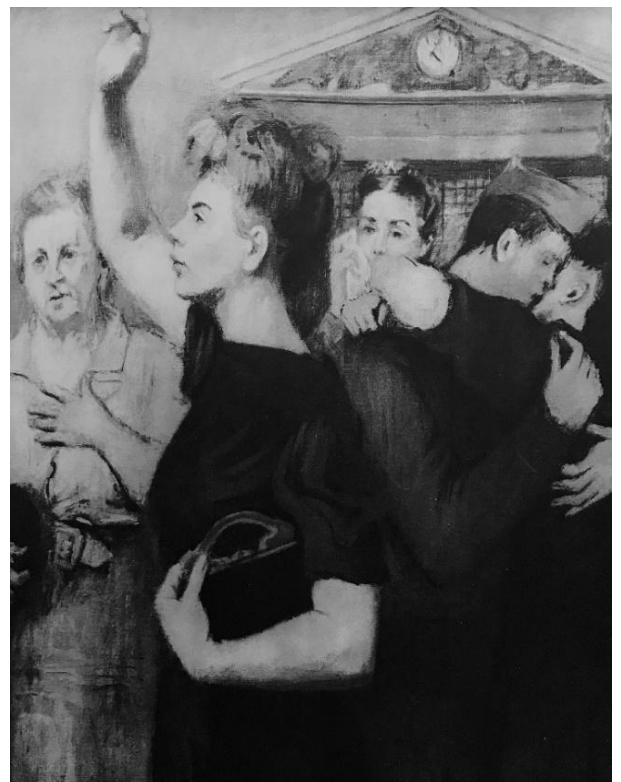
*“During the war years, Raphael Soyer and his brother were both signers of a call to American artists and writers to convene a congress in defense of culture against Fascism. He exhibited in the ACA Gallery's *Artists in the War* show in 1942, and his lithograph *Farewell* won honorable mention in the planographic division of the Artists for Victory *America in the War* competition”. [Landau, Ellen G. *Artists for Victory*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1983, p. 107]



Soyer, *Waiting at the Station*, c. 1941
 (Forum Gallery, New York)



Soyer, *Farewell*, 1943, lithograph



Soyer, *Wives, Sweethearts and Mothers*, 1942
 (Private Collection)



Alfred Eisenstaedt, *A Soldier's Farewell, Penn Station*, 1944, silver gelatin print



J.C. Leyendecker, *Woman Kissing Soldier Goodbye*, 1917
(cover, *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 19, 1917)