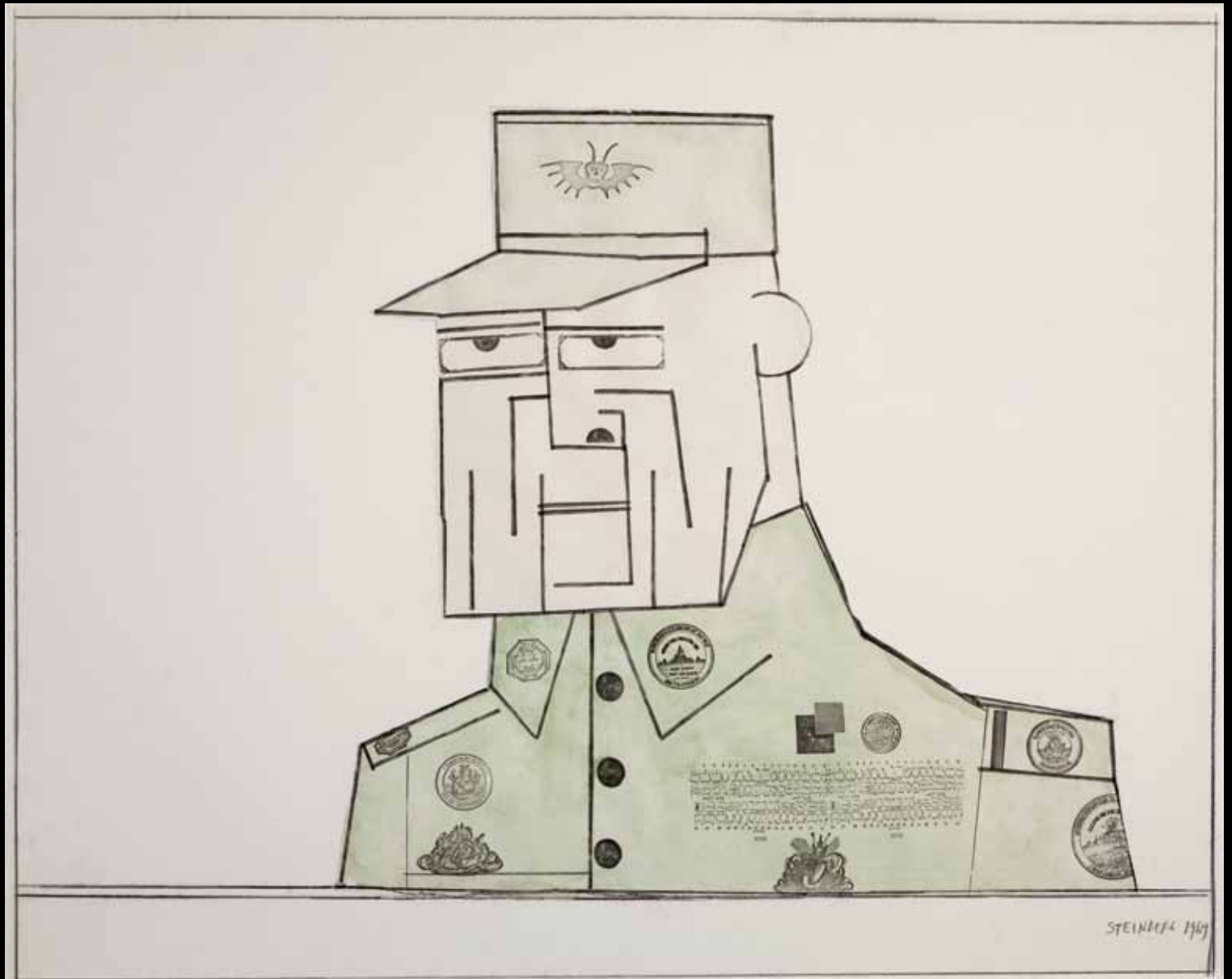


SAUL STEINBERG

SELECTED MASTERWORKS



PUCKER GALLERY | BOSTON

SAUL STEINBERG

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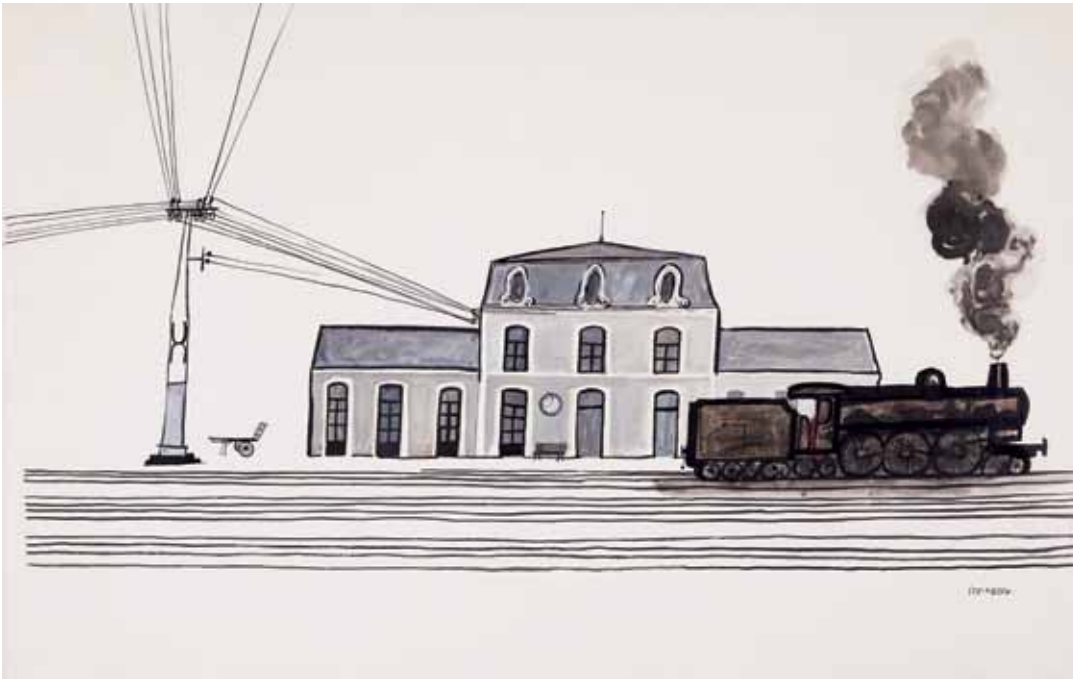


The art of Saul Steinberg (1914–1999) begins with the black line, the simplest of artistic marks. Within the relative quiet of line, however, lies an intricate lexicon of symbols and ideas. His art rewards close looking and thoughtful analysis, all the while evading easy explanation. Steinberg was by all accounts a private man whose career as an artist gave him a very public persona. Much ink has been spilled in the pursuit of gaining insight into his life, mind, and work. Harold Rosenberg’s 1978 essay, Joel Smith’s *Steinberg at The New Yorker* (2005) and *Saul Steinberg: Illuminations* (2006), and the comprehensive research available from the Saul Steinberg Foundation (saulsteinbergfoundation.org) are instrumental resources. A master draftsman, a commander of visual puns, an encyclopedia of art and historical references, Steinberg created a staggering body of work which, over the course of six decades, provided an incisive, sardonic, and humorous perspective on 20th-century life. His compositions are often simple but his examinations of politics, culture, relationships, identity, and human emotion are profound. Joel Smith wrote that Steinberg was “virtuosic—unparalleled—in both the sheer range of phenomena he absorbed into his repertoire and in his ability to reinvent himself on paper in

order to convey new perceptions about it all.” How does one explain such an anthology of work, when the artist himself wrote that “every explanation is over-explanation?”

Renowned for his relationship with *The New Yorker*, Steinberg published nearly 1,200 drawings and 89 covers in the magazine. He was equally prolific outside the commercial medium, showing his drawings, paintings, prints, collages, and sculptures in more than 80 lifetime international one-person shows after the breakthrough 1946 *Fourteen Americans* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His personal history—his youth in anti-Semitic Romania (which he dubbed “a masquerade country”), boyhood visits to his father’s printing and bookbinding shop, his architectural studies in Mussolini’s Italy, his fraught journey escaping Fascist rule for the United States, his experiences as a U.S. Naval Officer during World War II, his life as an immigrant in America—all is synthesized in an exceptional intellectual, philosophical, and creative outlook.

As an immigrant to America in the 1940s, Steinberg was fascinated by the self-determination of its people. He saw Americans shift easily between different facets of themselves, all the while protecting themselves from authentic self-revelation through incessant posturing. He noted the real and metaphorical masks of their appearances, behaviors, and



Untitled (Train), c. 1951 Watercolor on paper
14.5 x 22.75"
Signed lower right: "STEINBERG"
SS22

Between 1952 and 1955, a series of traveling Steinberg exhibitions in the U.S., South America, and Europe marked the first time Steinberg’s art enjoyed broad international exposure. The exhibitions were organized thematically, presenting subjects not usually found in Steinberg’s magazine work, among them railroad trains and stations. Steinberg loved to travel and drew railroad stations in England, France, Italy, and the United States. Though it is unidentified, this station has definitive French architecture and reflects his regular travel to France in the 1940s and 1950s. The tracks in this station appear like musical staff paper and shapes in the electrical pole are reminiscent of musical clefs.

Steinberg once said, “My drawing contains often parodies of drawing. It’s a form of criticism.” This critical eye fueled much of Steinberg’s philosophical comedy. Though he could recognize and respect the beauty of religious, romantic, and art historical motifs, he found them to be clichéd and out of touch. In *Knight on Horseback*, a stoic, valiant knight, complete with horse, feathers, and lance, is threatened by a small, but angry lizard, illustrating what Joel Smith called “the vanity of noble intentions.” Though hot breath steams from the knight’s valiant steed, Steinberg pokes fun at an old trope—the legacy of the art, knighthood, and masculinity.



Knight on Horseback, c. 1949-1954
Ink drawing on paper
11 x 14"
Signed upper right: "STEINBERG"
SS18

environments—which he both criticized as specious and celebrated as a sign of the imagination at work. New York might have been fodder enough, but Steinberg was engrossed by the fantasy of America and traveled extensively by bus, train, and car, observing and drawing the country’s symbols, cities, citizens, and frontiers. Smith noted “how intimately joined were [his] mechanics of noticing and recording.” And Steinberg said, “When I came here, I realized the American landscape was untouched. ... I drew things that hadn’t been drawn before—American women, baseball games, small town motels and diners—but I drew them with the same carefulness that more ‘noble’ artists use for a nude or a still life or an apple.” For Steinberg, it was not the witnessing of things but the drawing of them that gave them life.

The same immigrant status that afforded him the observational viewpoint of an outsider also filled him with questions about the nature of identity. Harold Rosenberg wrote about Steinberg’s contemporaries, artists like Pollock, de Kooning and Rothko, who each “sought a unique idiom in which to unveil a being underlying consciousness”—meaning they were all looking for their own way to explore their unconscious selves. He goes on to say that “like them, Steinberg conceived art as autobiography, but autobiography of whom? The hidden metaphysical self? Man today? The immigrant? The stranger? In the mid-twentieth century, the artist is obliged to invent the self who will paint his pictures—and who may constitute their subject matter.”

Traces of himself, or more accurately his

camouflaging of self, abound in Steinberg’s work. He pressed his inked fingerprint in the work in several ways: as abstractions of the face, of the body, and of birds, clouds, vehicles, and animals. Sometimes the fingerprint stands alone as a comment on the unavoidable fact of individuality, while other times it is repeated in clusters to demonstrate the ironic nature of conformity. In all cases, Steinberg uses the fingerprint to cleverly and simultaneously obscure and announce his presence. Oblique references to his history proliferate, the ubiquitous ink bottle regularly reveals his proximity, and certain recurring characters are widely considered his surrogates. Rosenberg explains: “Steinberg’s presence in his visual narrative is personified by a cast of invented characters who serve as his disguises: the little man in profile, the cat, the dog, the fish, the artists, performing in varieties of domestic and comic-strip situations from watching TV and scrutinizing pictures in art galleries to marching in formation on mathematical moonscapes.” Joel Smith referred to Steinberg as “the dog in the postcard of modern art history: he walks around among those posing for the camera, but obeys his own itinerary, follows his nose, is oriented by his own landmarks.”

The menagerie of flora, fauna, and man-made objects in Steinberg’s drawings evolved over time, but each smartly chosen element functioned as philosophical investigation in the guise of wit. Myopic socialites, armored knights, Victorian ladies in plumed hats, war generals, long-legged creatures, and Wild West cowboys populate the scenes. Historical figures



Railway, 1952
Ink and wax crayon on paper
14.5 x 23"
Signed lower right: "STEINBERG"
Titled and dated on reverse: "Railway 1952"
SS11

Drawings such as *Railway* reflect not only Steinberg's love of railroad stations (drawings of this subject matter are primarily limited to the early 1950s), but his training as an architect. In *Railway*, he emphasizes precise structural lines while enhancing both the industrial qualities of the bridge and the decorative qualities of the Dinas Mawddwy station. The Mawddwy Railway in Mid Wales began as center for slate quarries and became a public railway in 1867. The railway line then went through periods of decline and revival until its eventual closure in 1952—the same year Steinberg created this drawing of one of the stations. Void of nearly any passengers, the drawing reflects the lack of activity at the station, but also expresses Steinberg's affection for the design and spirit of the place.

eat Thanksgiving dinner with Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, and Mickey Mouse packs a semi-automatic weapon. Birds in gilded cages, oversized rabbits, domesticated pets, and thick-skinned crocodiles engage in bewildering activity. Furniture and household items take on personalities and geometric shapes behave like human beings. Tabletop vignettes, tilted upright in skewed Cubist perspective, became sculptural objects as wooden tables were painted with trompe l'oeil drawing tools, pieces of art, and studio paraphernalia.

The iconic Art Deco Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, small-town corner stores, Hollywood theaters, European monuments, and local railroad stations recall Steinberg's interest in architecture. Steinberg's fantastical emanations are representations not of physical reality but of the truth that underlies the seen. Neither are his landscapes a form of veritas; instead, his souvenir postcard-style scenes express the pseudo-reality of landscape art. He wrote: "When I admire a scene in the country, I look for a signature in the lower right-hand corner." Works by Steinberg often contain reflections, exploring the accuracy of our perceptions of reality by illustrating a scene through concurrent opposing points of view.

Artifice was often reiterated by the addition of rubber-stamped elements, a mechanism the artist introduced into his work early on to parody the authoritative hand of power. Fake government seals decorate Steinberg's stylized false documents—passports, driver's licenses, tax receipts, birth certificates, and bank notes—but also function as a visual device

in his other works (such as his landscapes, still lifes, and portraits). The repetitive use of simple stamp shapes (just like the repetitive use of Steinberg's fingerprint) introduces visual patterns, and this along with the contrived seals of approval throughout remind the viewer that art is but a subterfuge of reality.

Florid but illegible texts and autographs lend empty authenticity to the documents. In many works, indecipherable calligraphy fills the paper like ornate chatter. The earliest known example of this fictitious handwriting appeared when curator Dorothy C. Miller requested Steinberg's Artist's Statement for the *Fourteen Americans* exhibition, and spectators have endeavored to decipher the decorative scrawl ever since. As Joel Smith wrote, "Steinberg's flourishes are non-figurative (i.e. alphabetic, illegible) to be sure, but—far from resisting interpretation—they are virtually impossible not to interpret."

Harold Rosenberg called Steinberg "a writer of pictures" and an "architect of speech and sound." In his word-object drawings begun in the 1960s, words behave like their definitions and verbal clichés are given visual form: "No" is a brick wall while the letters H-E-L-P-! shout desperately as they fall over a precipice. The question mark takes on numerous roles, as when it plays the part of a museum visitor contemplating various artistic iterations of itself. Steinberg appropriated the thought balloon, a historically cartoon-based device, to make tangible the internal machinations of the human mind. The balloons take on various structures, becoming images in and of themselves whose form and mostly indecipherable calligraphic



North Carolina, 1955
Ink and watercolor on paper
14.5 x 23"
Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 1955"
SS5

In 1947, Steinberg bought a used Cadillac convertible and over the next decade drove with his wife throughout the 48 states. For Steinberg, Joel Smith wrote, "travel was not a break from anything so much as it was the central part of his process, neither work, nor leisure but a comprehensive art of living." He was the rare artist who gave special focus to small-town American life and architecture. This drawing of an unknown street corner in North Carolina, which he visited in 1954, features an ordinary drug store overshadowed by a large billboard advertising beer. *North Carolina* focuses less on site-specific details and more on the universal charm of a ubiquitous American scene, one where run-of-the-mill buildings share space with attention-grabbing signs, slogans, and advertisements.

content speak to the thoughts and moods of animate and inanimate objects alike.

The combination of fine and popular art was trademark Steinberg, who straddled the worlds of high art and mass media and who reimagined the norms of art historical genres in a way that defied categorization. Hilton Kramer talked of his “Cubist and rococo characters, Expressionist conversations, Renaissance objects, Gothic words, and Pointillist emotions,” of his “primitivism” and “animism” and Joel Smith said he “[absorbed] every visual mode that seized his connoisseurial attention.” By all accounts he was simultaneously gregarious and reserved, and he eschewed fame as a construct that heightens the absurdities of our social systems and undermines the stability of the self. Fame also frustratingly interfered with his preferred position as anonymous observer. He was famously photographed in disguise, wearing paper-bag masks of his own devising to express a host of human emotions and social types.

Steinberg spoke not through words but through drawing, and the messages

he expressed evolved over time to reflect developments in his personal life and changes in the political and social environment throughout decades of work. Many compositions were simple and facilely understood; others were ornate, brimming with visual references that defy easy deciphering. Steinberg remained conscious of the viewer as the collaborator in the making of meaning, saying he appealed “to the complicity of my reader who will transform this line into meaning by using our common background of culture, history, and poetry.” Ultimately, he was striving, he said, “to make an image that cannot be unseen, that fundamentally changes the way you think about something.” Joel Smith described Steinberg’s drawings as “illuminations” not only because, like illuminated manuscripts, they mingle image and text, but also because they bring to light the germane, the unnoticed, and the absurd. From the whimsical, to the satirical, to the philosophical, to the everyday, Steinberg indeed fundamentally changed the way we view the world.

— JEANNE KOLES

ON THE COVER:

A lining himself with anti-Vietnam war protests, Steinberg disparagingly depicted military officers such as *General A*. In 1970, a year after this piece was made, he donated a related print to *Peace Portfolio I*, twelve prints by twelve different artists published and sold to raise money for the peace candidates. Mocking the high-ranking decorated official in *General A*, Steinberg swaps out the general’s badges and buttons for rubber stamps, which are marked all over his uniform, from shoulders to collars, hat, and chest. The rectangular swath of “medals” on the right chest are not military ribbons but a rubber stamp of a dental chart. These substitutes mock the seriousness of the officer’s stern stare and intimidating stature.

General A, 1969
Watercolor and rubber stamp on paper
28.75 x 34.75”
Signed and dated lower right: “STEINBERG 1969”
SS6



The Affairs of Anatol, 1957
 Ink, pencil, colored pencil, and paper collage on paper
 23 x 15"
 Signed lower right: "STEINBERG"
 SS13

The *Affairs of Anatol* was based on the 1893 one-act play *Anatol* by Arthur Schnitzler that was adapted as a silent film in 1921 by Cecil B. DeMille, and later adapted by Herbert Berghof, an Austrian-American actor, director, and acting teacher, for the 1957 production at Chicago Summer Theater's Edgewater Beach Playhouse. Saul Steinberg was friendly with Berghof and his wife, the actress Uta Hagen, who starred in the production. This is the drawing for the poster announcement for the play's 1957 Chicago production. In *The Affairs of Anatol*, a married Anatol Spencer falls for several intriguing women whom he feels a need to rescue—but he is ultimately cheated on, robbed, or tricked by these women. When he realizes that he still loves his wife, Vivian, and wants to reconcile with her, he discovers that she spent an evening out on the town with his best friend. The drawing depicts a party scene from the play when a hired hypnotist convinces Vivian that she must wade through a stream of water, and she begins to undress. To save her from public indecency, Anatol whisks her away from the crowd.



Horse and Jockey, 1958
 Ink and watercolor on paper
 23 x 14.5"
 Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 58"
 SS23

In the later 1940s and 1950s, Steinberg produced many drawings of equestrians, in most of which the horse receives exaggerated proportions and contours. He loved the elegant curves of the horse, at rest or in motion, and was fascinated by racetracks—the horses as well as the colorful jockeys and the spectators. This drawing is one of a group of seven that were published in a *Sports Illustrated* feature entitled "Steinberg at the Races" in 1963; most of the racetrack drawings, like this one, date from the later 1950s. Steinberg's horses, as here, throughout the *Sports Illustrated* piece, and in other equestrian drawings, almost always have unnaturally slender legs, ill-equipped to carry their human burdens.



Heroes and Giant Rabbit, 1963

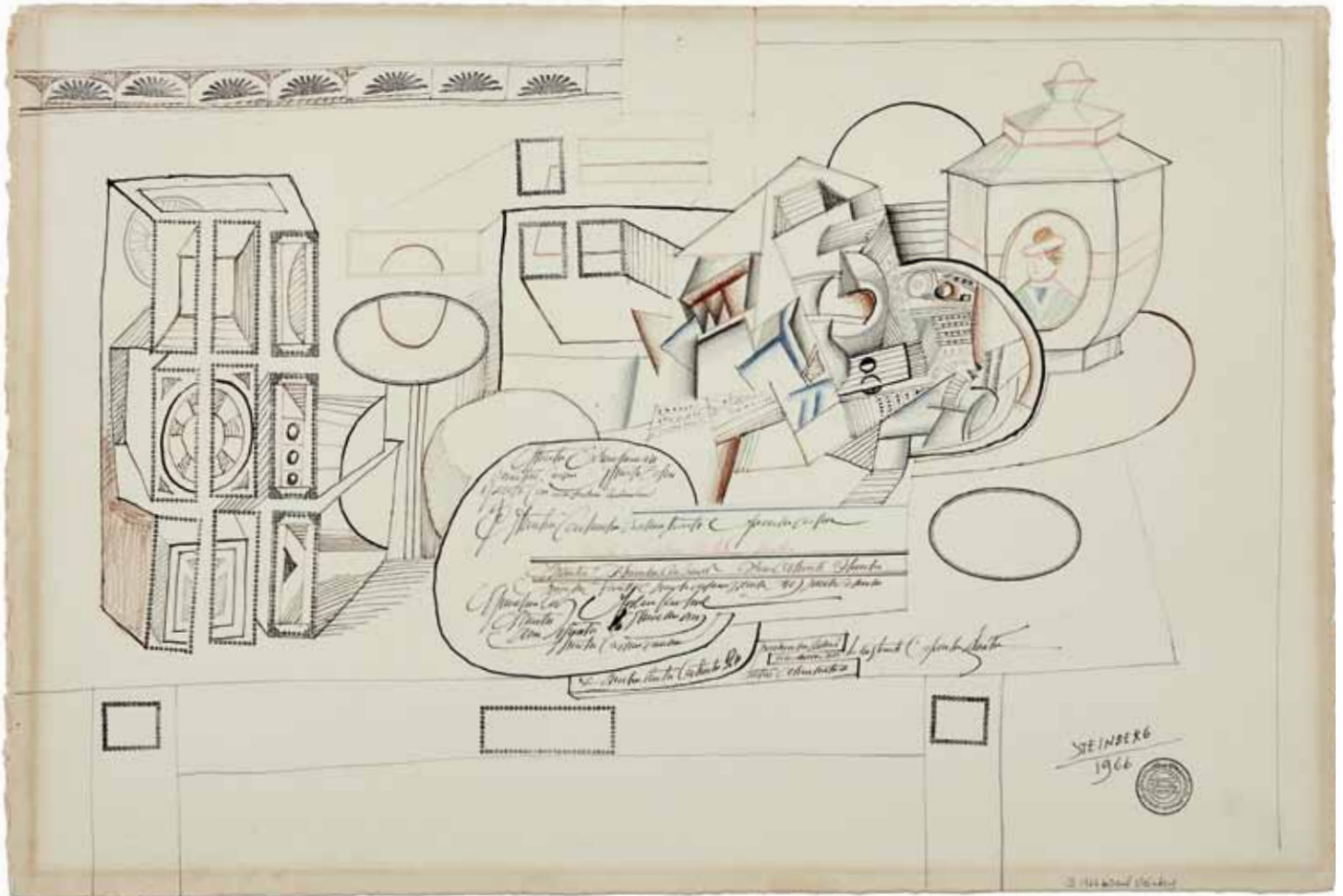
Pencil, colored pencil, and ink on paper

23 x 29"

Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 63"

SS14

For years, this piece was incorrectly titled *Herves and Giant Rabbit*, a mistranscription from a gallery's files that has since been remedied. The humorous depiction of a group of knights waging violence against a seemingly benign, albeit huge rabbit points to the moral question: how to judge the ethics of a hero when encountering an adversary. Of a related drawing with a knight challenging a giant rabbit, Steinberg said: "the mark of the hero is the size and quality he picks out for himself to fight. Any hero who fights a giant rabbit is not so good." While the rabbit's size does pose a potential danger to the knights, Steinberg ultimately asks: "should [the rabbit] be destroyed, or should he be educated?"



Still Life with Rubber Stamps #1 (Uno, Une, Ein), 1966

Ink and wax crayon on paper

15 x 22.25"

Signed, inscribed, dated lower right: "STEINBERG 1966 ©1966 by Saul Steinberg"

Stamped on reverse: "©1966 BY SAUL STEINBERG"

SS7

Though Steinberg had been exposed to Cubism throughout his career, with a conceptual approach to the genre that drew from Klee, Ernst, Picasso, and Matisse, he began employing the style more prominently in his still lifes of the 1960s. Here, Cubism is combined with Steinberg's use of custom-made rubber stamps to create repeated patterns within the visual panoply of the tabletop. He characterized this distinct visual language as "Cubism revisited" and said that he used stamps to "show that this paint is not real paint, it's a symbol of the thing painted." This symbolic use is apparent throughout *Still Life with Rubber Stamps #1 (Uno, Une, Ein)*, where rubber stamps, calligraphy, and Cubist elements—symbols used like rhetorical devices—translate into Steinberg's personal repertory of the vernacular. Apart from an identifiable lidded jar with a cameo decoration, indecipherable calligraphy and abstract Cubist expressions comprise much of the setting and resound in the center with a visual clatter. This abstracted cacophony might represent the auditory elements within the environment: the calligraphy contained within a pseudo speech bubble may allude to the verbal or written conversations contained within the scene, and the Cubist formations that include musical staff lines and notations may indicate the bustling sounds of a surrounding city that permeate the indoor space.

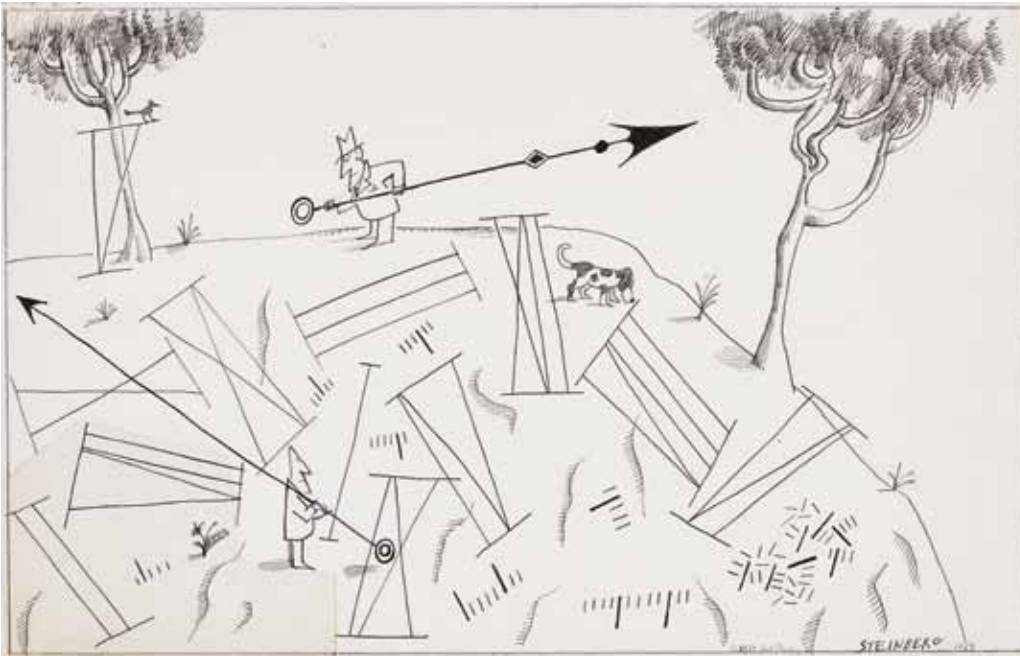


Untitled, 1966

Ink, pencil, and rubber stamp on Strathmore
23.5 x 29"

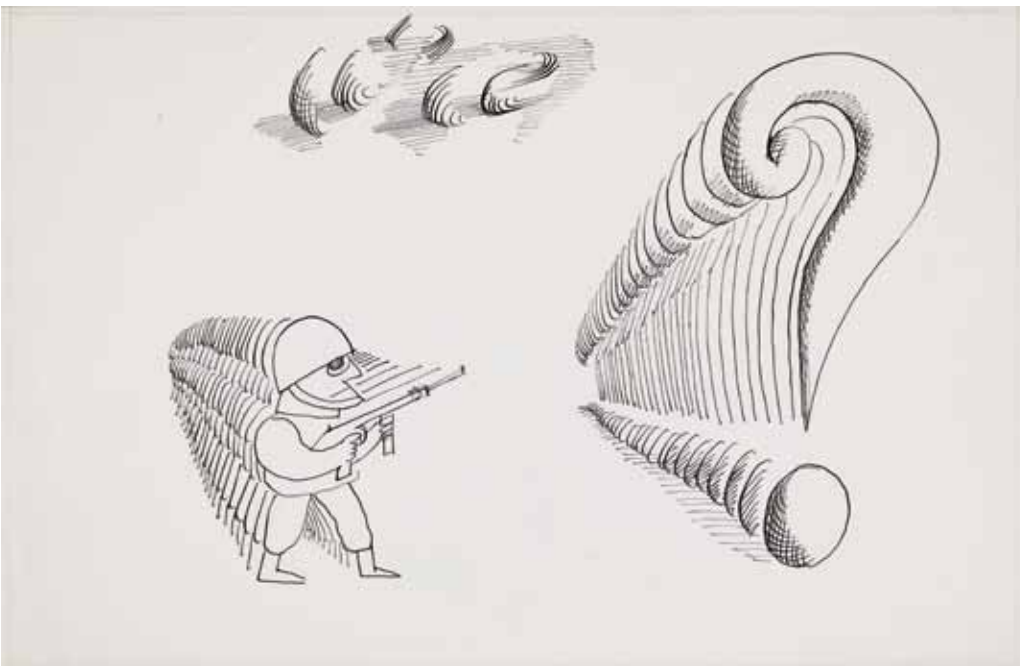
Signed and dated upper right, recto: "STEINBERG 1966"
SS26

Rubber stamps, a characteristic Steinbergian device, entered the vocabulary of his art around 1951, when he began to contextualize drawings with the addition of ready-made stationer's stamps. Around 1965, Steinberg graduated to stamps made from his own designs. Dark standing men, artists at easels, crocodiles, bicyclists, eagles, cars, Indians on horseback, marching and running men, no less than the elements of architecture—lines and rectangles. All these, he said, "I used like an alphabet. ... All these stamps allowed me to render crowds, concentration camps, landscapes, Bauhaus architecture, military decorations, to build factories and all kinds of imaginary engines. With my stamps, I create series, as if my characters emerged from a computer, identical to each other, regimented the way they appear in our rigid society; in this way I destroy conventions more effectively than with drawing and painting." Rubber stamps, he also said, "help me avoid the narcissistic pleasure of hand work. Work is a trap that keeps people from thinking—it's therapy. I avoid it by making these simple elements and then arranging them. With about fifty stamps I can do everything necessary to render space, nature, technology. It's a computerized form of art." This rubber-stamp monument with a mounted Indian on top is made of medallions, bicycles, and crowns, while cyclists ride past in the foreground.



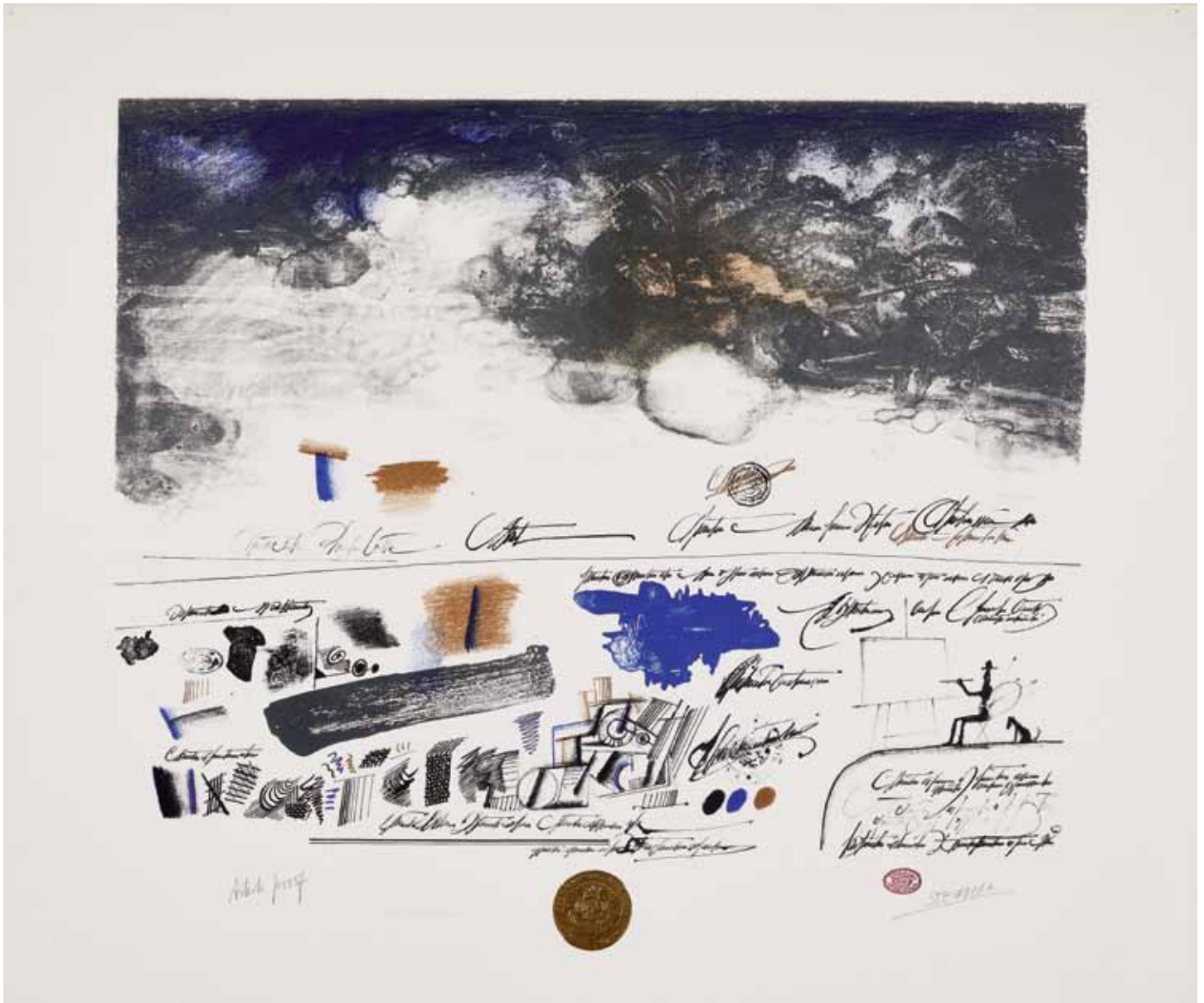
Untitled, 1967
 Ink over pencil and collage on paper
 14.5 x 23"
 Annotated, signed, and dated in lower right: "© 1967 Saul Steinberg STEINBERG 1967"
 SS27

This drawing is a variant of the one published in *The New Yorker*, November 4, 1967. The subject, as in many of Steinberg's works, is enigmatic. The Roman numerals of a clock are scattered on a hilltop while two men hold the separated hands of the clock, a little dog sniffs the top of the VIII, and a bird perches on the tip of the V. Are the men holding the clock's hands trying to reconstruct time? Is time uncertain? The drawing that appeared in *The New Yorker* lacks the clock hands and the bird and contains a shadowy man under a single tree.



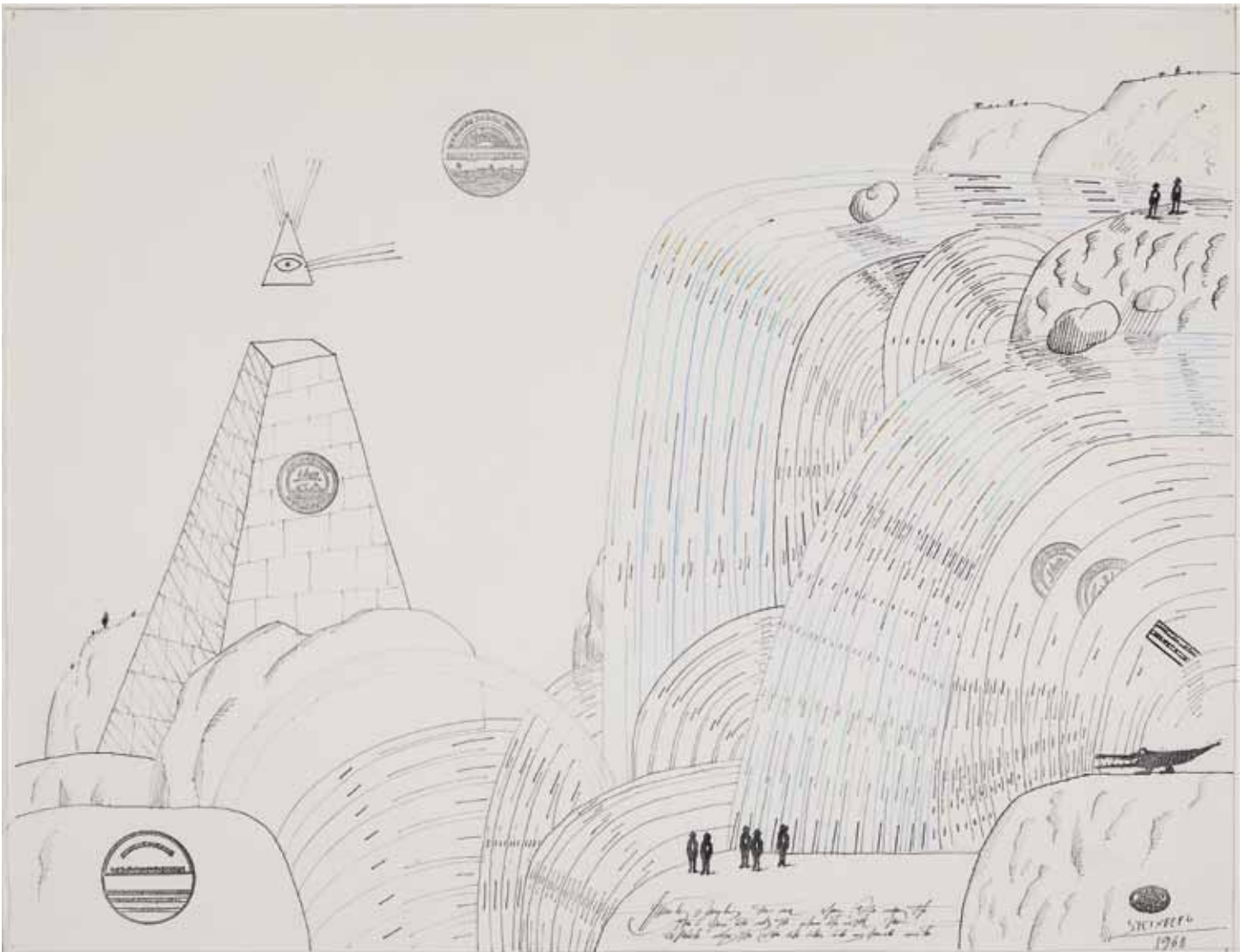
Untitled, 1968
 Ink and pencil on paper
 14.5 x 23"
 SS28

Steinberg had been engaged with the parade theme since the early 1950s. On May 25, 1968, he published a series of his latest interpretation of it in *The New Yorker*. The same works, or variants, were then republished in his 1973 compilation, *The Inspector*. In all the 1968 works, the parade marchers appear as reiterative "etceteras," the full foreground figures receding in echelon as narrow linear slices, each one representing a political or social type. In this version, a row of soldiers aim machine guns at a row of oversized question marks. This drawing was published only in *The Inspector*.



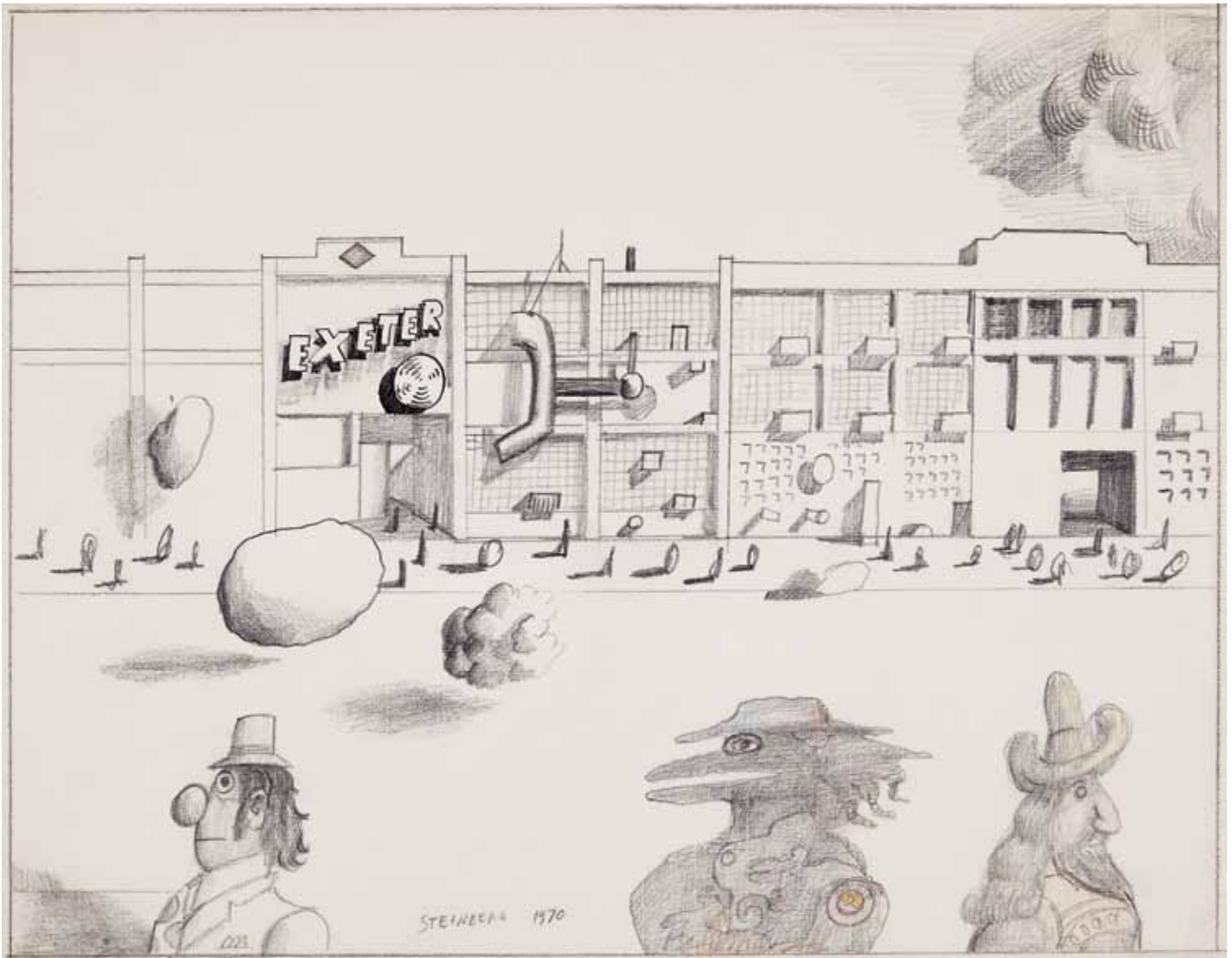
Certified Landscape, c. 1968
Lithograph in colors with gold embossed label and rubber stamp on BFK Rives paper
23.5 x 26.5"
Signed lower right: "STEINBERG"
SS40

Certified Landscape demonstrates Steinberg's lifelong engagement with visualizing the making (and viewing) of art. In this lithograph, he challenges the historical norms of landscape painting; without its title as clue, the genre of this work is not immediately clear. A key to this piece sits in the lower right-hand corner, an artist with his dog at an easel, about to paint a landscape comprised not of hills and trees, but of brushstrokes and assorted graphic devices. Steinberg believed that we see nature through pictorial conventions, and so calligraphy, Cubist doodles, brushstrokes, and forged stamps become the elements of this landscape and smudges of printer's ink make up the dark sky. A gold embossed medallion in the lower center certifies this landscape as a work of art.



Niagara Crocodile, 1968
Colored ink, pencil, and rubber stamps on paper
19.5 x 25.5"
Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 1968"
Inscribed on frame reverse: "Niagara Crocodile 1968"
SS24

N *iagara Crocodile* conjoins a clichéd tourist spot with the Eye of Providence (famously on the Great Seal of the United States on the reverse of the U.S. dollar bill) and the crocodile, lurking at lower right and casting a dangerous eye on the goings-on. Steinberg said that crocodiles “symbolize the monster, they symbolize for me the political life of administrations, of power and just like them the crocodile power has too many advantages—it spits fire, it has terrific teeth, and it is armored. It’s corrupt and wicked and so on.” In this drawing, the crocodile looks out on two iconic American images: Niagara Falls and the Eye of Providence. The political message is ambiguous but definitely ominous. Are these icons being threatened by the “political life of administrations” or are they part of it? The rubber-stamp men at bottom are left to wonder.



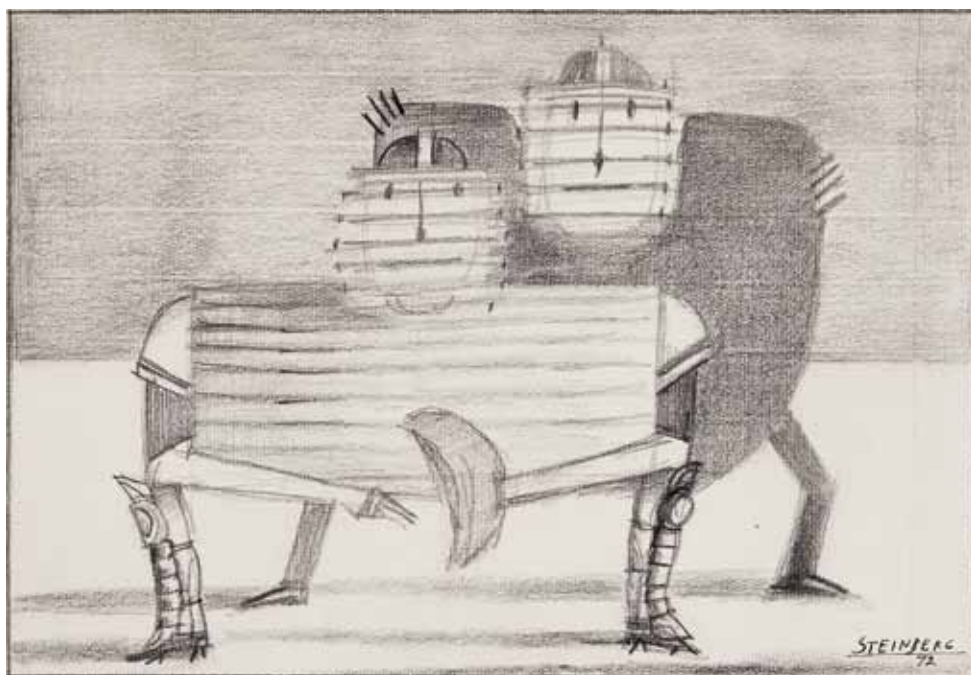
Exeter, 1970
Pencil, ink, and colored pencil on laid Ingres Canson
19.75 x 25"
Signed and dated lower left: "STEINBERG 1970"
Annotated (not by ST) on reverse: "Exeter 20" x 25" 1970 crayon"
SS35

Around 1970, Steinberg began to fill the streets of his townscapes and other locales with geometric and abstracted figures, representing people, vehicles, or other street features. This drawing is related to such works, with many of the small figures on the background sidewalk, each casting a long shadow, simplified to attenuated ovals. A cloud formation and (perhaps) a rock float in the street. The factory the figures walk by is labeled "Exeter." In the foreground, from left to right, are a man with a clown nose and patterned tie, a crocodile-headed creature wearing a hat, and a long-haired man in eighteenth-century garb. Why these three are together and what they are doing on the street remains open to interpretation—which is exactly what Steinberg, who insisted on the viewer's complicity, wanted.



Mesa with Figures, 1971
 Watercolor, ink, pencil, and rubber stamp on paper
 19 x 14.25"
 Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 1971"
 SS25

Beginning in the late 1960s, Steinberg developed his Postcard-Style landscapes. Joel Smith wrote that “Steinberg performed a kind of travel research via documents, learning at least as much about a place—about America, for instance—by studying the way it represented itself in postcards, news imagery, advertising, and historical recreations as he did by traveling through it physically.” The defining characteristics of these scenes are broadly brushed or sponged open skies with uncluttered land or water below, peopled with tiny, usually rubber-stamped figures and rubber-stamp seals serving as suns. There is little variation in general composition among these works. “These postcards,” Steinberg said, “represent not the reality, not the truth—they represent our convention, and our idea of what nature looks like.” None of the Postcard-Style landscapes represent actual places; they were all painted in the same studio. For this reason, many of them have generic titles such as “landscape” or “sunset”: others, however, bear a place name to mark a locale where Steinberg lived or had visited—but not where he produced the drawing.



Untitled, 1972
 Charcoal on Ingres Canson
 13 x 19.75"
 Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 72"
 SS39

In May-June 1954, on commission from *LIFE* magazine, Steinberg accompanied the Milwaukee Braves baseball team to their games. He had not followed baseball before, but once immersed in its subculture, he came to see it as an “allegorical play about America,” with keynotes of “courage, fear, good luck, mistakes, patience about fate and sober self-esteem (batting average).” He took up the subject again in the 1970s, in a series of charcoal drawings which, as here, sometimes play on the shared horizontality of the catcher’s chest protector and the facemasks.



Untitled, 1972
Pencil, watercolor, rubber stamps, and embossed foil seal on paper
14.5 x 23"
Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 1972"
SS29

Around 1970, Steinberg introduced his Postcard-Style landscapes: “exquisitely brushed or sponged in oil or thin watercolor wash, they are simple compositions, with cloud-sky formations above, punctuated by rubber stamp sun-seals, and a horizontal expanse of flat land and/or water below; sometimes a bit of faux calligraphy feigns elucidation. They are peopled with painted or (usually) rubber stamp figures, the kind of embellishments called staffage in earlier landscape painting” (The Saul Steinberg Foundation). This work represents a subset of the Postcard-Style landscapes, a group that includes one or more pyramids dominating the scene. The reference is to the ubiquitous tourist postcards of the Egyptian pyramids, though the subject is less about Egypt (the works are untitled) than the role of postcards in creating our notions of reality.



Untitled, 1974-81

Colored pencil, crayon, pencil, and embossing on paper with Japanese print and Japanese currency collaged on foamcore
24 x 36"

Signed and dated center: "ST 74"

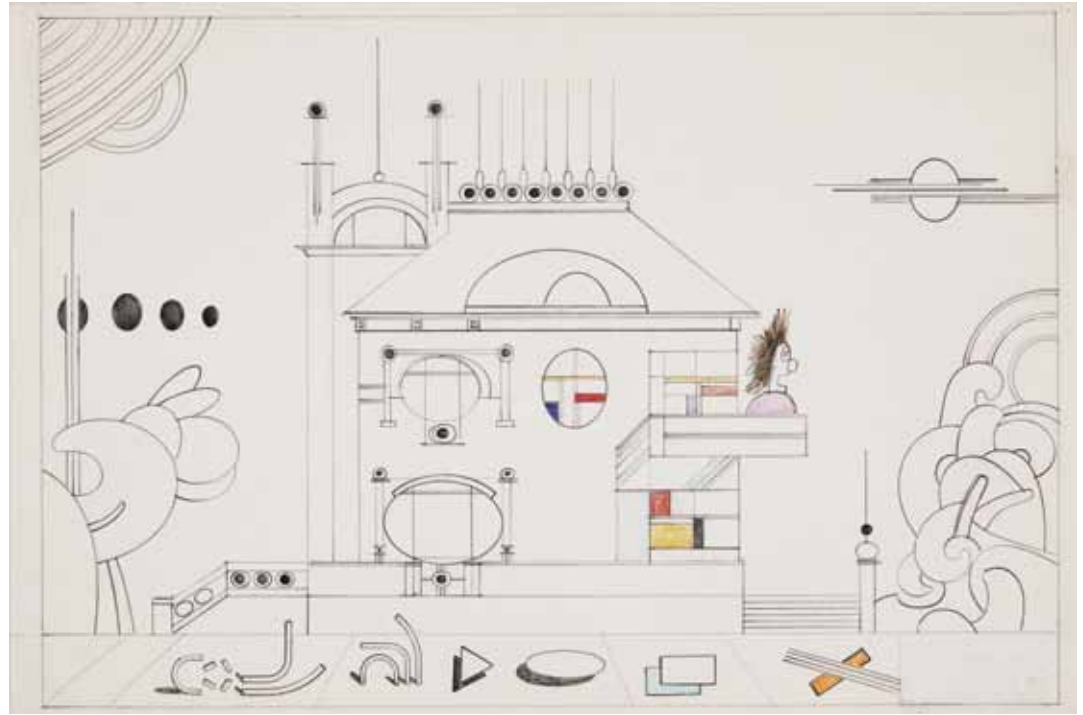
Signed and dated lower right: "ST 81"

SS38

This drawing exemplifies Steinberg's frequent play with reality levels.

"Drawing," he said, "is more truthful than reality because reality is undoubtedly invented, whereas drawing is faithful. It is made according to the rules of drawing." At top, in both halves, are redrawings of a typical Steinberg still-life, signed and dated 1974. Below, on the left side, is a real Japanese banknote and real cutout reproduction of a Hiroshige woodcut—the same woodcut that inspired his "Rain on Hiroshige Bridge" series, of which four were published in *The New Yorker*, November 2, 1981. In the right half of this work, signed and dated 1981, all the elements are redrawn and a jar of pencils is added, affirming that is more faithful than reality because rendered by the artist's hand.

Bauhaus, 1978
Pencil and ink on paper, torn from
sketchbook
16.5 x 24.25"
SS31



Steinberg's "Architecture: Villas" portfolio in *The New Yorker* (September 26, 1983) featured this drawing and was preceded on April 4, 1983 by another portfolio entitled "Architecture: Housing." Trained as an architect, Steinberg never built a building but architecture was an abiding feature in his art. The "Villas" portfolio, like "Housing," explores different styles of architecture seen through Steinberg's witty and critical lens. Here, the Bauhaus style comes under his critical scrutiny—for its piercing slab walls and excess of cantilevers and portholes, which may explain the screams of the woman on the balcony at upper right.



Untitled, 1978-80
Colored pencil, crayon, and pencil on paper
14.5 x 23"
SS32

Like most Steinberg still lifes, this one is autobiographical, composed of objects that he owned, from the toy fire department car to the jar and platter of Willow Pattern (or Blue Willow) ware, which appears frequently in his art from the 1970s on. Willow Pattern ware was first produced in the late 18th-century for the British market and is still sold today. Repurposing the artificiality of a decorative Western reading of Chinese architecture is pure Steinberg.



Still Life with Couple, 1978

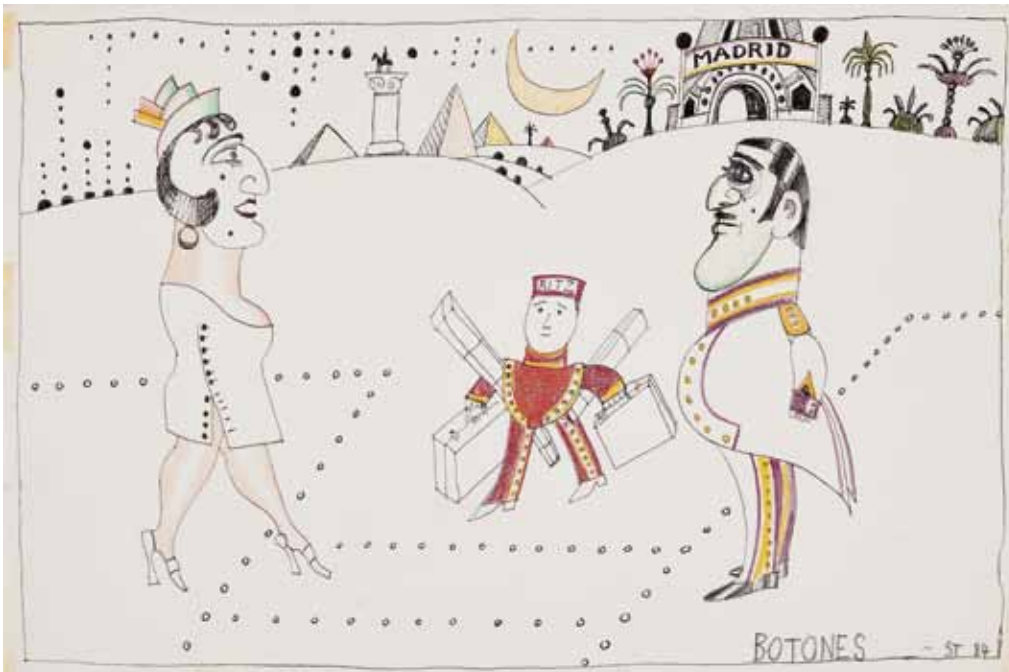
Pencil and colored pencil on paper

20.5 x 29"

Signed and dated lower right "STEINBERG 1978"

SS36

This is one of Steinberg's watercolor still lifes from the 1970s and 1980s whose subject is autobiographical—the objects depicted are the domestic objects he owned (the vases and glasses) or the implements of his artmaking (the brush in a can). The couple in the framed drawing do not seem to be specific people, but rather reflect Steinberg's long engagement with male-female pairs. The paint can at left with a Greek label reads *Rodozachari* ("rose sugar"), the name of a confection made by monks in the Taxiarches region near Aegion. This can appears in several other works on paper and drawing table reliefs.



Botones [Buttons], 1984

Ink, marker, crayon and colored pencil on Ingres d'Arches MBM
13 x 19.75"

Signed and dated lower right: "ST 84"

Inscribed (by ST) lower right: "BOTONES"; inside fold, production notes and label: "Copyright 1987
The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. .. AH1442 (2)"
SS34

Botones (*Buttons*) is one of four images in Steinberg's "Dreams" portfolio, published in *The New Yorker*, February 1, 1988, and is one of the more mysterious drawings in the group. Here, a Ritz Hotel bellboy is flanked by a couple facing each other, all their garments decorated with buttons. The same form is used to depict the street lanes, and button-like dots appear in the sky. The background is a geographical conflation of Egyptian pyramids, an Italian equestrian monument, and a Madrid hotel.



Untitled, 1983

Marker, pencil, and crayon on Strathmore folded in half
14.25 x 23"

Signed and dated lower right: "ST 83"

Production notes inside the fold, with label:
"Copyright 1983 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. .. AF 6468-C"
SS33

Like Aesop, Steinberg often told his pictorial tales through animals. Cats, dogs, and mice (Mickey Mouse, in particular) are a ubiquitous presence in his art. The "Domestic Animals" portfolio, which appeared in the March 21, 1983 issue of *The New Yorker*, featured this drawing of an interior with a cat-man and a butterfly-woman, along with three other drawings of invented half-animal, half-human creatures that explore male-female relationships.



Untitled, 1986
Crayon, colored pencil, and pencil on Strathmore
23 x 29"
Signed and dated lower right: "ST 68"
SS37

This drawing, which Steinberg misdated by accidentally transposing the numbers, combines three long-standing themes in his art: the American West, life on the postwar American highways, and signage. That we are in the West and that the work dates from the mid-1980s is confirmed by the Art Deco mountains in the background. Art Deco architecture and interiors punctuate Steinberg's art from the 1950s on. In the 1980s, it enjoyed a new incarnation, as he turned the streamlined horizontal geometries and piercing slabs of Art Deco into the mountains of the American West.

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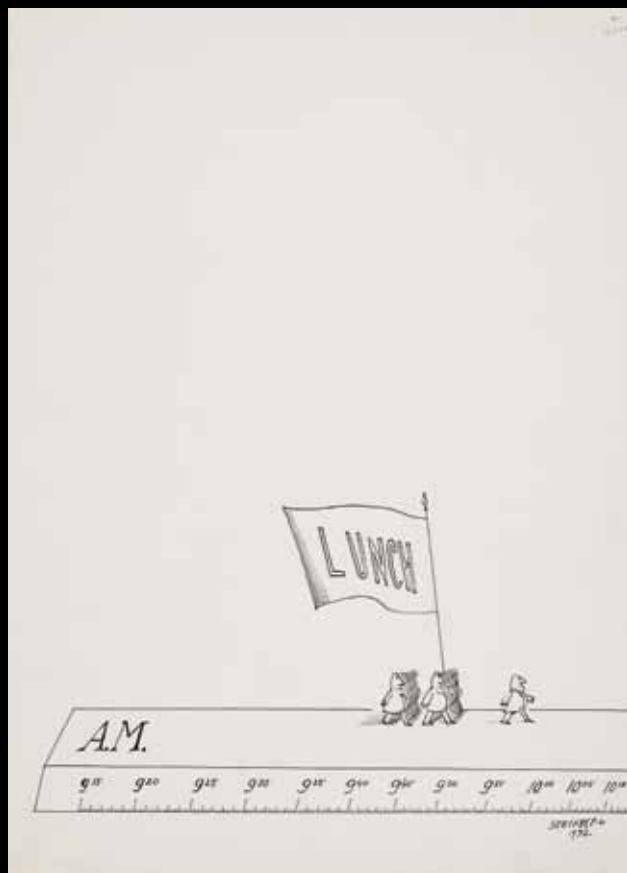
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Untitled, 1972

Ink over pencil and colored pencil on Strathmore
20 x 14.5"

Signed and dated lower right: "STEINBERG 1972"
Production notes at upper right and on the reverse
SS30

Lines of iterative office workers, led by a single figure, parade with a lunch banner on a ruler measuring time. Here Steinberg repurposes the space calibrations of the ruler in 5-minute increments as the workers pass the morning in anticipation of their break. This drawing appeared in the September 9, 1972 issue of *The New Yorker*.

“ WHAT A FABULOUS COLLECTION OF MASTERPIECES.

THE PLACE IN MY HEART THAT ONCE BELONGED TO PICASSO AND
MATISSE HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY STEINBERG'S GENIUS.

HIS ABILITY TO BALANCE FORM AND CONTENT, GIVING TO EACH ALL THE
POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT, IS IN MY HUMBLE OPINION, UNPRECEDENTED.

IT HAS REMAINED UNMATCHED IN THE ART OF THE 20TH CENTURY. ”

— SAMUEL BAK —

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