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**קטלוג ואלבום אמנות המתעד את הליתוגרפיות של מרק שגאל Marc Chagall בין השנים
1962-1968. מבוא מאת ז'וליאן קאין Julien Cain בהוצאת Boston Book and Art
Shop 1969**

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THE LITHOGRAPHS OF CHAGALL 1962-1968 Volume III - NOTES AND CATALOGUE

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THE LITHOGRAPHS OF CHAGALL 1962-1968 Preface by JULIEN CAIN



Marc Chagall

THE MOST ENDURING TRIBUTE which any book can pay to an artist is to collect together all his work in every form. In such a book one can trace each stage of his development, and one can come to understand how through the years the miracle of creation is renewed and brought nearer to perfection. Chagall's achievements over the last sixty years have been so immense that we owe a special debt to all who have studied it and especially to his son-in-law, Franz Meyer, keeper of the Basle museum, who has provided us with a book of such splendid scope that it throws all the host of previous books into the shade. But yet there is still room for detailed studies of well-defined aspects of Chagall's art, as painter, as potter, as sculptor, as worker in stained glass, and of course as engraver and lithographer.

In 1960 when I first realized that Chagall's vast output as a lithographer during very few years required a volume to itself, I had no idea that the 181 lithographs illustrated in the first volume would so soon have to be followed by another with 180 more illustrations covering the years 1957 to 1962. And now in this third volume we have another 180 to take us down to the end of the year 1968. So altogether there are 560 lithographs most of which were made within a period of only twenty years.

Work at such speed implies a mastery of technique which is all the more surprising when one considers that for a long time Chagall had not been paying much attention to this art form. Before he left France in 1941 he had hardly done more than a score of pencil sketches intended for lithographs and the occasional lithograph, none of them works of much importance. Under Ambroise Vollard's spell all his efforts had been directed into making engravings for book illustrations, resulting in three masterpieces: Gogol's "Dead Souls", La Fontaine's "Fables" and the Bible. While he was in the United States Chagall only once turned to lithography, when he did illustrations for "Four Tales from the Thousand and One Nights" It was only after he came back to live permanently in France that he really took to lithography. For that we owe an immense debt to Teriade and his splendid magazine "Verve", for he exercised a spell to rival Vollard's.

Chagall lived for some time in Teriade's company at Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat before he settled first at Vence and then at Saint-Paul. It was in the years after 1950 that Chagall turned his full attention to light. Light is the be-all and end-all of his painting, ruling the whole pictorial space and every form within that space. In this context, it was the impact of Greece that had been decisive, and the story starts with his illustrations of "Daphnis and Chloe". Once again, Chagall found, as so many other artists have found, that to illustrate a book is no simple craftsman's task. One must steep oneself in the atmosphere in which the characters live. It was memories of Vitebsk that gave life to "Dead Souls" for La Fontaine, the French countryside was there, all around him; and working on the Bible, he went to Palestine. When he turned his attention to Longus' charming tale, Chagall wandered to Greece, filling his eyes with the most beautiful monuments and the most moving sites including Delphi, but it was in the little island of Poros that he settled, and it was there that he gave expression to his wonder in gouaches and pastels which later, after another journey, formed the basis of his justly famous lithographs. The two young people sport by a shimmering sea in the freshness of unsullied nature. Subtle fingers seek to express nothing but the lyric beauty of the tale; the colors are transparent, and light reigns everywhere.

Chagall was never to forget Greece. Several years later, in 1959, he worked on the decor and designs for the costumes of a revival of Maurice Ravel's "Daphnis and Chloe" at the Paris Opera. Ravel's music seemed more beautiful than ever, with scenery in perfect sympathy with its spirit, which was, indeed the same spirit that had inspired the illustrations of Teriade's book.

Another ten years passed, and a new series of lithographs (529-240) gave fresh evidence of Chagall's attachment to Greece, that Greece that was the homeland of Provence where he had come to live. "Land of the Gods" was the title he gave to the series. Brief, vivid quotations from Anacreon and Theocritus went with these lovely images; most of the quotations were cheerful, but occasionally there is a roll of drums from Aeschylus. However, it is really the spirit of Sappho that prevails, celebrating the "intoxicating garlands of ravishing flowers" or turning to the happy bridegroom to say "You have the marriage you desire, and possess the maiden for whom you longed."

At the same time as he was working on this Greek cycle, Chagall's attention turned back again to the two great themes that had concerned him all his life, themes that might appear far removed one from the other: the circus and the Bible. He turned easily from the one to the other, and has frankly explained his feeling about this: "I have always thought of clowns, acrobats and actors as tragically human beings who, to me, seem closely linked with the characters of some religious pictures. Even now, when I paint a Crucifixion or some other religious picture, the same feelings spring up as I have experienced when painting circus folk, but all the same, there is nothing literary in those pictures, and it is very difficult to explain why I do find a psycho--plastic affinity between these two types of composition."

Once more we owe a debt to Teriade, who persuaded Chagall to look again, in 1967, at 19 gouaches which he had painted thirty years ago at Vollard's insistence; the result was a splendid flowering of thirty eight lithographs, twenty three of them in color (490-527). At last Chagall had found the right expression for his dreams and visions of the circus which was, for him, "a magic and ephemeral sight, that passes like another world... the endless dance of the ages, where humans with their smiles and with the gestures of their arms and of their legs transform themselves into great art... Often they touch the sublime heights of poetry... It is in heaven that my circus performs. " But on earth the circus does come to an end. " A man passes down the street. Out go the city's lights. The show is over." The Great Harlequin remains alone: once more Chagall will portray him with fine panache. One of his most recent lithographs dating from 1968 is called "The Circus with the Angel", where that Angel is a trapeze acrobat (No. 543). Finally in December 1968 come "The Little Harlequins" (No. 552) which is very close to "The Vision of Moses" (No. 553).

Chagall's Biblical message runs through the whole of his work, but in recent years it has taken new and more exact shape. The great pictures shown in the Galerie Mollien at the Louvre and intended for exhibition at Nice have a unity, the result of long meditation and profound study, which can be traced through the drawings, gouaches and lithographs of these fertile years. The series of preparatory drawings which Chagall did for the twelve stained glass windows of the synagogue of the Medical Center of the Hebrew Hadassah University at Jerusalem show extraordinary freedom and powers of invention, and the same may be said of the twenty four "Exodus" lithographs done a few years later in 1966 (Nos. 444-467). In them we can trace the life of Moses from the

moment when Pharaoh's daughter found him in the bulrushes, down to his death, and thereafter the entry into the Promised Land. Unity of conception is never lost in all the wide variety of these scenes, while the technique of lithography permits endless nuances.

So Chagall was able to use this tool that he had longed to master in the service of those cyclic dramas that formed the inspiration of his art. But he also delighted to use it as the fancy took him for a subject from the wealth of glorious nature surrounding him, birds or beasts or lovers entwined half hidden by gigantic bunches of flowers. Flowers and fruit too are always with him, and his lyric temper makes it natural for him to say, "Gardens bloom within me". These light hearted themes gave him the rest, or rather the change, needed by a man of his great age who has undertaken grandiose labors.

I have mentioned the Jerusalem windows. Father Couturier who had already persuaded Matisse, Rouault, Braque and Leger to design windows for him, asked Chagall to do the same for his church at Assy: he designed two windows, and also two bas-reliefs in marble, "The Deer and The Bird", as well as a large ceramic mural, "The Crossing of the Red Sea": so Chagall as sculptor and as potter put all the resources of his fresh inventive genius at the disposal of sacred art. He did not shrink from an even harder task the design for two empty windows in the cathedral at Metz. He did this work in the workshop over which Charles Marq presided at Reims, making models and trying out the colors. The glass-workers at the Simon works accepted him as one of themselves, just as the craftsmen of Mourlot's lithographic workshop had accepted him in days gone by. Chagall, a craftsman himself, could take charge of the operations: he would stand on a ladder and paint the glass himself. As Charles Marq put it: "color gloried in his service: skeletons took on flesh, as Chagall turned inert matter into living art."

All these works, not to mention others such as a cartoon for a mosaic intended for Ravenna, did not prevent Chagall from continuing to travel with indefatigable zest, and they were all accomplished within a few years on either side of 1960. His creative impulse seemed ever to be growing. He met every challenge which life and his growing renown presented to him: for how can a man turn down demands pressing in from every side, if he feels that still, after so much work accomplished, all has not yet been said? Chagall gave clear expression to this feeling: "The demand frightens me, but yet inside myself I dream of monumental labors." That was how he put his inmost thoughts at the moment when, with the great work of the ceiling at the Opera in Paris just finished, he was preparing to face the equally exacting task at the Opera House in New York. Chagall could pass easily from such monumental works, works on a scale to rival the great achievements of the Renaissance, to gouaches and lithographs which however small in scale were not "minor" works, for he would not have recognized any such hierarchy. At eighty two his hands remain as agile and as supple as his mind, constantly inventing, like a musician, new variations of astonishing freshness on old themes, finding thereby the truest ways to delight our eyes and wake our sensibilities. He still

keeps busy with new plans, and one can hardly wait to see what he will make of the watercolors intended to illustrate Andre Malraux's "Anti-Memoires".

Perhaps Chagall's secret lies in his refusal to accept any "theory or method" at a time when school after school has been following in rapid succession, as often as not trampling on art and sterilizing it with a host of rigid prescriptions and interdictions. He has been content, as he says, "to sing like a bird." Of course that means going on creating images, and those images, as Gaston Bachelard among other philosophers has pointed out, have come to form a part of the world of vision, of sensibility, in our day. Such images are always at a certain distance from the every-day world, but Chagall has made his point of view plain when he wrote, "that which seems strange is clear."

JULIEN CAIN

Member of the "Institut de France"

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[The Lithographs of CHAGALL, 1962-1968: Lithographe III - Notes and Catalogue with Original Lithographs](#)

Hardcover: 179 pages of text and many b&w and color illustrations (183 color plates); 2 original lithographs by Chagall: original color lithograph as frontispiece, and original lithographed dust jacket protected in acetate; the album is preserved in its original publisher's card box slipcase

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