

Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC



George GROSZ (1893 - 1959)

SO SMELLS DEFEAT

Reed pen and pen and ink on paper

23 1/4 x 18 1/8 in. (59,1 x 46,1 cm)

1937

Signed titled and dated bottom-right „Grosz/so smells defeat/37” and annotated "34 so smells defeat" bottom center.

Stamped on the reverse "GEORGE GROSZ NACHLASS" and numbered 4-19-5

Drawing for "Esquire. The Magazine for Men", November 1936

PROVENANCE

The Estate of George Grosz

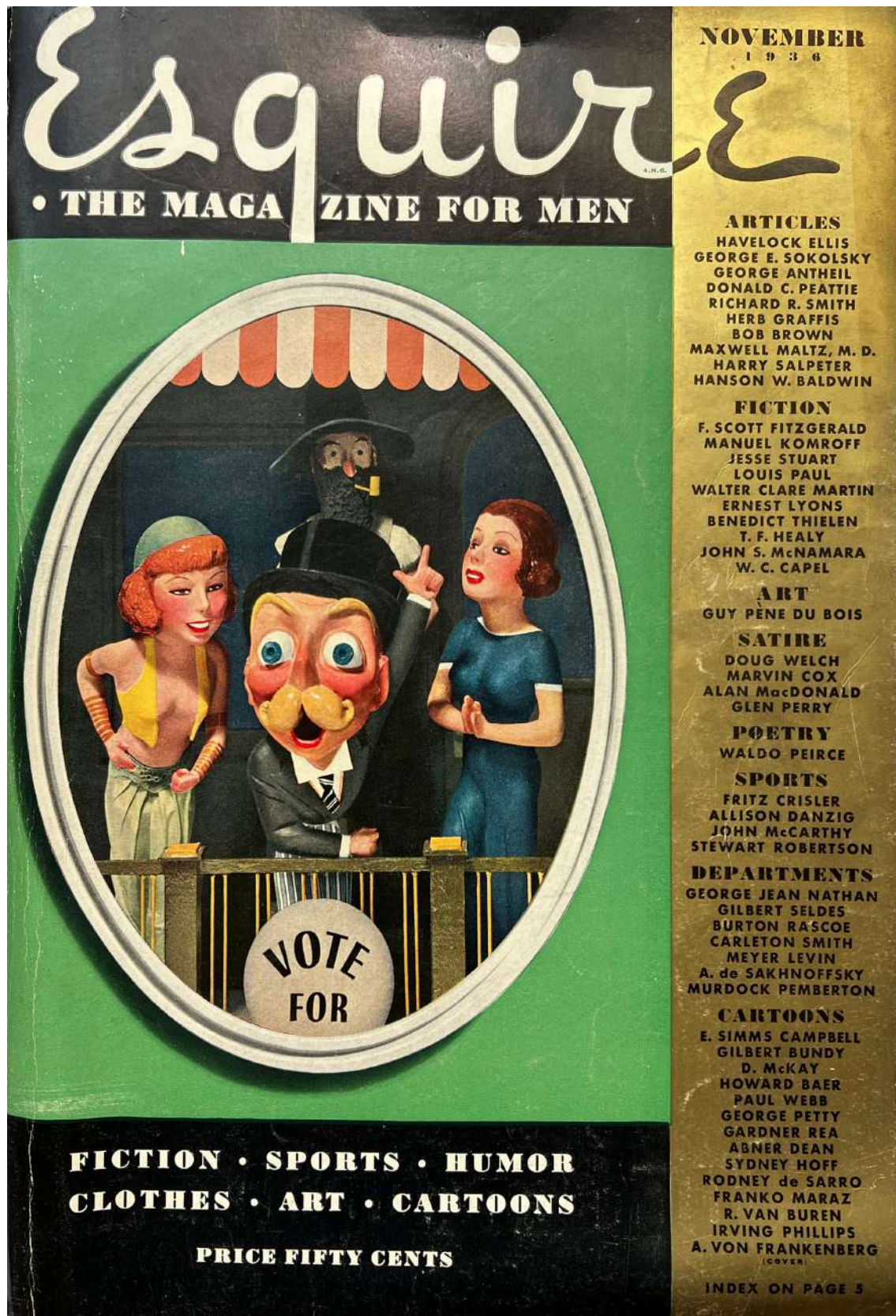
LITERATURE

George Antheil, "So Smells Defeat," Esquire Magazine, November 1936, p. 52

AUTHENTICATION

This work will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of works on paper by George Grosz in preparation by Ralph Jentsch, managing director of the George Grosz Estate.





George Antheil, "So Smells Defeat" Esquire Magazine, November 1936, p. 52

So Smells Defeat

A picture, from sadly authentic sources, of what might happen to America if we fight another war

by **GEORGE ANTHEIL**

• HISTORY •



THE metropolis itself will remain practically untouched. That famous super Big Bertha saddled upon that equally famous super-super dreadnought (designed especially to float it) will hit New York just once, thereby hardly justifying its great cost. The several nondescript hits of the third visit of the enemy bombing squadron will do even less damage. It will almost seem as if the enemy had been more than especially desirous of keeping the great prize of New York City intact and had confined itself instead to attacks designed rather to demoralize than to destroy. There will remain, of course, a few awe-inspiring reminders of the recent war as, for instance, that enormous big hole large enough to enfold a whole ocean liner; this hole will remain in the middle of Broadway and 116th Street for five years and disclose deep down the torn entrails of abandoned subways, gas and water mains and dead electric cables. That part of Broadway, however, will now have been closed to traffic for quite a number of years. There will be a shattered skyscraper near the Public Library; some will claim that this was the work of the sea-going Big Bertha; they will prove that the shell had barely missed the Empire State Building which still stands majestically but minus its coat of gold and silver, but the posthumous memoirs of a foreign air-commander will show that it was the work of a single bombing plane. There is another whopping big hole (although not as large as the one up on Broadway) at 59th

and Madison. The American Flag will still be flying at the top of the Empire State and the Chrysler buildings.

BUT we shall now be paying heavy indemnities to foreign nations. It is almost two years since our defeated armies disbanded. Our money shall just have begun to tremble and flutter into paper, and there will be much talk of moratoriums and the betrayal of our great war-dead by wicked and unpatriotic statesmen. It will be claimed that we signed peace treaties before there was actually any need to do so.

After three years everybody will still be wearing overcoats bought long before the war, most of them threadbare and fashioned in the style of ten years ago. The greatest and most sumptuous of our hotels will soon be forced to economize in ways that would once have seemed grotesque; for instance, they will unscrew at least half of their electric light bulbs and so leave their great corridors in semi-darkness. They will also take up their rich red carpets and remove the expensive brass handles from the doors of their rooms. If they neglect to do this thousands of hobnail boots will destroy the carpets and the expensive brass doorknobs will disappear in the departing pockets of starving guests.

Vast hordes of returning soldiery will swell beyond any comparison available today the already tremendous ranks of the unemployed and there will be petty looting and stealing everywhere although the city police will have already long ago doubled its strength. Policemen, moreover, will walk in twos.

To add to the general fever of speculation the Dollar will drop in value, and an English Pound will soon be able to buy ten instead of five American Dollars. Everyone will say that the worst has happened and that the Dollar can drop no lower. But the following week it will be twenty Dollars to the Pound. One will witness the wildest days of market speculation this country

has ever seen. Foreigners will flock to New York City. Our Dollar will drop steadily day after day until it reaches 50, then 100, then 1000 to the English Pound. Prices will be as unstable as quicksilver; to illustrate: one may be seated in a great restaurant, a proud restaurant that has fed generation upon generation of our very greatest families. Perhaps you yourself are now studying the menu. The waiter will snatch it out of your hands. When he hands it back each item will be marked with a new price according to the latest stock-market returns. Newspapers will be printed upon the cheapest possible paper and will only carry news about the falling Dollar, possible moratoriums, and loans to be attempted of foreign and richer powers.

Then after a few weeks the Dollar will really begin to slip. Newspaper headlines will scream "POUND \$136,900." Day after day newspapers will carry only these large screaming number headlines. Newspapers will be sold only by ghastly war-wounded for there will be no jobs left for the little enterprising newspaper boys of other days. College students will sell gum, pencils, and shoestrings in the restaurants, otherwise they will not eat. The mistresses and daughters of the former rich will likewise be unable to eat unless they find for themselves a rich foreigner, of which, fortunately for them, there will now be many in New York. Thousands of women, never accustomed to work, will haunt the streets, giving themselves for a single square meal. The Pound will reach the million mark, one million Dollars for one Pound! Householders will secure their vegetables through barter or buy them with suitcases filled full of the new Dollars the presses in Washington are now printing in carload lots. School children will be ad-



DRAWINGS BY GEORGE GROSZ

mitted to school only if they bring coal or food to every lesson.

The city will be swamped with a deluge of magazines so astonishingly and forthrightly filthy that the old *Brevities* of 1933 will seem in comparison like a Sunday school weekly.

A thousand insignificant restaurant-café will enjoy the most temporary of existences, all of them with nothing to eat, but with plenty to drink. They will all be designed to accommodate the new and vicious camaraderie of the times.

This camaraderie will be very peculiar, decidedly queer. Five million soldiers have been fighting in the field for five years without women, and twenty million women have been sitting at home with no companionship but that of very young boys and very old men.

Quite of its own accord new friendships have solidified, friendships cemented under dangerous conditions, dangerous pressures, and in devil-take-care times.

"Tomorrow everyone may be dead." New sexual habits will have been formed and firmly established. The two long separated sexes will at last come together almost as strangers.

These new frightening loves and perversions, habits too long continued to be broken, will then only too often end in suicide. Certain cafes will be full of elegant and beautiful women who are not women but men. There will also be cabarets full of handsome young men who beneath their faultlessly trim dinner jackets and tuxedos will be women.

Many, many churches will be closed. The small towns will be drained of their youth who will go on the march in numbers away beyond anything ever dreamed of after the famous 1929 depression. Millions upon millions of boys will grow up never even having known what the word "work" means. Curious, mad, dadaist-futuristic art movements will spring up and many "intellectuals" having nothing better to do, will take enthusiastic part in them. Curious as these strange art movements may be, they will, nevertheless, be true mirrors of the mad times they reflect. There will be in addition many insane, pathological crimes, all of a shockingly macabre tendency. Meanwhile the Dollar will reach 1,000,000,000 to the Pound.

Purely Republican and Democratic political parties will have disappeared. Replacing them will be neither one extreme right nor one extreme left party but ten separate parties of every political shade of the rainbow. Shattered into small fragments, the nation's political strength will now be ever weak and faltering, the Constitution will be changed, and our new Congresses will go into a frenzy of ineffectual lawmaking. Among the new political parties will be the Republican-Socialist Party, the Republican-Democratic Party, the National-Socialist Party, the Communist-Democratic Party, and the All-American Blueshirts.

A mass murderer will appear in Reading, Pa., and to the horror of everyone it will be discovered that he has sold human flesh at his meat shop for over one whole year. Meat however will have been tremendously scarce and one will hardly be too astonished with the little-too-inventive Reading butcher. Butter and eggs will be at a premium. Substitute food will appear; synthetic sugar (with a bitter taste!), synthetic bread (that

The homeless will now be so numerous that it will now be dangerous to try to drive them out. For all these many years everyone has refused to pay any but the most minimum of rents and many middle-strata homes have declined point-blank to pay any rent at all, but they have not been evicted; there are already too many of them and one cannot very well evict the ragged, the poor and the sick. Of the latter there will be, of course, a

great many and rich foreign governments will send us their relief organizations with many welcome boat-loads of canned milk, potatoes, meat and medicines. And we will need to take alms from everybody who will give. Meanwhile our politicians and bankers will sail for abroad in order to try to negotiate loans . . . loans that will be negotiated at tremendous premiums, loans that neither they, nor we, whom they represent, ever really intend to pay. There will be, in particular, some great foreign

power who will have profited more than the other powers through this last of great wars to end wars, and this power, in consequence, will be puffed up beyond all endurance by its new importance and will, accordingly, simply beam with goodwill upon all mankind. We will nick this country for a loan every time we get the chance, putting this cash quickly into buildings, concrete, factories, and homes for the homeless . . . unmovable property that can never be taken away from us.

Our hotel lobbies will now be so full of brimming with panhandlers and get-rich-quick little shots, ready to sell us anything from a sack of potatoes to a scrapped battleship, that we will be utterly sick of them.

Fat little profiteers speculating successfully
Continued on page 227



will crumble in the mouth like chalk) and synthetic coffee (the less said the better!). The Pound will now bring 100 billion Dollars at the banks, and one million American Dollars will hardly buy a single match to light a cigarette. Everyone will now say that the Dollar cannot possibly depreciate any lower. Foreigners of every description will flood New York; they will bring with them Pounds, Marks, Francs or Liras. A thousand transient shops will open and close; they will sell valuables obtained apparently from nowhere; in reality they will be but the go-betweens of the richest homes of Fifth and Park Avenues; the situation will eventually grow so corrupt that the state will take over the pawnbroking of the nation and a tremendous government pawnshop will eventually be set up in Madison Square Garden. In this enormous place, seething with booths, departments, and officials, almost

every last householder will bring his last remaining valuables; he will have to do this in order to eat, for his fat little bank account of other days will be now so valueless that it no longer will buy him even a crust of bread. Country estates originally worth \$160,000 will be sold for 100 Pounds Sterling.

Over the entire breadth of the country one will never see a newly painted house and in New York City many of the older frame buildings in the poorer section of the city will, through lack of repairs, literally fall apart. These abandoned properties will then be gradually taken over by the homeless of whom there are by this time millions. They will from the remaining tin, board, and beams construct fantastic and dadaistic structures.



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So Smells Defeat

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with the country's meagre food-stuffs will be sitting in every cabaret, all of them giving expensive dinners to the successful little actresses of the moment.

There will also be "strategic zones." The immediate vicinity of New York will find itself in several of these and every time we journey to Philadelphia, we shall be stopped at Trenton, New Jersey, by a dapper little foreign lieutenant who will make his way through the coaches of our train followed by two unsmiling soldiers both armed to the teeth. He will then demand of each of us "Passport!" and he will do so without a smile or without flinching an eye to your banter. No one will be able to move anywhere without his "papers"; these identifications will have to be stamped and passed by both the foreign government and our own. We will laugh bitterly every time we see one of these detestable foreign uniforms and we will laugh bitterly often, for they will be everywhere.

The situation will now grow rapidly worse. Wives who have remained faithful to us during the whole long war will no longer be able to see their children or shell-shocked husbands starving and often indeed will they go either directly upon the streets, or become the mistresses of those greasy little gentlemen who speculate in humanity's necessities to secure for you the very same necessities these little gentlemen speculate with. Prostitution will increase.

To cross Park Avenue after one o'clock at night will be the signal for a snake-line of girls to run and encircle you. Fifty girls holding hands! Among them you will distinguish a former motion picture actress, a former society girl, and three girls from your home town.

Gangsters will disappear because money has become the sign of a sign and all valuables, except jewels, will either be too bulky to steal or too difficult to convert into foreign exchange. Thieving will revert rather to petty larceny, the stealing of vegetables, bread, and small finery. If the left-overs of gangsterism should kidnap someone and hold him for a 50,000 Pound ransom, they would have to get a large truck to cart it off; the ransom must be paid in American dollars for it will be forbidden to obtain foreign exchange money at any American bank. This alone will make kidnapping a well-nigh impossible undertaking; it would take the kidnapers well-nigh a month to count the ransom Dollars just to make sure that they had not been short-changed. One or two large gangs will persist, but they will devote themselves to robbing the few remaining bank vaults still filled with American valuables. A few foreigners with too much foreign valuta in their pockets will be held up and murdered but wise foreigners will quickly learn how to walk about with no foreign valuta in their

pockets. Travelers' Checks, issued upon foreign banks and countersigned at the time of tender, will be in use everywhere.

But a new type of crime will spring into being, the crime of desperation, inhibition and inability to cope with the new life dictated by national defeat and the consequent new economic conditions. These crimes will be the crimes of those who were never intended to be criminals; they will be stupid, ridiculous, and terribly ineffectual crimes. Various American families will, of course, react differently. One family will take to the new situation as a duck takes to water whilst the other will go down brittle and unbending. One family will take off their coats and dig; the family next door will not remove their white collars, waiting, hoping, intriguing, until these same white collars can be laundered no more, and their coats and trousers may be repaired no longer. College professors will be the hardest hit. Many of these ancient specimens, once intellectuals, writers, or lecturers in their own right, will now peddle some little book or another they have written; they will appear regularly in the hotel lobbies, restaurants and cafés; all of them will be mendicants but apparently making a living from that which they sell. The alms given them will still be the true alms of compassion and they will be given by those who still have respect, even though misguided, for learning.

An intellectual ferment, having nothing else to do but to sit around and hatch, will increase until it is fever hot; people will, year after year, mope about and evolve the most *recherché* theories about everything. Out of this feverish muddle will arise many new political faiths, art-movements, philosophies, and their accompanying pamphleteers; new "intellectual" magazines printed upon the cheapest paper will be sold in every bookshop, and perhaps the only new and booming industry will be the printing of cheap books. New bookshops will spring up like mushrooms. In St. Louis a dictator will arise, and a little group of fanatics will arise about him. He will be put into jail, of course, but here he will find time to write a revolutionary book later destined to sweep the nation into flames. The book will be Chauvinist to extreme and revive in spirit the old Ku Klux Klan.

No loaves of bread will be displayed in bakery shop windows. (There will no longer be any necessity to advertise this commodity.) Eatables will be obtained only by punched cards and several armed policemen will stand in every foodstuff establishment to prevent rioting. The food will be miserably inadequate. Everyone will slowly come to know what protracted hunger means. The new generation of American girls will be ugly. One will be hard put

Continued on page 228

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to it to select a beauty chorus for the new Broadway Revues . . . the Revues, of course, will never falter but appear eternally, year after year, without fail; they will be the last to disappear among the souvenirs of pre-war American life. But our popular songs will no longer be sappy-lovey-dovey but will be hard and brittle and very much to the immediate point; they will point blank beg the little girl to spend just one night with the gentleman entertaining her. Brutality and actuality will have been substituted for June-dream sentimentality. The youth of New York will lose its interest in sports and partake of vicious amusements more in keeping with the blood-sprayed atmosphere of our recently returned battalions. Dangerous clubs well hid from the police and meeting in obscure apartments will permit every kind of orgy which will take place in these secret hide-outs and murder and suicide societies will satisfy the thrill-lust of those who have just spent five years behind the machine guns. Those who have flown five years above a hostile front will no longer have a stomach for that special whimsey fare of 1936 afforded by public libraries carefully censored plays or the well-meaning intentions of matronly entertaining societies. The returning heroes will have done with the Ladies-Aid-tea-shoppe type of entertainment. The taste for blood rather will find its vent in the formation of secret societies meeting weekly to saw off the top of a living man's skull merely to watch the brain throb as the victim slowly dies. Ladies of the Street will offer their dubious services for the merest cigarette money but they will also murder you at the drop of a hat if you unnecessarily flash valuta. But if you go home with them, you will find that they will take you to their former homes upon East End Avenue, and their mothers, brothers and fathers will receive you with the most perfect equanimity while you stay the night. Pride will have disappeared with morality, and there will be nothing left but hunger.

Meanwhile practically all of the world's rich scum and riff-raff will loll about in our gigantic Park Avenue apartments, paying but \$25 monthly for them in valuta. These apartments will be filled with parasitic friends, loot from the remainingshops, and any number of temporary mistresses.

Upon this apparently endless desert of American misery there will eventually appear a new mirage . . . the old paper dollar will disappear and its place will be taken by a new Gold Dollar.

But years of additional misery will come and go. The new generation will grow up furious and questioning; they will camp in the country and harden themselves and will become countryside Spartans and detest the city strongholds reeking, for them, of desolation and corruption. They will hold fanatically together and organize into thousands of secret societies upon thousands of American countrysides; they will manufacture forbidden machine guns, train secret troops, and suddenly and at the right moment thrust forward a new leader, perhaps this very same "dictator" so unsuccessful in that coup at St. Louis so many years ago. The nation, just beginning to raise itself out of sickness and desolation and fully ready for the excitement of a new creed will now perhaps experience a new thrill . . . that ancient thrill

of power and united strength which comes from within. The new movement will be Chauvinist to extreme and various Leftist parties, now thoroughly alarmed, will band together, thrust and parry, and cause many bloody internal and secret strifes. There will be, for a time, unending intrigues,

political killings and wholesale imprisonments; no one will be able to think, eat, sleep or discuss anything but the politics and coups of the hour. The new would-be dictator will adapt the symbols and rigamarole of the American Indians; in his paradoxical and Chauvinistic fervor he will claim that the ancient Red Man is the only real and valuable essence of true Americanism and that all other races and inhabitants of this continent should emulate him and him only. The new dictator will adapt totem poles for standards and will "go back" to the Spartan doctrines of the American Indian and soak his preachings in blood. He will call his armies, as they grow, by the names of American Indian tribes. And, as time passes, he will become one of the strongest dictators in the world, the rest of the world having grown, in the meantime, politically weak and torn by internal strife and unemployment. He will laugh at existing agreements forced out of us by foreign powers in the years of our misery and defeat. He will manufacture, against treaty-agreements, thousands of airplanes, and will train thousands of young pilots to fight in them. He will develop new and secret killing devices of which no foreign power has ever dreamed, and against which, therefore, they hardly can be prepared. This may be America. It was Germany, 1918-1934. So smells defeat. #



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George GROSZ (1893 - 1959)

"George Grosz gave a fantastic testimony of Berlin life during a terrible period, divided between fascism and communism. He was active in the communist party but had an anarchist's fascination for the characters of underground life. Military figures, prostitutes and violence abound, and fascinate the viewer [...] this meant he instinctively rooted his art in the common people. It also explains, I think, why caricature and graphic design in magazines and newspapers held such an appeal for him."

Quote of Mario Vargas Llosa
'You nourish yourself with everything you hate', George Grosz, in TATE ETC. Magazine (Spring 2007)