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Catalan Artist Pierre Daura as Exile, Refugee, Naturalized American Citizen

Teresa Gunter

Senior Honors Project

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirements
of the Westover Honors Program**

Westover Honors Program

May 2020

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Saint Cirq-la-popie, France
Dearest Family,

January 31, 1937

Changing from a pleasant to an unpleasant subject, we were outraged when we read the newspaper two days ago of a proposed law, which the French High Commandment of War is trying to pass. All foreigners living in France, within forty eight hours after war is declared, will be deported or put into concentration camps on islands off the coast of France. Only men or women over fifty will be exempt from this law, which does not apply to allies, but does apply to neutral countries. So in case of war, which the French believe more and more imminent, we will be deported, unceremoniously. Even in case Pierre were over fifty, Martha and I would have to leave the country at once.

Our love to you all,
*Louise*¹

Introduction

The letters of American-born artist Louise Blair Daura to her family in Virginia reveal the complicated predicament that she and her small family in France were facing during and after the Spanish Civil War. France's deportation announcement produced a familiar uneasiness in the family. Three years prior, when Louise applied for visitor visas for her husband and their young daughter Martha, the United States Department of Labor — the agency charged with immigration and visa oversight — questioned the family's intentions with regard to the nature of their travel and type of visa they were seeking.² A few weeks after posting the letter to her family, Louise's forty-one year old Spanish husband, the Catalan artist Pierre Daura, left his family in St. Cirq intent on joining the Loyalist militia. Months later, Daura returned to St. Cirq

¹ Correspondence from Louise Blair Daura to her family, 31 January 1937, Box 81, folder 4, Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

² Correspondence from Harold Finley, American Consul to Louise Blair, 26 April 1934, Box 3, folder 10, Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

to recuperate from wounds he received at the Battle of Teruel. After Franco's victory, Pierre renounced his Spanish citizenship. With the development of France's restrictive immigration policies, only one choice remained for the family: they must return, once again, to the United States. But Pierre and Martha's status became a sticking point with U.S. officials charged with enforcing the Immigration Act of 1924, and a visa was anything but certain.

In the space between Daura's arrival in the United States as a refugee in exile and his citizenship by naturalization, memories of his deepest source of vulnerability continued to foment. Before Pierre and Martha were granted visas to return to the U.S. in 1939, they faced displacement and the separation of their family as a result of socialist doctrines that had migrated to the United States from Europe. Policies meant to forestall the spread of Communism and the effects of a Bolshevist ethos on America's economic and social fabric, complicated the family's return. When finally vested with American citizenship and firmly ensconced in Rockbridge County, Virginia, a sentient transformation occurred that invigorated Daura's artistic narrative.

Daura produced hundreds of works from his Rockbridge Baths studio, among them, sculptures and paintings depicting the winsome nature of Martha and Louise in tender domestic and maternal scenes, as well as the fecund valleys and mountains of Rockbridge. Daura wrote that "this village of Rockbridge Baths – it produced in me the impression of a very wild savage country like nothing I had ever known. Yet in some places around, when I came to forget that I was in America, in Virginia, I couldn't help but think of some places in the Lot, in France, in St. Cirq, some places in Catalonia, Montsegur and of the Pyrenees."³ His once-instinctive attraction

³ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, "Brief Survey of Daura's Life," Box 7, folder 12. Athens, GA: Daura Archives, Georgia Museum of Art, Pierre Daura Archives, University of Georgia.

to innovation returned, revealing not only the reserves of his strength and resilience, but confirming place as the progenitor of Daura's oeuvre.

The impetus for this paper began with the following question: where once Daura's identity had been firmly grounded in his Catalonian origins and within the milieu of international artists in France, did this period of change in his artistic output originate from a grave insecurity in nationality? By examining U.S. immigration policies and Daura's identity as a refugee, immigrant, and naturalized American citizen, I will establish that a crisis of nationality, complicated by Nation of Origin Quotas and nativist immigration policies, influenced the art of Pierre Daura and coincided with a striking transformation of his style.

In contrast to the art he produced during the pre-war years — vibrantly-colored landscapes, energetic abstract paintings, and compelling and tender figure studies of his wife and daughter — he painted the more vulgar images of war with a heavy hand. He rendered raging battle scenes with discordant, saturated colors and in atmospheric, monochromatic images, leaving little negative space for the eye to rest. Complex and unsettling depictions of women and children displaced by war occurred simultaneously with his family's displacement from their adopted home in France and his birthplace in Spain.

This paper presents a fairly chronological account of the events that were essential to Daura's artistic development after his introduction to the American woman who would become his wife. It begins with the upbringing and artistic accomplishments of Louise Heron Blair. She was integral to Pierre's determination to submit to the risks and rigors of war, as well as his successful adjustment to the United States. Next, Pierre's origins and his move to Paris expanded his circle of friends and acquaintances, and he found himself in the position of a catalyst in a developing art movement permeated by political radicals and communists. Briefly, art took a back seat when the Civil War in Spain diverted his attention and he answered that internal

compass that urged him to volunteer for the Republican cause. Even though Pierre was wounded at the Battle of Teruel, after a period of recovery, the extent of his reach continued as he served Civil War refugees fleeing across the Pyrenees to land in squalid concentration camps, from which many inmates died. Pierre's art took a dramatic turn during his war years and subsequent immigration, first as a stateless refugee and then as an immigrant to the United States. While Pierre repudiated communism, he may have been viewed with suspicion by immigration officials due to his active involvement in the Civil War and by association with leftist organizations. Then, when he was well-established as an American citizen and his art reflected a fresh, expansionary outlook, the gut-wrenching death of a fellow anti-fascist banished his fleeting illusion of security and prompted a period of retrospection. His art briefly returned to mournful interpretations of the consequences of fascism. Finally, Pierre fully gave himself over to art when he left his teaching position in Lynchburg and returned full-time to Rockbridge and seasonally to his home in St. Cirq. His output was profuse and diverse. With rare forays back to dark themes, Daura's abstract art, his landscapes, and figure studies reflected an outlook from reserved optimism to delighted contentment that can be placed directly on his peace of mind.

*"Then came the meeting of Louise, my wife"*⁴

Louise Heron Blair held her own in the intellectual and artistic circles in which the Dauras moved. The daughter of a wealthy entrepreneur and outspoken author of several books on economics during a period of rapid economic growth in the U.S., she was well-educated, intelligent, and an accomplished artist in her own right. Her childhood home on the fashionable

⁴ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, "Brief Survey of Daura's Life."

Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia was a center for art and music. With her mother's approval, after graduating from Bryn Mawr College, she set out for Europe in the 1920s with her cousin. In Paris that winter, she met Pierre and soon gave herself over to serious art study. She went on to launch a respected, though somewhat short-lived professional career.

Louise's art was distinctly different from the avant-garde art that Pierre and his friends were producing. However, she was free to define her work as she felt disposed with Daura as her tutor and primarily embraced traditional elements in landscape and portraiture, for which she is best known. Her art utilized classic techniques with an emphasis on realism. Conceivably, during a brief period of exhibition from 1928 until 1930, Louise's work may have appeared *démodé* within her circle, precipitating less output.⁵ Nonetheless, she made inroads among traditional circles in 1928. The year Pierre and Louise married, the jury of the prestigious annual Salon d'Automne shunned Daura and his fellow abstractionists but accepted Louise's painting *View of Cargèse* for their 1928 exhibition (figures 1, 2).⁶

Louise was her husband's greatest advocate. After Daura returned to France to convalesce from an injury he received at the Battle of Teruel, she challenged him to explore new media. In an effort to personalize the fight against fascism in Spain, she persuaded the publishers of an American literary and cultural magazine, *The Atlantic*, to print Pierre's poignant letters. The *Atlantic* published several of the countless letters he and Louise exchanged during his months-long absence from his family.⁷

⁵ *Louise Blair Daura: A Virginian in Paris*. Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 2017, 44.

⁶ Exhibition Catalog for Salon d'Automne 1929, page 215, Box 17, folder 2, Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

⁷ Louise Daura, "The Soldier Returns, *Spanish Letters*," *The Atlantic*, January 1938.

For Daura, his Spanish identity made going to Spain a duty to his country and a moral obligation to his family residing in Barcelona. Arriving in Spain brought Pierre back to the origins of his art, even as his attention was directed to practical and prosaic matters. Pierre's letters described his difficulty in hitching up with a volunteer unit that would accept him because of his age and the handicap of his useless left arm. He told Louise about solitary nights sleeping rough on bitter cold wind-swept mountains. A few volunteers entered Spain with their own firearms, but like many others, he was ill-equipped to engage the enemy with the light revolver he managed to acquire on his own. Instead, he stayed alert on lonely mountain lookout posts. At the approach of unknown travelers, Pierre took cover under branches he fashioned over a dent in the earth just large enough to conceal and shelter his body. At times he went days without food or sight of another human being, and he wrote of his fear that he might not return home.

Although Louise's natural inclination to cheerfulness and optimism occasionally cracked, letters to her family in the United States pieced out a narrative that radiates optimism and admiration. She cast Pierre's war experiences in a golden light of adventure, daring, and bravery, which stands in stark contrast to his lived experiences. However, the statements that he made in the bleak art he subsequently created stems from his circumstances and surroundings.

When war in France seemed inevitable during Pierre's convalescence, Louise wrestled with the complex procedures and precise language in the legal documents required for U.S. visas. She increasingly pressed U.S. Embassy officials in Paris for approval to return with her now stateless family in the summer of 1939. After months of review and rounds of explanations and substantiating evidence, in July 1939 Pierre and Martha were allowed to sail for America under the tenuous proviso of a Nansen passport (fig. 25).

In lieu of legal travel documents from Spain or France, and after a review of Pierre and Martha's situation, the International Office for Refugees provided them, and scores of

disenfranchised victims of conflict, with Nansen passports. At the conclusion of the Russian Revolution in the early 1920s, the League of Nations assigned Arctic explorer and humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen of Norway the task to resolve an alarming situation that had come to an impasse. Lenin had revoked the citizenship of nearly 800,000 Russian expatriates across the globe, spawning a crisis for war-torn countries hosting asylum-seeking refugees. Lacking legal identification documents, internment camps were a dead end for stateless persons who became a burden to their host countries. Nansen proposed a passport that would allow the bearer to move between countries for work and education without fear of deportation. However, it made few other guarantees of repatriation or citizenship in host countries.⁸ For Daura, a Nansen passport meant assurance in the security and safety of his family and a return to the familiar, at least temporarily. They would go back to the tranquil mountains of Virginia to resume close relationships with friends and Louise's family. He would worry about citizenship at a later date.

“So I went to Paris, and . . . I just threw myself in the arena.”⁹

Daura's route to the United States was somewhat circuitous. He grew up in Barcelona tutored in art by José Ruiz y Blasco, the father of Pablo Picasso. In Daura's later youth and early adult years, he left Spain to continue art studies in Paris where he was determined to become a naturalized French citizen. Coincidentally (or not), Pierre's friend, the German artist Jean Arp became a naturalized citizen of France in 1926, the same year that Pierre petitioned the Foreign

⁸ The National Archives at Kansas City, “Hidden Treasures from the Stacks: A Man without a Country,” October 2015. <https://www.archives.gov/files/kansas-city/press/newsletter/2015-october.pdf>.

⁹ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, “Brief Survey of Daura's Life.”

Service division of the Paris police for French citizenship.¹⁰ On March 22, 1926, at the age of thirty, Daura's application was voluntary; no form of duress was forcing a change in allegiance. Although he was granted a hearing, the outcome that he then desired did not come to fruition (fig. 3).¹¹ Eventually, the idea of French citizenship seemed to fade, perhaps due to drawn-out and cumbersome French bureaucracy. Whatever the reason, within a year, Daura would be preoccupied with a new pupil with whom he would eventually establish residences in St. Cirq and Rockbridge Baths, Virginia.

Daura worked in the midst of an international band of abstract artists in Paris who were beginning to refine new and modern expressions of the arts. Daura and his friend and neighbor, Joaquin Torres-Garcia, a Spanish Uruguayan artist, along with Belgian painter Michael Seuphor founded the abstract art group and magazine *Cercle et Carre (Circle and Square)*, which simplified geometric forms and the mechanics of gesture to reinterpret traditional elements of painting. In rejecting Surrealism by breaking nearly every rigid convention in the tradition of Western painting, geometric abstraction represented the relationship between art and revolution during a time of rampant discontent after World War I. Individual mechanical elements of geometric construction and abstraction contextualized those social and political reforms.

The making of this "Group of Construction" occupied much of Pierre and Louise's attention and was not without complications as Louise related in a letter to her family.¹² On one

¹⁰ "Jean Arp: From the Collections of Mme. Marguerite Arp and Arthur and Madeleine Lejwa, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art." . Accessed Apr 5, 2020. <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/186265>.

¹¹ Correspondence from Ralph Stillman to Pierre Daura, 10 March 1944, Box 2, folder 2, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

¹² Louise Blair Daura, correspondence to her family, December 7, 1929, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

occasion in early December 1929, the Seuphors and Torres came to tea at the Daura's. In her role as hostess, Louise spent the day baking cookies to serve to her guests. She did not, however, take into consideration an unfinished still life composed of her teapot and package of tea. In her haste for access to her kitchen equipment, she "worked like fury to finish it before" her guests arrived. Their primary topic of conversation centered around the new group. The Dada artist Theo van Doesburg, who enjoyed attaching his name to new art movements, got wind through a friend of a friend that Seuphor and Torres were hand-picking members to join. Doesburg, who according to Louise was "crooked," finagled himself and several other names onto the list that elicited strong reactions from the group's founders. One name was obviously a pseudonym that Doesburg used for his poetry. By including two names under which he wrote, his own and the pseudonym, he hoped for twice as much print space. The other unwelcome name was none other than Pierre's future brother-in-law, the French artist and avowed communist Jean Héliion. Neither did those present at those early meetings favor Jean Héliion, but Pierre in a conciliatory gesture urged them not to strike his name.¹³

This mélange of characters included the soon-to-be acclaimed artists, the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian, and the outspoken critic of fascism, writer André Breton, who was their friend and St. Cirq neighbor, as well as an ex-Dadaist and French co-founder of Surrealism. Mondrian declined to participate until he learned that Doesburg had withdrawn to form his own group. Additionally, members included Jean Arp who recalled that he and his wife Sophie Taeuber were enthralled by the "use of the circle to contrast with the rectangle and square."¹⁴ He referred to the

¹³ Louise Blair Daura, correspondence to Walter Blair, December 19, 1929, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

¹⁴ *Jean Arp: From the Collections of Mme. Marguerite Arp and Arthur and Madeleine Lejwa, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.* New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972. <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/186304>.

period as one of great personal discovery. Fernand Léger, a French painter and sculptor became convinced after being gassed at the Battle of Verdun during World War I that a machine-dominated world was inevitable. Thereafter, Léger devoted himself to creating art that would be accessible to all people.¹⁵ Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky and Italian-American Joseph Stella, whose works have been infinitely reproduced and emulated in the past century, numbered among the company (figures 4, 5, 6).

Doesburg made plain to Pierre that Jean Hélion, who eventually rejected abstraction in favor of figurative art, opposed Daura's membership in *Cercle et Carre*. The "crooked" Doesburg made a calculated pass to pit Hélion and Daura against each other. Hélion, he claimed, "won't have you in the group" on the grounds that Daura lacked an understanding of geometric constructivism. But Daura's design of the group's logo and subsequent magazine covers is indicative of his acceptance and assimilation in the group (figures 7,8). Taking technology as his model, the logo that Daura executed abstains from all gratuitous movement and is a punctuation mark within his oeuvre. For the duration of his life, Daura frequently and successfully returned to geometric abstraction, much to the discredit of Hélion's skeptical observation.

In 1929 Daura received a commission to design the cover of the Italian edition of John Reed's eye-witness account of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (fig. 9). Reed's book was published in a number of languages, each with its own unique cover (figures 10, 11, 12). Daura was not only an exceptional figure painter and successful abstractionist but a highly skilled typographer as well. The cover he designed bears

¹⁵ Jean Hélion, "Interview" in *Partisan Review* 4, no. 5, 1938, 37. Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University. <http://hgar-srv3.bu.edu/collections/partisan-review/search/detail?id=283910>.

some similarities to earlier editions of *Ten Days* in its use of military and industrial elements. Two stylized hand grenades are enclosed within mirror images of the symbol for proletarian solidarity. The hammer and sickle motifs are topped with the acronym for Communist International, a group that advocated for world communism. Lenin wrote the introduction for the original 1922 edition of *Ten Days*, which was published in New York. The book still had legs in 1945 when George Orwell mentioned *Ten Days* in the introduction to *Animal Farm*, his allegory of the Russian Revolution.

After graduating from Harvard, Reed, a journalist and prominent socialist who hailed from a wealthy industrialist family in Portland, Oregon, regularly contributed to the socialist newspaper, *The Masses*. He faced a good deal of backlash in the U.S. for his radical political opinions and outspoken defense of striking workers and the Bolshevik cause. Upon returning to the U.S. in 1918 from his second lengthy stay in Russia during which Lenin took control of the provisional government, he was indicted for violating the Sedition Act of 1914. Reed was accused of inciting large crowds against the government and the war effort in his public speeches. When he assumed the position of leader of the Communist Labor Party in the United States when it split from the U.S. Communist Party in 1919, he clearly articulated his stance against Western democracy in the organization's platform and manifesto.¹⁶ It is not clear whether Daura accepted the commission for the cover of *Ten Days* in accordance with shared ideologies or simply for economic purposes. Nonetheless, considering the milieu in which Daura lived and worked, cursory and extremist ties to socialism and communism were not uncommon among the influx of artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals attracted to Paris. Louise and Pierre,

¹⁶ Eric Homberger, *John Reed*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 191-193.

however, sought a transition from the noisy, obtrusive life of the Paris art scene. In 1930, they purchased a thirteenth-century house in St. Cirq-la-Popie where they had honeymooned in 1928.

Daura embraced the vibrant ebb and flow of domesticity in St. Cirq that informed his art and implied that it was inseparable from that which he conveyed on canvas. In the midst of a personal artistic flourishing, Pierre's world had expanded with his marriage to Louise, followed several years later by the birth of their only child, Martha. Having taken on the responsibilities of marriage, fatherhood, and a home, Pierre was inspired by the prospect of unhampered access to his favorite muses and the surrounding countryside. The images that he constructed showcase his pleasing surroundings and unmistakable affection for his family in every style of painting and sculpting that he undertook.

“And, all of a sudden, exploded the war, the Civil War in Spain”¹⁷

On the periphery of this gentle interlude, Spain's internal struggles could not be ignored. In 1931, a series of elections and public unrest forced Spain's monarchy into exile. The Second Republic, a moderate faction of the left comprised of reformed socialists and petty bourgeoisie Republicans, established a republican constitution and government. Republicans aimed to break up great agricultural estates, curb the influence of the Catholic Church and the Army, and grant more autonomy to the Basque and Catalan regions. While a heavily-financed, right wing coalition appealed to Spain's middle-classes on moral grounds, the left, however, found a niche among voters concerned with the right's affiliations with fascism. When the dust settled on the February 1936 elections, the left had won a narrow victory. But in-fighting rendered them

¹⁷ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, “Brief Survey of Daura's Life.”

ineffective, and the Falangists, a branch of the right, successfully launched a violent campaign to instill terror and chaos in the country.

At first, the Second Republic appealed to Great Britain and France for aid to combat fascism. However, on the grounds of neutrality, each country declined. Between pro-Republican and isolationist Americans who lobbied for a United States Neutrality Act, support for the Spanish Republican government was not forthcoming. Conservative Americans were frightened by Spain's unions and militia.¹⁸ While the United States, France, and Britain hesitated, Hitler and Mussolini salivated at the opportunity to support the armies of rebel Spanish Generals Mola and Franco to gain control of Spain's resources. Russia, however, hoping to strengthen its position among world powers, offered military aid in the form of aircraft, tanks, artillery, armored cars, and ammunition to the Second Republic, with which they were ideologically aligned. In July 1936 when military conspirators orchestrated an uprising that began in Spain's Moroccan territory and spread North, an authoritarian regime was established.

In the summer of 1936, the Spanish Civil War mobilized thousands of transnational volunteers with a common purpose — to staunch the tide of fascism.¹⁹ At the urging of Communist International, Spanish expatriates and men and women from Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Mexico, and the United States converged on Spain via legal and covert channels.²⁰ In

¹⁸ Eric Foner, John Arthur Garraty, "Neutrality Acts" in *The Reader's Companion to American History* (Houghton Mifflin, 2014), 781-782.

¹⁹ Photograph of Abraham Lincoln Brigade marching in Barcelona, January 1937, Image 3.6, "Memoria Republicana: Imágenes de La Guerra Civil Española 3. - Brigadas Internacionales." Sociedad Benéfica de Historiadores de Aficionados y Creadores. http://www.sbhac.net/Republica/Imagenes/FotoBI/GCE_Sbhac_Imagenes_FotoBI.pdf.

²⁰ Photograph of Abraham Lincoln Brigade saluting, October 1938, Image 3.5, "Memoria Republicana: Imágenes de La Guerra Civil Española 3. - Brigadas Internacionales." Sociedad Benéfica de Historiadores de Aficionados y Creadores. http://www.sbhac.net/Republica/Imagenes/FotoBI/GCE_Sbhac_Imagenes_FotoBI.pdf.

defiance of fascist movements in their respective countries, German and Italian volunteers joined the International Brigades, which paraded the streets of Barcelona, Madrid, and the cities and pueblos in between.²¹

Pierre followed the unrest in Spain during the 1930s with great interest. His concern was from a political, ethical, and emotional point of view. He was prepared to act for his family in Spain if the worst came about. In a letter to her family, Louise quoted her husband's justification for his decision to join the Loyalist militia in late January 1937, "I can't stand here and watch my family be massacred. This is not a simple civil war, this is a foreign invasion. I'm no Anarchist, no Communist, but now is the time for all liberal forces to unite, no matter what their creed. I've got to go."²² Despite Pierre's age and a disabling injury in his twenties that rendered his left hand paralyzed, he made a convincing case for his usefulness as a Forward Observer to the 59th Mixed Brigades, one of the first units to accept international volunteers (fig. 13).

*"After a few months I couldn't resist the call of duty to join the army of my people."*²³

It is worth noting that before he left to join the Loyalists, Daura emphatically denied membership in the Communist Party, but his active membership in the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (National Confederation of Workers — CNT) and Spanish Socialist Workers' Party

²¹ Photograph of International Brigade, Garibaldi Battalion marching in Barcelona, June 1937, Image 3.47, "Memoria Republicana: Imágenes de La Guerra Civil Española 3. - Brigadas Internacionales." Sociedad Benéfica de Historiadores de Aficionados y Creadores. http://www.sbhac.net/Republica/Imagenes/FotoBI/GCE_Sbhac_Imagenes_FotoBI.pdf.

²² Correspondence from Louise Blair Daura to her family, 18 January 1937, Box 81, folder 9, Pierre Daura Archives, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

²³ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, "Brief Survey of Daura's Life."

(PSOE) suggests somewhat more than a marginal association with organizations deemed suspect to American officials. The Second Republic legalized the CNT in 1936, and it is at this point that Pierre makes his membership official (fig. 14). The union collaborated with other Republican groups opposed to the Nationalists to reorganize Spain's economy, and in Barcelona the British journalist and Popular Front supporter George Orwell observed the collectivization of all spheres of society and local government. But ideological divisions weakened the effectiveness of the organization.²⁴

On April 26, 1937, Franco's allies, the Nazi Luftwaffe, bombed the Basque market town Guernica in northern Spain. The air attack on the market and the strafing of women and children fleeing through the surrounding fields immediately emerged as a watershed event of unprecedented magnitude and viciousness. Guernica generated feelings of despair, outrage, and hopelessness in the world. Daura was among a group of Spanish émigrés in France, including Picasso and the Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, who maintained a strong identity and connection to their homeland. The Spanish artists harnessed their primal reactions to intensify the mounting zeal against fascism.

Daura and Picasso may have found inspiration for their artistic reactions to Guernica from several widely publicized sources, e.g. Australian newspaper reporter Noel Monk's graphic descriptions of a thriving market town reduced to a hellish rubble, charred bodies scattered in every direction, and the "wailing and weeping and rocking to and fro" of hundreds of refugees who escaped from the inferno of the incendiary bombs dropped by the Luftwaffe.²⁵ In his

²⁴ Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, (London: Constable & Robinson, 2012), 223-238.

²⁵ Beverly Ray, "Analyzing Political Art to Get at Historical Fact: Guernica and the Spanish Civil War." *The Social Studies*, Vol 97, no. 4, 2006, 168-171. <https://doi.org/10.3200/TSSS.97.4.168-171>.

widely-disseminated French newspaper, George Bidault, editor of the *L'Aube*, which was hostile to the nationalist cause, reproduced an eye-witness account by Father Alberto de Onaindia, a Basque priest. Shortly after the bombing Onaindia dispatched a report to Paris which eventually reached the Vatican:

*For three hours, the German airfleet bombed the defenseless town. For three hours, the Germans fired their machine guns on the women and children in the streets and in the fields. All of this in the name of civilization. And even, for the Crusade, as they say.*²⁶

Pierre couched one of the more demoralizing and ubiquitous experiences of the war by framing it in gentle, paternal tones as a story for his daughter. One day in carrying out his duties as a forward artillery observer, his commander ordered him by radio to verify the coordinates of a target below their post in the hills overlooking the picturesque village of Gea de Albarracin in Teruel. There had the day before been, “a great movement through the road that passed by the side of the village, of great contingents of German Army.”²⁷ Daura checked the angles and looked once more through his glass at the barracks that were to be the object of their shelling. Under cover of night, the guards of the German army had traded their barracks for a convent school across the square. To Pierre’s horror, the instant he was ready to give the command to fire, two nuns followed by the children in their charge, came rushing out of the barracks in a stampede of terror. One of those children, a little girl about the age of Martha, with thick plaits laced with red ribbon, seemed to pause and look directly at Pierre a great distance away. Pierre had the presence of mind to announce “correction” instead of “fire” and delay the shell that would have ended the lives of the innocents who stood in place of the Germans. He hastily

²⁶ Herbert Rutledge Southworth. *Guernica! Guernica!: A study of journalism, diplomacy, propaganda, and history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, 11-21.

²⁷ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, “Brief Survey of Daura’s Life.”

recalculated the angles, and the artillery adjusted their mark to land squarely on the building that the day before had sheltered the little girl who so closely resembled his daughter. As Daura recalled, the incident “had an undue, very deep influence forever more . . . more influence on my thinking, my feelings and my purposes. My vision of my child in the person of that child that I was going to shell haunted me completely. And that girl, from now on was given the name of my own little girl.”²⁸

Daura’s artistic reaction to the grim spectacle playing out across Spain is visceral. With his painter’s critical eye, a crushing awareness of his family’s desperate situation in Spain, and loyalty to the Republican cause, Daura sketched his experiences as a Forward Artillery Observer on the front lines. Daura could not forget the violence, or the families displaced from their homes. In November 1937, while in recovery, Daura wrote to his friend Bertholdt Cohn, a German member of the Republican Sacco Y Vanzetti Brigade, “I can’t imagine that the brush in my hand [once] painted the soft and curved lines of a landscape, because today it only wants to paint the rough straight lines of war, blood and destruction.”²⁹ It was no longer within his power to express in his art any but the most primal emotions which dominate his existence during this time.

²⁸ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, “Brief Survey of Daura’s Life.”

²⁹ *Ibid.*

“I tried to be useful to all of the refugees that poured like a furious river through the Pyrenees towards the south of France, to and in concentration camps and distribution centers all over southern France.”³⁰

During Daura’s convalescence, he traveled more than 350 kilometers from St. Cirq in southern France to the Camp de concentration d’Argelès-sur-Mers near the Spanish border on the Mediterranean coast to seek out comrades whose whereabouts were unknown. More than 300,000 Spanish civilians and Republican military refugees crossed the Pyrenees, the natural border between Spain and France, to the camp that was established in February 1939. Civilian and military alike were disarmed and interned in grim, unsanitary conditions until the French government established a string of detention centers along the border to relieve conditions in d’Argelès. Chilling scenes of starvation, disease, and death at d’Argelès were reminiscent of Nazi prison camps to those looking at it through the lens of history (fig. 15).

A great percentage of refugees were dispersed to the region of Daura’s home, and he received a number of requests from desperate loved ones of interred refugees. He went to great lengths to locate his comrades, relieve their suffering, and communicate with their families. “Using all strings in my power, from village to village, I roamed everyday bringing relief to those expatriates so miserable.”³¹ In several cases, he established a life-long correspondence with siblings and parents of volunteers in the International Brigades.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Pierre Daura application to the War Information Department to serve as a volunteer relief worker. Pierre Daura Archives, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

Daura extended his recovery to visit the 1937 Paris Exposition where Picasso's *Guernica* was the centerpiece of the Spanish Pavilion. On the eve of the World's Fair, the entire Spanish pavilion had been orchestrated as a commentary against the Spanish Nationalists. The Pavilion's simple, modern architecture and pragmatic exhibition space marshalled a highly-orchestrated propaganda machine. Nearly all of the exhibited works commented on the current crisis in Spain, leaving little doubt that sentiments lay with the Spanish Republicans.

The only foreigner in the Spanish Pavilion, an American sympathetic to the Republican cause, Alexander Calder's *Fountain of Mercury* in the round was situated directly in front of *Guernica* in the exhibition hall. Mercury mines in Almadén, Spain which produced the highly toxic mineral, were under siege by General Franco's army. The working fountain of the fluid metal made a political statement on behalf of the Republicans. Most conspicuous upon entering the Spanish Pavilion, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* editorialized the bombings, the annihilation of women and children, and the senseless destruction of the non-industrial market town "in the name of civilization" as the witness de Onaindia had reported (fig. 16).³²

Back in St. Cirq, Daura's individual identities and his observations mingled and found expression in a series of front-line sketches he refashioned into paintings and engravings entitled *Civilisation* (1937-1939). The title is a grim sort of irony directed to a world that was, at the moment, anything but civilized. *Civilisation* highlights the pluralism that animates Daura's sentience. The series explicitly connected paternal love and love for his wife with an empathetic response to the destruction of war. Daura illustrated the breach between humanity's disparate natures; on the one hand base and barbaric, and on the other, readily responsive to the condition of humanity.

³² Russell Martin, *Picasso's War: The Destruction of Guernica, and the Masterpiece that Changed the World*, (NY: Plume, 2002), 40-43.

Daura pointedly illustrates those opposing interests in *Civilisation 1937: The Innocent Victims* and *Civilisation 1937: La Cultura del Odio (The Culture of Hate)* by drawing upon more tranquil days (figures 17, 18). *Innocent Victims* is just one example of Daura's subconscious impulse to conflate the vitality and spirit of Martha with the pigtailed school girl in the village of Gea de Albarracin. The child in the foreground of *Innocent Victims* is a near facsimile of a father's tender observations of a daughter in repose (fig. 19). In both of these examples of the *Civilisation* series, the central figures are children and far more illuminated than the despairing adults who surround them. At first glance, the figures in the foreground appear to be sleeping, but upon closer examination of the background, the scene is reminiscent of a death vigil, perhaps representing the futility of humanity.

Daura planned to sell prints of *Civilisation* to American artist and political activist Rockwell Kent to raise money for the Spanish Republican government. In much the same fashion, Picasso began a series of satirical prints in January 1937, *The Dream and Lie of Franco*, to promote the Republican Loyalists (fig. 20). In July 1937, Kent wrote to Pierre in Spain from his farm in upstate New York reassuring him of the tremendous support by sympathetic Americans "who are deeply concerned about democracy in Spain." In fact, Kent read from Pierre's letter at a gathering of "a very large audience of fairly prosperous people who had met at a banquet to speed our Dr. Barsky on his return to Spain."³³ Barsky, the son of a founder of Beth Israel Hospital in New York City, joined the Communist Party in 1935. He was an active member of the American Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy and twice travelled to Spain to organize hospitals and convalescent homes for injured soldiers. As the head of the Joint

³³ Correspondence from Rockwell Kent to Pierre Daura, November 11, 1937. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 12, Folder 21, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee established in 1941, he attracted the attention of the House of Un-American Activities Committee and was subsequently imprisoned at the federal penitentiary in Petersburg, Virginia.³⁴

An April 1937 article in *The New York Times* reported that Kent made a gift of the \$600 National Academy of Design Prize for Painting to an American organization supporting Spanish Loyalists. The American Friends of Spanish Democracy supplied food, clothing, and medicines to the Loyalists. In the article, Kent commented, “no artist counts upon prize money for the expenses of living; every artist does count upon democracy for life.”³⁵

Kent, whom autobiographer Garnett McCoy described as “a man of the left,” had many irons in the fire in 1937.³⁶ FDR’s Works Progress Administration commissioned him to paint two murals in the new Federal Post Office building in Washington, D.C. He painted *Mail Service in the Arctic* and *Mail Service in the Tropics* in the emerging style of social realism, an art movement that gained traction with artists and the public during the interwar period (figures 21, 22). Kent’s murals developed from visits to the Philippines and Alaska, both U.S. territories at the time, where he witnessed and bluntly depicted the consequences of colonization. The murals are characterized by gritty portrayals of contemporary life and social and political situations that he observed. An understated political message embedded in the murals sparked a good deal of opposition. Philippine and Alaskan officials demanded that Kent alter the murals to include more

³⁴ “Edward K. Barsky,” *ALBA! Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives*. <http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/edward-k.-barsky>.

³⁵ “Rockwell Kent Aids Loyalists,” *New York Times*. April 6, 1937. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 12, Folder 21, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

³⁶ McCoy, Garnett. “The Rockwell Kent Papers.” *Archives of American Art Journal* 12, no. 11972: 1-9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1557119>.

fair-skinned subjects and remove the polemical statement that he painted in the indigenous dialect of Kuskokwim at the bottom of *Mail Service in the Arctic*: "To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends! Go ahead, let us change chiefs. That alone can make us equal and free."

In 1948 Kent ran unsuccessfully for Congress on the American Labor Party ticket founded by former members of the Socialist Party of America. Because of his associations with organizations seen as threats to the U.S., he became embroiled in the anti-communist hysteria of Senator Joseph McCarthy during the fifties. As a result, Kent was denied a passport to travel to Europe on the grounds that he refused to sign an affidavit denying membership in the Communist Party. The unconstitutionality of passport restrictions was eventually settled in his favor in 1958 by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Kent vs. Dulles*. It was a landmark decision with far-reaching implications for Americans affiliated with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Kent felt disenfranchised in America and donated nearly two-hundred of his works to the Russian people in 1957.³⁷

Before Daura completed the entirety of the *Civilisation* series, the war ended. Each man, Daura and Kent, according to his individual nature and temperament grappled with ways to shoulder his commitment to the democratic cause. While Kent relished his reputation as an outspoken critic of his government, Daura exercised a more circumspect approach, offering his services as a relief worker to the War Information Office during World War II, work he had carried out in France while in recovery. Kent and Daura's initial collaboration was the beginning of a lengthy, warmhearted correspondence between two artists with distinctly different styles who shared an affinity for the Spanish Republic. Both struggled with U.S. immigration officials.

³⁷ McCoy, Garnett. "The Rockwell Kent Papers." *Archives of American Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (1972): 1-9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1557119>.

In fact, when Daura first exchanged letters about *Civilisation* with Kent, he did not anticipate a difficult move to the United States as an artist in exile. However, with one harmonious voice the two artists resolutely condemned fascism. As two people caught up in a political milieu that discouraged political thought perceived as extremist, the men set aside their differences and focused instead on their shared vocations, ideologies, and experiences. The pair maintained a long and warm correspondence until Kent's death in 1971.³⁸

“Her (Martha’s) immigration identification card states that she is the bearer of a quota immigration visa . . . My husband is a non-quota immigrant.”³⁹

The Immigration Act of 1924 restricted the number of legal immigrants by establishing Nation of Origin quotas that were based on past U.S. Census figures. The 1924 law required all non-citizens to present a visa when arriving in the United States. Visas allowed the U.S. State Department to both approve and control the number of legal immigrants entering the United States. Two agencies, the Bureau of Immigration and the Bureau of Naturalization, consolidated in 1933 to focus primarily on the enforcement of immigration laws and the investigation and deportation of subversive and criminal aliens. Oversight of the INS shifted from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice due to national security concerns.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Correspondence to American Consular Service from Louise Daura, April 24, 1934. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 3, Folder 10, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

⁴⁰ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Visa Files, July 1, 1924-March 31, 1944,” <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/visa-files-july-1-1924-march-31-1944>.

Historians have approached U.S. immigration during the interwar period from the perspective that political, gender, and racial ideologies intersected with labor and economic needs to influence policy.⁴¹ Fear of deportation intimidated and silenced otherwise politically-engaged immigrants during the 1930s Red Scare and as early as the Palmer Raids more than a decade before. Anyone holding a grudge or with unfounded suspicions might raise an alarm that could result in indefinite detention and deportation.

Daura was no stranger to migration as Louise's letters to visa and immigration officials in Paris attest. He and Martha applied for visas at the U.S. Embassy in Paris on three occasions — in 1930, 1934, and 1939. Daura first encountered problems with American immigration authorities in the spring of 1930 when Louise, who was expecting a baby, wanted to return to the U.S. for the baby's birth. Louise was her husband's liaison to the U.S. Embassy in Paris. He applied for a visa, but due to confusion about whether he was seeking a visitor's visa or an immigration visa, it did not arrive in time for travel before the birth of their daughter Martha.

In 1934, Louise again wrestled with the Embassy to obtain visas for Pierre and Martha (who was also a Spanish citizen). An Embassy official urged Louise to quickly resolve information on her family's applications which appeared contradictory and ambiguous. Spanish immigration quotas were nearly exhausted and further delay, he wrote, would postpone their visit by a year. Louise's letters to the Embassy demonstrate her commitment to overcome Nation of Origin restrictions, and on April 24, 1934, Louise was notified that Pierre's visitor visa had been granted. Martha, the official said, was entitled to apply under a non-quota status, thus somewhat easing the pressure to conform to strict regulations. Days later, however, the Consul retracted his

⁴¹ Kathryn Olmsted, "British and US Anticommunism between the World Wars," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 1 (2018): 89-108. doi:10.1177/0022009416653458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009416653458>.

approval for Martha's visitor visa on the grounds that a minor child shall not be granted visitor status if the parent intends to immigrate. Louise is understandably anxious. In her next letter, which is handwritten in contrast to those previously typed, she emphatically declares that her "husband has never had any intention of residing in America."⁴²

A third round of visa applications in 1939 proved just as arduous for Louise to untangle. The situation was further complicated because Pierre and Martha no longer enjoyed the benefit of citizenship in any country. The U.S. government cast a suspicious eye to naturalization seekers and individuals involved in suspect organizations. Daura was affiliated by various degrees with several organizations targeted by the elusive *Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations*, particularly the Socialist Workers Party and the International Brigades. Daura had reason to downplay his connection to anarchists and communists. If the artist had been keeping his associations with socialism under wraps while Louise navigated visas for Pierre and Martha, he must have been successful. Within four months and with Nansen passports in hand, the family celebrated American Independence Day with a gala dinner aboard the S. S. Washington on their way to the United States and Rockbridge Baths, Virginia.

From Rockbridge, where Pierre, Louise, and Martha sheltered during World War II, Daura responded to news of Germany's invasion of Poland by censoring fascism in the images he produced from scenes sketched during his stint with the Loyalists. At the same time that his ideological and intellectual affinities to socialism seemed to fade, his work was a critique of war and evinced bitter grief for the loss of his homeland. Perhaps he sought to avoid unwanted attention by U.S. immigration officials at a time when Spanish refugees to America faced nativist immigration policies. Furthermore, American leaders such as the U.S. Congressman Martin Dies

⁴² Correspondence from Harold Finley, American Consul to Louise Blair, 26 April 1934, Box 3, folder 10, Museum of Art, University of Georgia archives, Athens, Georgia.

viewed communist labor organizers operating across international borders as threats to national security.

Dies reacted to widely-promoted threats of communism at a gathering of twenty-thousand American Nazis in Madison Square Garden in 1939. Dies' hostile attitude toward the influx of immigrants is partly predicated on "the communist influence imported to Spain from enslaved Russia (which) doomed the Republic of Spain and (was) responsible for the slaughter of a million Spaniards."⁴³ Foreign influencers, Dies, the Chairman of the House Un-American Activities argued — and here he conflated Nazism and Communism — worked to shape domestic and foreign policy by sabotaging the political and economic system of America, especially the abolition of private property and private ownership of industries. During this period, American veterans of the Spanish Civil War Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Ed Lending and Conlon Nancarrow, as well as German refugee Herman Bottcher and Spanish refugee Pierre Daura were returning to the United States under hyped suspicion of collusion with American enemies.

The recollections of New York newspaperman and Works Progress Administration teacher Ed Lending (1912-2003) and Texas composer Conlon Nancarrow (1912-1997) corroborate reports from Daura related to an investigation conducted by the government as he prepared for citizenship. Nancarrow was a committed communist and Lending, upon learning of the fascist uprising against the government of the Second Republic, hastened to obtain his passport for Spain. Both were assigned to the XV *Brigada Mixta*, Dimitrov Battery, named for Georgi Dimitrov, the noted Bulgarian communist and General Secretary of Communist

⁴³ Martin Dies. *1939 Dies Speech Backup* 1939, November 29, 1939. <http://archive.org/details/1939DiesSpeechBackup>.

International. In February 1937, Lending, like Daura, exchanged the security of his home for periods of starvation, thirst, and hand-to-hand combat that ultimately led to the loss of an eye and several other wounds. Daura's painting *Tank Battle* exemplifies Lending's account of his ordeal in Spain (fig. 23):

*A shell was slammed home, the lanyard yanked, and in an ear-splitting explosion the cannon blew up. Heads, arms, legs, and less definable parts of our comrades whizzed across the landscape...*⁴⁴

In the painting *Tank Battle*, Daura emphasizes opposing colors to invoke an unimagined sense of dissonance enveloping the victims of the Civil War. A concentration of red establishes associations with rage and fear. While brown and green resemble the uniforms of the soldiers, these monochromatic tones may also represent desperation and death. *Tank Battle* connotes his preoccupation with the demoralizing consequences of war, and his sensitivity to its aftermath. Daura may have been physically far-removed from the arena of war, but mentally, his subconscious remained attuned to the brutality he witnessed and the uncertainty of his situation as he contemplated the status of his nationality.

U.S. officials did not roll out the red carpet for Nancarrow when he returned following the Spanish Civil War. In fact, he claimed that as a result of his membership in the Communist Party, the United States directed a good deal of unwanted attention his way, and in 1940 he moved to Mexico City where he became a naturalized citizen to avoid "harassment" by U.S. officials.⁴⁵ Biased public spirit and rigorous screening guidelines may have marked the nadir of

⁴⁴ Ed Lending in Spain, RA Fond 545, Opus 6, Delo 932. [Originally published in *The Volunteer*, Volume 7, No. 2, July 1985.

⁴⁵ Charles Amirkhanian, *An Interview with Conlon Nancarrow*, 1977. http://archive.org/details/AM_1977_04_28.

U.S. immigration in the wake of numerical limits established in 1924, but a refugee from Nazi Germany managed to gain access to the country in the 1920s during the height of the industrial revolution.

The fleeting illusion of security banished by retrospection

After an interlude when Daura had once again found inspiration in the quietude of his family and the mountains of Virginia, and peace and security were again reflected in his works, *Pax Pacifica* was a return to dark days (fig. 24). Captain Herman Bottcher, anti-fascist refugee from Germany, International Brigade veteran of the Spanish Civil War, decorated American soldier, and of late American citizen, was killed in action in the Philippines in 1944 on the last day of the year. News of the German's death and the publication of a poem "Herman Bottcher, Summa Cum Laude" by Bottcher's friend, Sergeant John Rossen, seemed to unleash an emotional artistic upheaval in Daura that had, by all appearances, waned as the artist and his wife established genial personal and professional relationships in the United States. Accounts in the media, *Life* magazine for one, and Bottcher's years-long pursuit of citizenship may have struck a nerve with Daura, whose own journey to the U.S. uncomfortably resembled Bottcher's. Before Bottcher succumbed to a mortar round which exploded near his foxhole during the Leyte Campaign in the Philippines on December 31, 1944, he had established himself as a man of sacrificial conviction to anti-fascism.

Herman Bottcher, Summa Cum Laude
Sgt. John Rossen

How far is it, please
From Landsberg, Germany
(Which the Red Army
took this morning)
5 To a six-foot plot

*Of the lush soil of Leyte Isle?
 How far from Southern California
 To Aragon and Castile?
 We were there at the command*

10 *post*
 *On a hill near Caspe
 When the CO asked for volunteers
 Hardly a chance in ten to
 make it, he said*

15 *And you and Jim Ruskin stepped forward
 How far from that blood-soaked Caspe road
 That gully of death at Pandols
 Those shell-torn vineyards before Gandesa
 Those waters of the Ebro in July 38*

20 *And Sierra Cabals in September -
 From these how far
 To a foxhole facing Buna Mission?
 At the bivouac near Falset
 Gathered round an evening*

25 *campfire*
 *You gave us a political pep-talk
 Speaking of German anti-Nazis
 And the world struggle against
 the Fascist beast*

30 *What you said filled minds and
 hearts
 With the iron solidarity of
 humankind*

*Herman Bottcher reckoned the distances
 well*

35 *And his is an "A" forever and ever
 In the subject of anti-Fascist
 Geometry*

The Graduation Exercise

40 *Went off with a bang
 And he was the honor student of
 the class*

*Graduating suddenly
 With the speed of shrapnel from a*

45 *Jap mortar*
 *At dawn of the last day of 1944
 When word of Munich reached us
 Some cursed bitterly
 And flung down their rifles
 Many sank to the ground*

50 *As for you, Butch
 Only the muscles around mouth*

and eyes
Tightened and set
And more grimly did you bend
55 *Over the pistol you were cleaning*
Yes, he passed his exam with flying colors;
Now comes the test for us the living
The Final Exam for us the undergrads
Two billion students in a hundred million classrooms
60 *Located in many places on the face of the Earth*

67 *We heard you say once to a frightened Spanish youngster*
“A real anti-Fascist must know how to die when necessary”
You were a real anti-Fascist, Butch
70 *And you knew how to die when it became necessary*

When the Graduation Day comes
80 *For all of humanity*
And all the distance have been rightly reckoned
It would be rightly remembered
What a great teacher of Geometry
Was the anti-Fascist Herman Bottcher.

Camp Luna, New Mexico
16 September 1945⁴⁶

Precisely when or even if Bottcher, Rossen, and Daura were acquainted as volunteers for the International Brigades has not yet been established. Daura began work on *Pax Pacifica* after seeing the poem that unfolded Bottcher’s anti-fascist military service in Spain and his active duty for the Allies. In a resurgence of his old vulnerability, Daura integrates the by now accepted conventions of Circle and Square with an innate sensitivity to Bottcher’s unselfish willingness to give his life for a cause, for which Daura, too, risked death. *Pax Pacifica* is remarkable for its

⁴⁶ John Rossen, “Herman Bottcher, Summa Cum Laude,” September 16, 1945. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 12, Folder 21, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

striking features and contrasts. One is struck by the strength of color, fullness of controlled emotions, and quiet finality of the scene.

Pierre must have been moved by Rossen's recollection of Captain Bottcher's stoic perseverance (lines 50-54), perhaps bringing to surface an anguish so deeply-personal as not to be easily extinguished by a covenant with his new nation. Daura redirects Bottcher's violent death into a space of unsettling, contemplative silence. He anchors the painting with a kneeling figure that balances material and historic context and the reverberations of poignant, deeply personal memories and fidelities. The interplay of shadow, light, and color is more consistent with his representational work, while the message of the painting makes itself known by its abstract elements which remain partially obscured, perhaps closely guarded by Daura.

Through complex iconography, *Pax Pacifica* stresses the predominant influence of the Allied Powers to overturn fascism. The figure kneels directly over a palm leaf shrouding a grave, in deference, perhaps, to the Philippines, the U.S. Colony where Bottcher is buried and where MacArthur's troops were then waging a battle for Manila with aspects of terror that were reminiscent of the Nazis. Religious themes figure prominently in Daura's artistic output. In Christian iconography, the palm originated in Christ's triumphant journey into Jerusalem days before his death and resurrection. Daura employs the Christian symbol for peace and victory over death to signify Bottcher's martyrdom. A soldier's helmet is loosely lashed to a cross overlooking the grave, and in the background over the figure's right shoulder, a white flag is suspended from a stanchion devised from the double traverse Cross of Lorraine, the banner of the Free French Forces supporting the French Resistance Movement during World War II. This was death by bloodshed, as Daura reminds the viewer by permitting a single, measured, thought-provoking drop of blood.

Daura's daughter Martha recounts that her father transformed Bottcher's violent death into a visual representation of triumph, not grief.⁴⁷ But, whose triumph? Did he conflate the mourner with himself to purge his consciousness of the baser elements of humanity? Or, is it a coincidence that the figure's left hand is clenched like Daura's? The hand rendered permanently useless when Daura took a tumble from a scaffold as a young man and the same from which he dug shattered bone fragments with a pen knife during the Battle of Teruel.

While still a teenager, Bottcher joined the Young Communists and began a lifelong crusade against fascism. Born 1909 in Landsberg, Germany, Bottcher was orphaned at a young age. In the mid-1920s, the Nazi party launched a campaign to build a nationalistic fervor among Germany's youth and working class in opposition to wealthy established elites. He was twice arrested during this time for demonstrating and served two six-month prison sentences. When he left Germany, he travelled first to Australia before immigrating to San Francisco, where he lived with an uncle and attended college for a time. When fascists over-ran Spain, the German-American left the United States to join the Loyalists. Bottcher joined the Debs Column (after Eugene Debs, the American Union and Socialist party leader), a division of the International Brigades at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, not as an American citizen, but as a German. Wounded twice in Spain, by the time he returned to America, he had earned the rank of Major in the *Brigada Internacional*.

Accounts of Bottcher's U.S. citizenship vary. Whether his citizenship had been revoked as a result of his enlistment in Spain with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, or whether the process was merely interrupted, he, nonetheless, was required to reapply upon his return from Spain.

⁴⁷ B. Scott Crawford, "Art vs Tyranny: Pierre Daura, John Rossen, and Herman Bottcher," *The Volunteer*, June 11, 2015. <http://www.albavolunteer.org/2015/06/art-vs-tyranny-daura-rossen-and-bottcher/>.

Citizenship again eluded Bottcher on his second attempt in 1939. Then, when confronted with the threat of Japanese fascism on December 7, 1941, the German-born Bottcher interrupted the naturalization process to talk his way into the U.S. War Department and an assignment with the Army's 32nd Division as a private.⁴⁸

In the Battle for Buna-Gona in New Guinea in December 1942, Bottcher and twelve volunteers devised a way to distract the Imperial Japanese forces deep inside enemy lines and rout them from the beachhead, thereby blocking reinforcements and supplies. Eye witnesses recalled that he lobbed hand grenades at Japanese pill boxes, the bunkers which fortified the village above the beach where the Allies had pushed Japanese troops.⁴⁹ The efforts of the American patrol, led by a German refugee, against roughly three hundred Japanese troops resulted in the death of nearly half of the enemy contingent.⁵⁰ Bottcher's leadership is credited with turning the tide toward Allied victory on Buna, and his superiors recognized his role. But, eligibility for a promotion to the rank of officer hinged on U.S. citizenship, and Bottcher carried a German passport. By a special act of Congress, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service awarded Bottcher a Certificate of Naturalization on the battlefield on December 31, 1943.⁵¹ ⁵² He then received the first of two Distinguished Service Crosses and a promotion from

⁴⁸ Herman Johann Friedrich Bottcher Archive, <http://hermannbottcher.org/archive/Hermann-Bottcher-Archive-CD/27-New-Release-Pg2-.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Frank, Staff Correspondent, "German to American," *Yank, The Army Weekly*, vol 47, 2 March 1945. <https://archive.org/details/1945-03-02YankMagazine-nsia/page/n6>.

⁵⁰ Royale Steel, Personal Recollection, 4 May 2009, Herman Bottcher Archives, http://hermannbottcher.org/royale_steele_001.pdf.

⁵¹ Herman Johann Freidrich Bottcher Archive, hermannbottcher.org, <http://hermannbottcher.org/naturalization.pdf>.

⁵² Frank, Staff Correspondent, "German to American," *Yank, The Army Weekly*, vol 47, 2 March 1945. <https://archive.org/details/1945-03-02YankMagazine-nsia/page/n6>.

Sergeant to Captain. In a tragic twist of fate, precisely one year later Bottcher was killed in action in the Philippines.

While Daura eventually achieved naturalization through the usual channels, Bottcher's citizenship was the result of an act of extraordinary bravery while in service to the United States. Daura's pensive tribute to Bottcher may have been the coda for a period of mourning for his lost identity and homeland.

During this period of limbo while Daura awaited naturalization, he felt a sense of duty as an American to rejoin the fight against fascism. He petitioned the Office of War Information to again volunteer overseas in the capacity of a relief worker — work he had undertaken in France during his convalescence. Pierre was disappointed to learn from Brackett Lewis in the Office of War that he would be required to pass a “stiff medical examination before we send anyone into a war theater.”⁵³

“I have never been as well as in my own (mind) as since I abandoned teaching. I have painted, I have worked. I have given myself to my art.”⁵⁴

It was from this juncture of uncertainty of place and identity that a latent force in Daura's artistic expression gave birth to a cynical alternative to his previous work. Experiences with the Republican Loyalists led to a profound shift in his state of mind which cued changes in the mood of his visual narrative. Pierre and Martha became naturalized citizens of the United States in

⁵³ Correspondence from the U.S. Department of State to Pierre Daura, June 25, 1943. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 4, Folder 4, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

⁵⁴ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, “Brief Survey of Daura's Life.”

1943. The family returned to St. Cirq after World War II, at first to repair and refurnish the ancient home that had been ransacked after they departed for the United States, and it eventually became a seasonal respite.⁵⁵ However, the family considered Rockbridge Baths a tranquil refuge among enduring friendships. In Rockbridge, he nurtured the burgeoning talents of a young Lexington native, Cy Twombly, until Twombly left for Black Mountain College in North Carolina. A warm friendship developed between Pierre and Louise and Rockbridge residents Dr. Robert and Betty Munger, who occasionally accompanied the Dauras on their sojourns to St. Cirq. Dr. Munger embellished his home and impressive gardens with his own sculptures and stained glass. He was a collector as well, in fact, owning paintings by Kandinsky and the illustrator Ray Prohaska, and the Mungers cultivated the artistic community in Lexington and Rockbridge.⁵⁶ They are the parents of acclaimed photographer Sally Mann, who photographed and wrote affectionately of her friend Twombly, who returned periodically to Lexington from his studio in Rome. In 1945, the Dauras took up a second residence in Lynchburg, sixty miles southeast of Rockbridge Baths across the Blue Ridge Mountains, when Pierre accepted a position in the art department of Lynchburg College and later at Randolph-Macon Women's College.

At one point in 1947 when the Dauras resided in Lynchburg, Pierre experienced a flashback to the bloodshed in Spain, accompanied by a moment of pique. Pierre sent *The Richmond Times Dispatch* several rebuttals to letters from Baroness Katherine Raffalovich, also of Lynchburg, that had been published in the *Times Dispatch*. She had written, "I honestly believe that every man who died fighting to save Spain from the Reds gave his life for the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *The Virginia Record Magazine*, March 1977, 30.
<https://usmodernist.org/AIAVA/AIAVA-1977-03.pdf>.

freedom we hope to save for the world.” To correct her misconception, in his rebuttal Daura quickly established himself as a citizen of the United States with family in Spain, as well as an active participant in the war. He wrote an especially vivid and poignant account of his visit the summer before to the American cemetery in Ste. Marie, in Normandy. His logic lay in his assertion that beneath her misunderstanding lay a contradiction, “What a farce would be all those cemeteries, all those monuments to people who died for the wrong cause.”⁵⁷ In a private letter to Virginius Dabney, editor of the *Times Dispatch*, Daura wanted to spare the Baroness embarrassment over her gaffe, while acknowledging a sense of shame that Raffalovich’s letter was published near December 7, “‘date of infamy,’ symbol of the treachery and degradation of Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito and their friends.”⁵⁸ Publicly addressing such exaggerations on the printed page served as a necessary catharsis as time passed and he once again gave himself over to the art he had been neglecting during his years in academia.⁵⁹

During the transition from refugee to citizen, Daura began to paint with brighter colors and with an energy that reflected a sense of security for his family and in his identity as a Catalan-American. This transition is evident when comparing the grim etchings of *Civilization to Little House at Tuckaway* (fig. 25). The colorful summer landscape depicts a small cabin near their home in Rockbridge Baths surrounded by an abundance of nature, which is never evident in his war art. *Tuckaway* is an indication of his revitalization as an artist and as an active member of a community.

⁵⁷ Letter to the Editor, Richmond Times Dispatch from Pierre Daura. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 15, Folder 6, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

⁵⁸ Letter to the Editor, Richmond Times Dispatch from Pierre Daura.

⁵⁹ Pierre Daura, November 11, 1967 transcription, “Brief Survey of Daura’s Life.”

Daura no longer sought the distinction of greatness or celebrity but discovered a latent stimulation from his surroundings and contentment within his family and friends. The craggy heights of House Mountain, long sight lines across verdant pastures, and the mellifluous ripple of the Maury River consoled and stimulated his spirit. The result: he continued the practice of exploration and innovation within the framework of his natural style. He allowed his surroundings to geographically insulate him from a progressive, international art community, and Louise, ever his ardent champion, managed his mostly regional exhibitions and sales and the family's summer sojourns to their home in St. Cirq. Spectral figures of the sort that appeared during his season of uncertainty virtually disappeared from his oeuvre. The "rough straight lines of war, blood and destruction" had given way once more to "the soft and curved lines of landscape." However, even though memories of Spain continued to exert themselves in his art from time to time, Daura's legacy is embodied in his art and is more than an extension of American immigration policy in that, his work transcends disparate borders and cultures and is fully Spanish and yet fully American.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pierre Daura Archive, Box 4, Folder 4 Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia.

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Appendix



Fig. 1. Louise Heron Blair, *Altafulla in Spring*, 1929, is representative of Blair's French landscapes
Oil on paper, 19 1/8" x 24 1/4", Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami



Fig. 2. Catalog, Salon d'Automne, 1928, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia

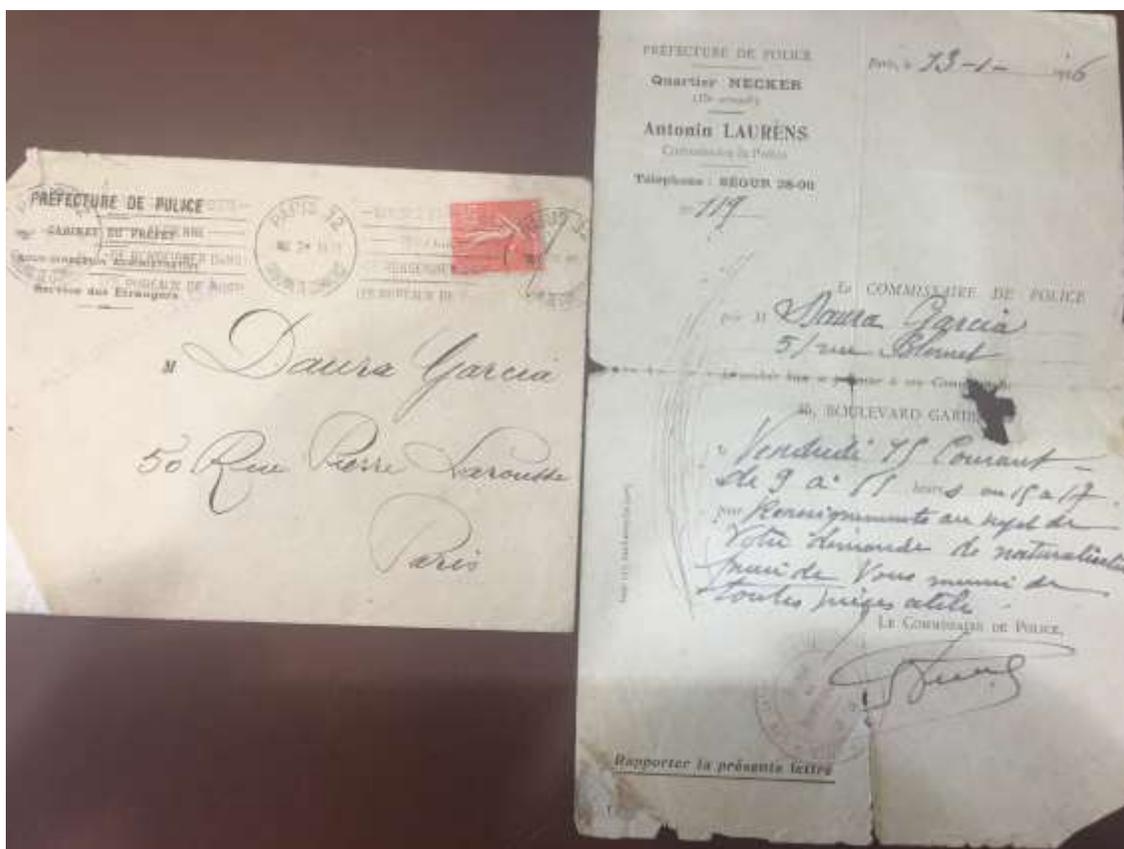


Figure 3. Pierre Daura: Application for French Citizenship, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia

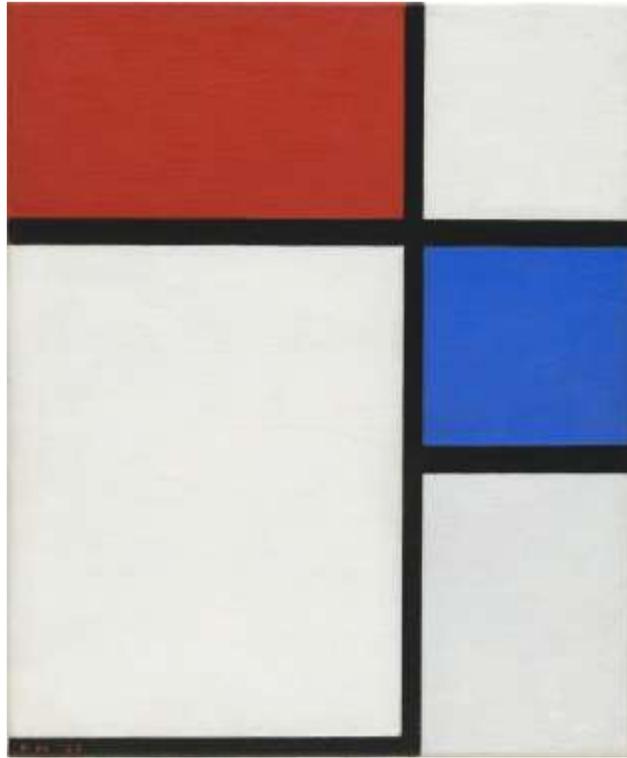


Fig. 4. Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944, *Composition No. II, with Red and Blue*, 1929
Museum of Modern Art, New York

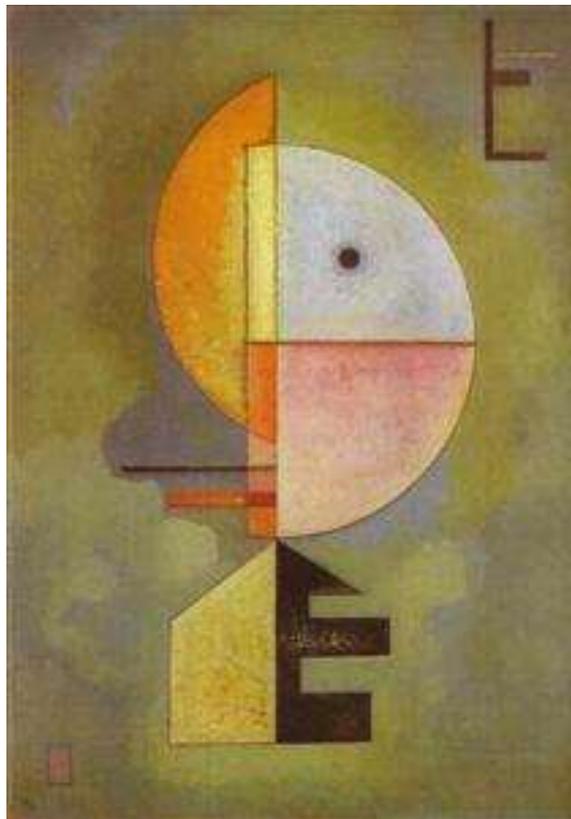


Fig. 5. Wassily Kandinsky, 1866-1944, *Upward*, 1929, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

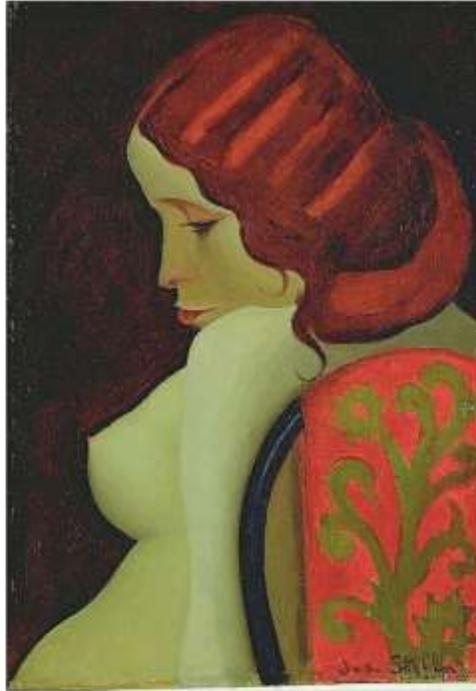


Fig. 6. Joseph Stella 1877-1946, *Torso*, 1929, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 7. Pierre Daura, Logo for *Cercle et Carre*, 1929, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia



Fig. 8. *Cercle et Carré* 1, *Circle and Square*, Number 1 - March 15, 1930, Private collection



Fig. 9. John Reed, *10 дней, которые потрясли мир*, 1923, Russian edition

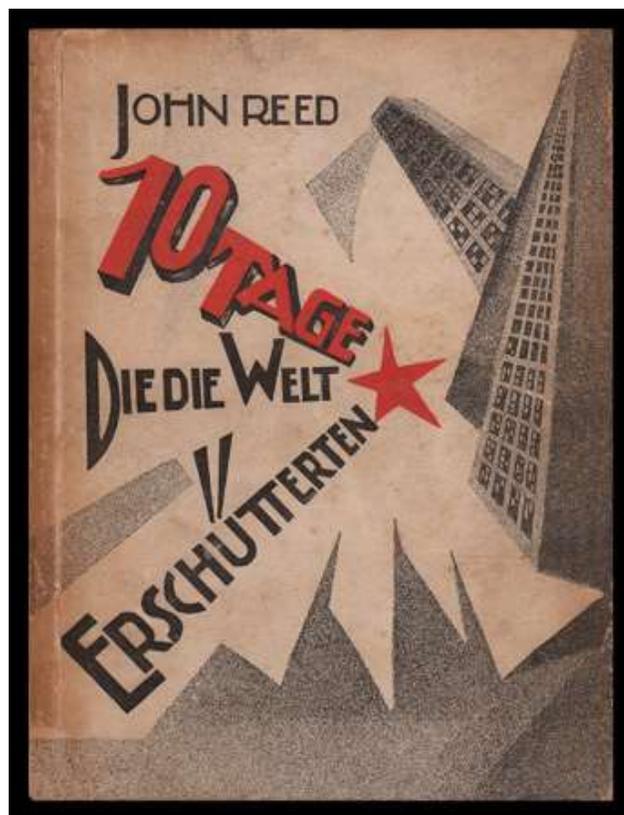


Fig. 10. John Reed, *10 Tage Die die Welt Erschütterten*, 1922, German edition



Fig. 11. John Reed, *10 днів, які сколихнули світ*, 1924, Ukrainian edition, Cover by Adolf Strakhov



Fig. 12., John Reed, *Dieci Giorni che Scossero Il Mondo*, Pierre Daura, Preliminary cover design, 1929
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia



Fig. 13. Pierre Daura, *Self Portrait with Militia Uniform*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 64.1 x 53.3 cm, Daura Gallery, University of Lynchburg



Fig. 14. Pierre Daura, *Membership Booklet, Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) 1937*, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia



Dibujo del pintor americano PIERRE DAURA

Evocación del Campo de Argelès-sur-Mer, 1939

Fig. 15. Pierre Daura, *Argelès*, 1939 (original)
Ink and Watercolor, sheet 20 x 13 in, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia



Fig. 16. Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937, Oil on canvas, 11'6" x 25'6", Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía



Fig. 17. Pierre Daura, *Civilisation 1937: The Innocent Victims*, 1937-1939, Etching and aquatint on paper, Daura Gallery, University of Lynchburg



Fig. 18. Pierre Daura, *Civilisation 1937: La Cultura del Odio*, 1937-1939, Etching and aquatint on paper, 17.8 x 12.9 cm, Daura Gallery, University of Lynchburg



Fig. 19. Pierre Daura, *Martha*, 1935, Ink, 22.9 x 31.8 cm, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia

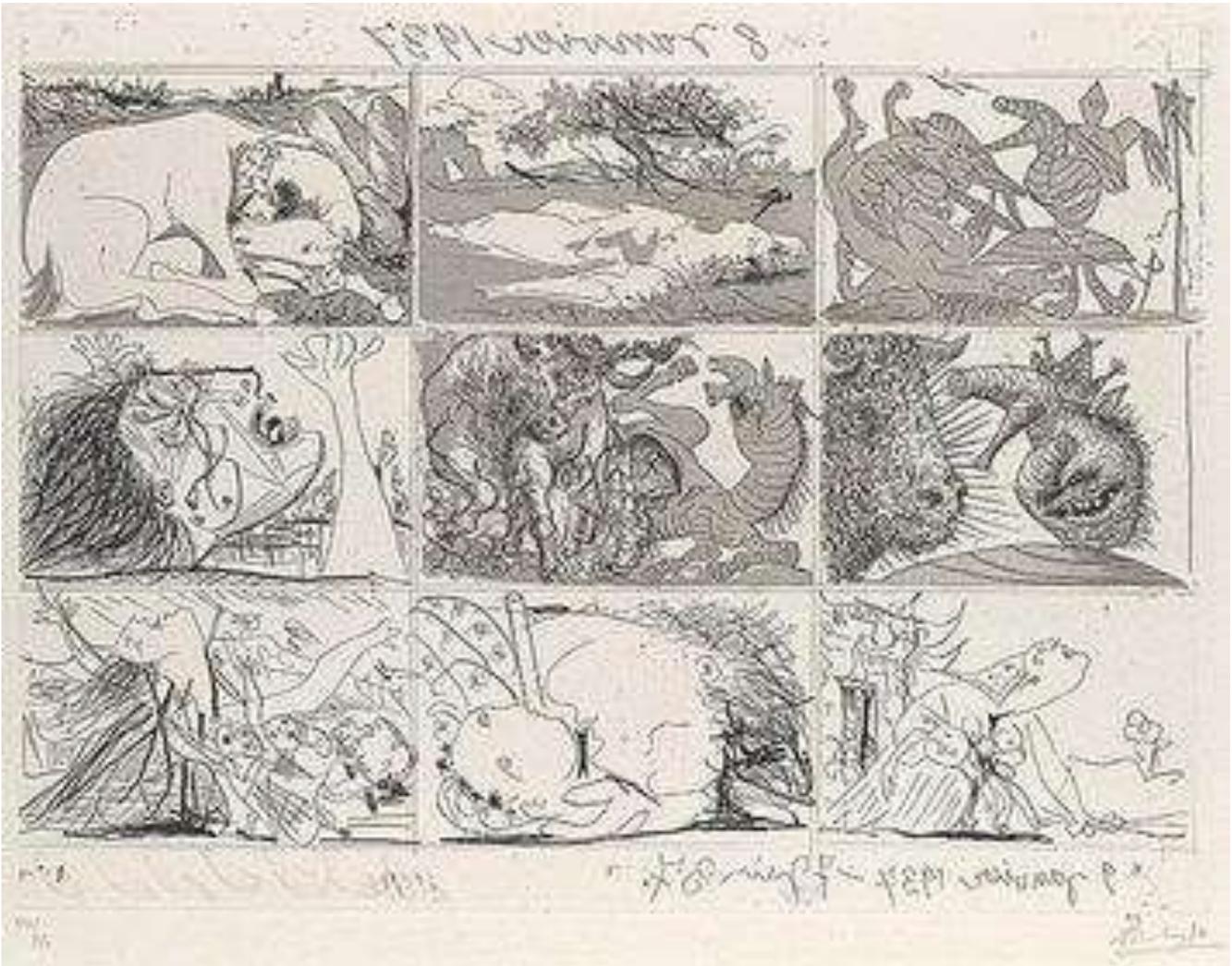


Fig. 20. Pablo Picasso, *Dream and Lie of Franco*, 1937
Etching and aquatint Plate, 12 7/16 x 16 1/2 in.; sheet: 15 1/16 x 22 1/4 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 21. Rockwell Kent, *Mail Service in the Arctic*, Federal Post Office, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 22. Rockwell Kent, *Mail Service in the Arctic*, Federal Post Office, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 23. Pierre Daura, *Tank Battle*, 1939, Pencil and gouache on paper, 48.3 x 62.9, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia



Fig. 24. Pierre Daura, *Pax Pacifica*, ca. 1945, oil on canvas, 32 x 24 in, Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection.



Fig. 25. Pierre Daura, *Little House at Tuckaway*, 1945, Oil on canvas, Daura Gallery, University of Lynchburg

The Daura's neighbor in St. Cirq, the Surrealist poet Andre Breton, wrote an affectionate poem in 1951 about his friend's summer visits.

*From my window
Each morning I rejoiced at seeing
The birth of a blue smoke.*

*I would say to myself
There, my friend Pierre Daura is up.*

*This smoke Veils and unveils
A sensitive and compassionate nature
such as I like And find so few of
May that blue smoke
Rise again each summer.*