

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Advisory Committee on the Arts

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

July 31, 1958

Revised 7/30

To: Mr. John Rhoden ✓
Mr. William Arthur Smith
Mr. Franklin Watkins

Dear Friends:

Please don't think that I am presumptuous in writing this letter to you in an official capacity. I am doing so, actually, at the suggestion of an officer in the Department of State in the hope that we can clear up a matter. In the first place, I believe I am correct in thinking that the three of you will go to Russia under the Leaders and Specialists program, and no doubt Mrs. Geesa has been in contact with you in regard to reservations, et cetera. Although I will be with the group, it happens that, technically speaking, I am "on loan" to the Leaders and Specialists program of the United States Advisory Committee on the Arts. It is involved, but I believe that is the easiest way to explain it. This simply means that some of the directives you people have received from time to time from one office, I, myself, received from another.

What prompts this letter is a call from William Arthur Smith that came in this morning, relative to a request that had been made by the Department of State for those of us who are going to Russia to carry along examples of our work. After completing my conversation with Mr. Smith, I called Washington to speak with a representative of the Committee on the Arts to find out more about this problem. And I have just completed another telephone conversation - with Mr. Robert Weise, Exchange Program Officer, International Educational Exchange Service - which brings up this point: it seems that the Russian representatives actually asked for us to carry along examples of our work.

I had not planned to do this for two or three reasons:

First, I had not been requested by the State Department to do so.

Secondly, I am planning to carry along a rather complete selection of slides from our Carnegie Study of American Art. This collection is extremely comprehensive, cutting across all fields of the visual arts, as well as applied arts, architecture, et cetera.

And there was a personal angle in it. I remember that when I carried some of my paintings overseas a couple of years ago, I found it extremely involved: first, to secure loans of important works from museums; to have them adequately covered by insurance, *et cetera*; to have special frames made for the canvases and a special, hand-portable crate built for shipment (in one or two instances I had to carry this myself); not to mention some of the problems with customs officers (particularly at one point when the paintings got separated from me on a plane).

In the conversation with William Arthur Smith, he told me that he had had absolutely no trouble handling his work on a previous trip overseas. The solution seemed to rest in the fact that it accompanied him on the same plane at all times. He had had an aluminum carrying case made for some sixteen matted and framed pieces. Although my memory is not as fresh as it might be at the moment, it seems to me that the major problem that faced John Rhoden when he took some work abroad was the failure of the local posts to provide for proper arrangements for the showing of his pieces.

When I raised some of these questions with Mr. Weise, including the availability of a place and proper showing of them in Russia (and certainly, I was not thinking in terms of any elaborate "opening" of American Art, but only the respect and dignity that the Russians would want to extend as well as that that we would like to receive), he suggested the possibility of two or three pieces from each one of us. This would mean a total of some eight to twelve pieces from the four of us. If it is deemed desirable that we do plan to take along examples of our work, keep in mind that each of us would have to furnish (probably would have to have made) a small traveling case, as these paintings or drawings or sculptures would accompany us on planes as excess baggage. Mr. Weise also made reference to the fact that the State Department could provide for excess baggage to cover the cost of shipment of such items. (I am assuming from previous experience, as well as from what Mr. Weise said over the telephone, that if we took anything of ours it would accompany us on the plane as a part of our excess baggage). But the cost of insurance could not be covered by the Department of State.

Franklin, you had previously brought up the question of what, if anything, we might take along as gifts for the Russian people, and as you recall we discussed the matter on the telephone. Mr. Weise and I talked about this today, and he told me that the U. S. I. A. office was going over a list of books on American art. I was very pleased to find out that at the forthcoming briefing session articles of this nature will be presented to us to carry along. While thinking of other possibilities, it had been suggested to me that consideration be given to carrying along some L. P. records, both classical and American [jazz -- and once again I was pleased to have Mr. Weise mention the possibility of records, although there was no promise on his part that these would be made available to us.

But back to the problem that faces us. It seems that the Russian do want us to bring along some of our paintings. Likewise, our State Department wishes this. But how can we represent ourselves adequately and at the same time give a true story of American Art as at least represented by four individuals? It is a serious, serious question. In other words, I would be perfectly delighted to take two or three of my canvases if arrangements could be made to borrow them in time, and if we could be assured of their safe entry and exit, insurance-wise and otherwise. But I do not feel that I would be quite fair to myself or to American Art to take along possible substitutes for what I might consider to be my best.

Once again, please give this matter of our "exhibition" some serious thought and let me have your reactions as soon as possible. As you will notice, a copy of this letter is going to Mr. Weise.

In closing, a very personal greeting to each one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lamar Dodd". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

Lamar Dodd, Head
Department of Art

LD:js

cc: Mr. Robert Weise