

# Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC



**George GROSZ (1893 - 1959)**

*The Bum's Rush for Allah*

Reed pen, pen and ink, and opaque white on paper

22 1/2 x 18 7/8 in (57,1 x 48 cm)

1941

Titled "The Bum's Rush for Allah" lower right and inscribed "to Ben Hecht 1001 Afternoon"  
Stamped on the reverse "GEORGE GROSZ NACHLASS" and numbered 4-49-7

## PROVENANCE

Studio of the artist, Douglaston, Long Island (NY), 1941  
The Estate of George Grosz, 1959

## LITERATURE

Ben Hecht, illustrated by George Grosz, "1001 Afternoons in New York," Viking Press New York, 1941, Illustration for the chapter "The Bum's Rush for Allah" p. 347

Ben Hecht, „1001 Nachmittage in New York.“ Insel Taschenbuch 1323, Insel Verlag Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig. Illustration for the chapter „Ahmed will zu Allah“ p. 383

## EXHIBITED

Of Mice and Men, October 5 - December 5, 2020, Popcorn Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Los Angeles

## AUTHENTICATION

As per photo certificate signed and dated "Ralph Jentsch, Berlin/Rome, October 10, 2019", 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.

## NOTES

Ben Hecht's 1001 Afternoons in New York is a culmination of the versatile reporter's stories of anecdote, adventure, personalities, politics, wit and satire. Grosz provided an illustration for each of the 86 stories included in the 1941 publication. The present work accompanies The Bum's Rush for Allah, the story of an immigrant who dreams only of becoming an American citizen and will "gladly trade in all his odalisques for a bottle of pop in the bleachers."

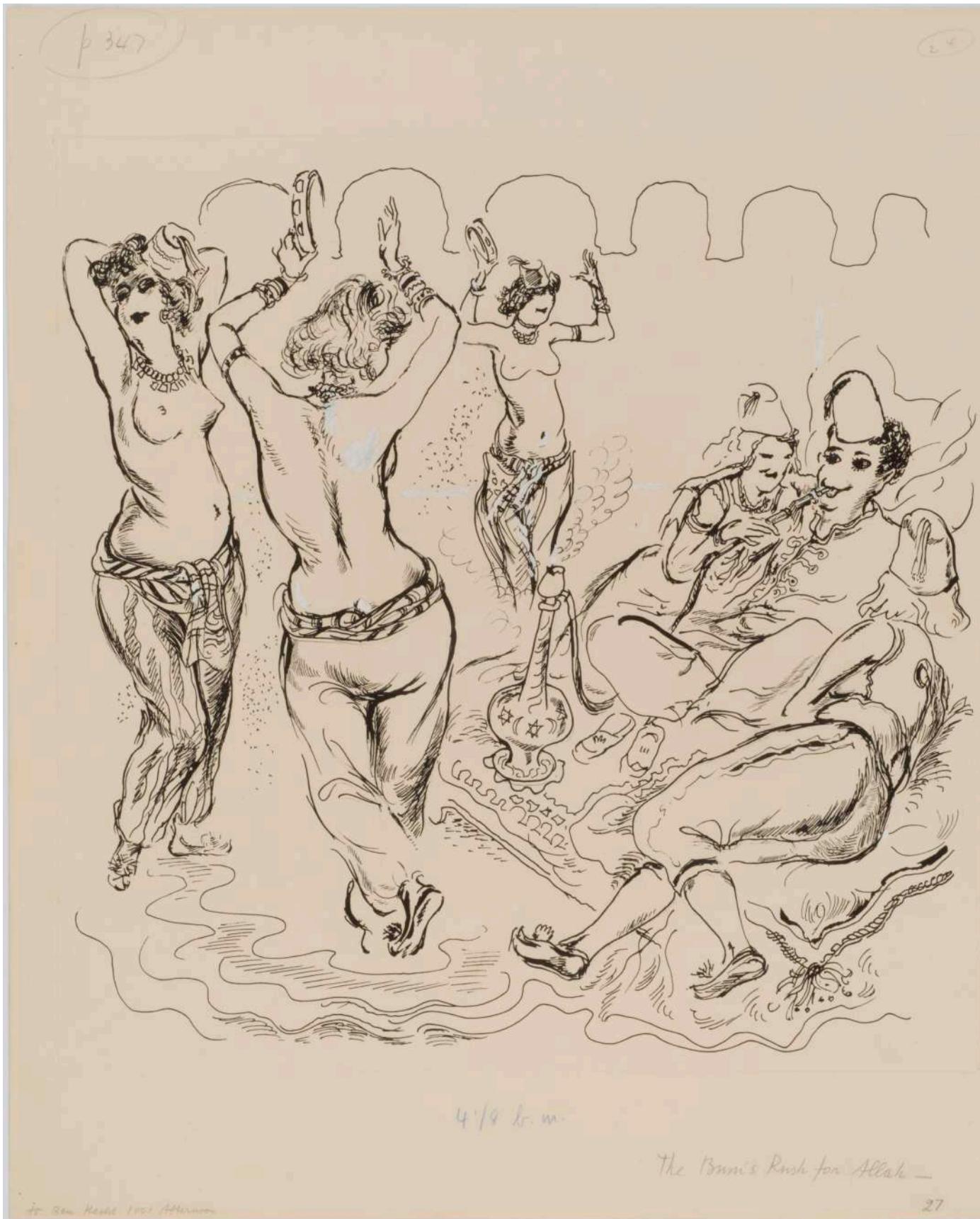
Vanessa Fusco

Grosz got to know Ben Hecht (1894 - 1964 New York) and became friend with him in 1919, when Hecht worked as a correspondent for the Chicago Daily News for two years in Berlin. Grosz took Hecht to the eventful DADA evenings and happenings in Berlin. One-time Ben Hecht was special guest of honour at the famous DADA demonstration: a race between six typewriters and six sewing-machines to the accompaniment of a swearing contest. That evening he was awarded the charter of an "Honourable DADA." In 1925 Hecht started working in Hollywood and became one of the most successful and highest-paid American script-writers of his time.

He also became well known as a writer. "1001 Afternoons in Chicago," "Child of the Century" and "The Sensualists" are among his best-known works. In June 1941, Grosz was asked to illustrate Ben Hecht's new book "1001 Afternoons in New York," a collection of political newspaper writings. Grosz produced in an incredible short period 86 large drawings and a number of not published illustrations for the book. In the foreword "Afternoon of an Author" of his book, Ben Hecht points out that the articles he has written in 1940-1941 are mainly a crusade against the Nazis and calls the Third Reich a "hellish invention."

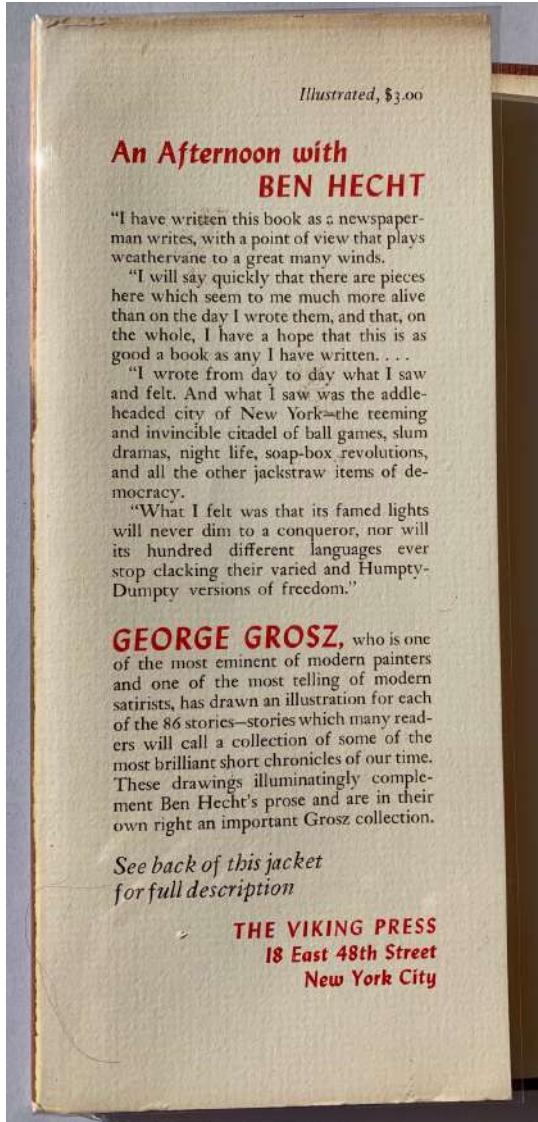
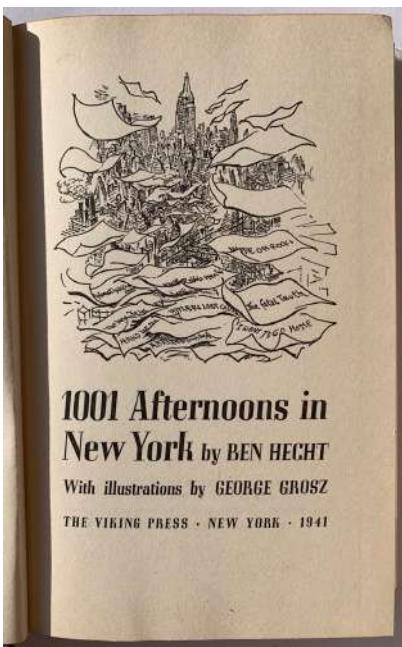
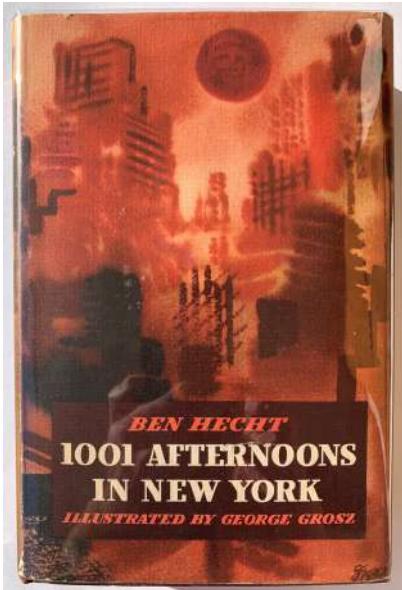
"The Bum's Rush for Allah" is the bizarre story of young Asmail Ahmed Abdulla and his fight with the American immigration officials in order to become an American citizen. He is stranded after an adventures odyssey and many hopeless attempts on Ellis Island, there awaiting to reach the Seventh Heaven. "There he will be able to put red, white, and blue hair ribbons on his odalisque, and listen to the 'Star-Spangled Banner' throughout all eternity." So ends the story.

Courtesy of Ralph Jentsch

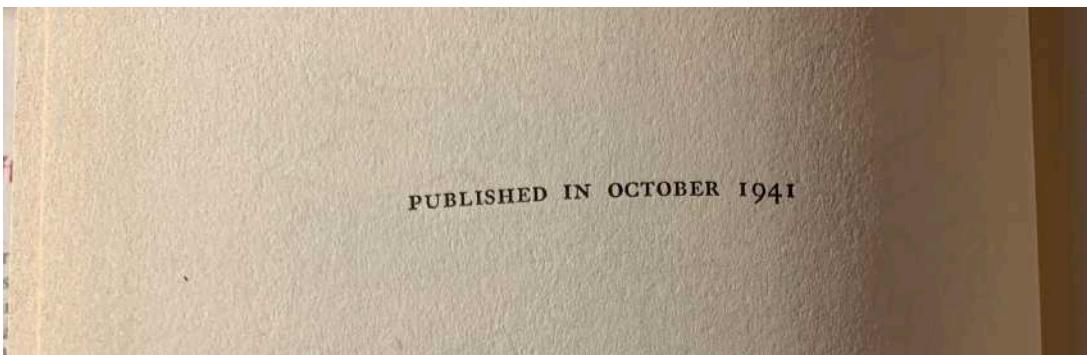


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Ben Hecht, illustrated by George Grosz,  
"1001 Afternoons in New York," Viking  
Press New York, 1941





## **The Bum's Rush for Allah**

You can't blame the immigration officials. They have to do their duty. And their duty is to kick hell out of Asmail Ahmed Abdulla every time he shows his doe-eyed beaming face in our midst.

Many years from now Ahmed Abdulla will have his revenge. For it is written in the Koran (Chapter II) that when an immigration official dies he goes only to the Third

Heaven. Here he is allowed but three odalisques to anoint his feet and rub the back of his neck.

Ahmed will have seven to perform the same services. And seven more to peel pomegranates for him, and seven times seven Gypsy Rose Lees to dance for him from dawn to dawn without stop. This is because, unlike the immigration official, Ahmed is a man of sweetness and simplicity.

At the present writing, the sweet and simple Ahmed is enjoying none of these delights. He is not even dreaming of them. In his simplicity, Ahmed is dreaming only of becoming an American citizen. He would gladly trade in all his odalisques for a bottle of pop in the bleachers. It is a vain dream, for the immigration officials have caught sight of the doe-eyed beaming face again. And they are placing Ahmed, head down, on the 15-yard line for another drop-kick.

It is written in the Koran (Chapter V) that no man may escape his fate—unless Allah himself wishes to intercede for him. There is no such out with an immigration official. Allah could come down on a silver camel and get nowhere with an immigration official. In fact, Allah could not even get by such an official today, for, as everyone knows, our quota from Heaven is full. We are allowing neither angels nor salamanders nor foreign gods of any description to put foot or wing on our soil.

If the tale of Asmail Ahmed Abdulla wrings your heart, forget it quickly. There is nothing to be done about it. As well appeal to a hole in the wall as to an immigration official. The mind of an immigration official is like an endless roll of flypaper. It is not there to think—only to catch flies.

Ahmed's tale begins when he was eleven. At eleven he was a doe-eyed cabin boy. He left Alexandria and sailed every-

where. At fourteen, he arrived in Galveston, Texas. He was overcome by the beauty of our country almost at once. He fell on his knees and kissed the earth and vowed never to live anywhere except in the paradise known as the U.S.A. Six months later, Ahmed arrived in New York. Here, too, he fell on his knees and kissed the same wondrous earth.

A sailor told Ahmed that when he was twenty-one he would become an American and be able to call himself a son of freedom. Ahmed kissed the sailor. He then went to work to sustain himself till that glorious day. Allah guided him into the old-clothes business and caused him to prosper.

On his twenty-first birthday, Ahmed Abdulla celebrated his transformation into an American by twelve hours of prayer and fasting. Our hero still was tingling with the joy of his achievement when an immigration official appeared. He had discovered Ahmed's name in the army roster, for Ahmed had been prompt to register in the draft. The immigration official ordered Ahmed to sell out all his old clothes—\$3000 worth—and get the hell and gone out of the country.

After sitting for three months on Ellis Island, and sighing at the Statue of Liberty—whose back, by the way, is turned upon this locale—Ahmed was put on a French ship carrying scrap iron to Japan. This was a double insult. Ahmed hated Japan as an enemy of democracy. At Newport News, Ahmed therefore stepped from this misguided vessel, and allied himself as a fireman with the crew of the Belgian ship *Ville de Hasselt*, sailing for Liverpool.

The *Ville de Hasselt* was torpedoed and sunk. Ahmed drifted about for three days in a lifeboat and nearly perished of hunger. Fishermen finally rescued him and bore him in safety to Newfoundland. Here a Newfoundland immigra-

tion official caught sight of the doe-eyed beaming face, and Ahmed was sent back to his starting point—New York. And again the good and simple Ahmed fell to his knees and kissed the wondrous earth of freedom.

This done, he hurried once more to enlist as a soldier in the army of liberty. However, no sooner had he put down his name than another immigration official spotted it. And once more Asmail Ahmed Abdulla was rushed at the end of a stick to Ellis Island.

And there Ahmed is today, in a large room with seventy other silent and unwanted men, one of whom has a cold and keeps all the windows closed. A number of people whose hearts have been moved by the sad tale of Ahmed have sought to intercede for him with the immigration officials. They have pointed out that this simple-souled Alexandrian wishes only to be an American, that he is eager to fight in our armies. Or if not to fight, to sing in them or wash dishes in them. And that Ahmed would have been a citizen today if an evil jinni, disguised as a drunken sailor, had not misinformed him as a boy.

On Ellis Island today Ahmed Abdulla begs with a smile that he be allowed to die for democracy rather than be sent away from our beloved shores. At night the infatuated doe-eyed Ahmed sings himself to sleep with the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "I Want to Be in Carolina in the Morning." But it is all in vain. Ahmed himself knows it and is resigned.

He will have to wait until he reaches the Seventh Heaven. There he will be able to put red, white, and blue hair ribbons on his odalisques, and listen to the "Star-Spangled Banner" throughout all eternity.

# 1001 Afternoons in New York

BY BEN HECHT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE GROSZ

It has been many years since Ben Hecht, one of the most versatile and ingenious of reporters, last hunched his shoulders over a city-room typewriter. He has been walking the fabulous heights of Broadway and Hollywood, and probably he would never have returned if the newspaper *PM* had not tempted him with an offer no true reporter could resist. New York was to be his assignment, and he was to write anything he pleased. The result has been a column of anecdote and adventure, personalities and politics, wit and satire, that harks back to the rich days of American journalism when William Bolitho was writing for the *World* and Carl Sandburg was turning out editorials for the *Chicago Daily News*.

The reader will find here a meeting with Sherwood Anderson before he sailed off to his death; a breath-taking picture of the Nazi as the persecuted Jew of the future; a raffish portrait of Gene Fowler; Harpo Marx in an unexpected role; the strange tale of the Russian engineer who was put through Columbia University by a Bowery panhandler. From the pages of this book emerges the form of our modern Babel and of the crazy, indomitable people who inhabit it.

*1001 Afternoons in New York* is a grab-bag of surprises and excitements. It will remind many who open it of its elder brother, *1001 Afternoons in Chicago*, which was a sensation of twenty years ago and a bestseller for the decade thereafter.

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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)