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P. O. Box 126
Avalon, New Jersey
August 3, 1958

Dear Lamar:

In view of the fact that the four of us have not been invited personally and individually by the Russian Government to bring examples of our work, I think it would be highly presumptuous of us to take it upon ourselves to represent by implication what is being done in U. S. A. on this first thrust behind the so called iron-curtain. I think we'd be exposing ourselves to justified criticism here at home and, if our work is badly received, we may jeopardize future exchange. This is a responsibility I'm unwilling to take.

I feel that our approach should be tentative, exploratory and promotional. Let us try to encourage further exchange and then some day present them with a bang-up severely edited exhibit, strong in its statement of what we are and what we do in paint. Let it be unalanted - not to please them nor to present our ways favorably. The statement should add up to freedom of expression - for that is what we have to count as a blessing for the price we pay in professional difficulties.

Furthermore, I think this exhibition (should it come about) should be on the basis of a synchronized exchange. I'm sure that a chain of American museums would pool their interests in a Russian exhibit of this sort. Considerable "How do you do" should be made about the thing at both ends. That's my idea. I should hate the responsibility of selecting "samples" of my own work for a thing of this sort with portability a first consideration. In addition I just don't think this would be a dignified way for an American to do it.

If an American show is really wanted (not the exhibit I visualize, but as an expedient to meet the situation while we're there) I'd suggest inquiries regarding the Lawrence Fleischman - Detroit Institute Exhibit now in Palestine. I understand that it is not committed as yet for October and November. Details regarding this through George Allen, Director of U. S. I. A. or Lois Bingham - Fine Arts - c/o Exhibits - U. S. I. A. This exhibit includes 76 pictures from Copley (1771) to today.

For our part I should think books, prints, slides, talks by you would be infinitely more curiosity inspiring than a small aeroplane size exhibit. Since a music group is going over separate from us perhaps the phonograph records should be left to their selecting.

I sounded out the Director of one museum regarding the loan of one or two of my paintings for our trip. His response was unfavorable in view of insurance and the general set-up. However, this did not imply unwillingness to participate in an important prearranged exhibit of fully prepared and specified intent.

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I'd be glad to have you pass on my opinion to Mr. Weise if you wish to.

Best regards

/s/

Franklin Watkins