

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 20, 1964

WHD

This morning I feel like - well, the whole day has been an adventure of my own - my personal pleasure.

I left early with Wendy and Bess, and we went tourist on regular airline, which seemed to be a fact of considerable interest to the newsmen, arriving in New York, there was a small cluster of photographers, not many. It just took a nice wave to get into the car and flash off.

We were headed for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where Mary Lasker met me. She was going to be my guardian angel through the tour. The director, Mr. ^{Rorimer}~~Rehrman~~, and the curator, Ted ^{Ross}~~Rehrman~~, and Mrs. James ^{Josburgh}~~Fossburg~~, and the President of the Trustees, Mr. Redmond, were on hand too, to take us through.

They took me to a Board room where they had set aside a group of American paintings that they would be willing to lend to the White House for two years. I looked them over; there's nothing that I am sure we'll want. There was a Frank Michell called "Tom Kinney Comes Home", a cowboy wending his way over the hill, followed by his remuda, a couple of horses that he's carrying on one rope behind him. It has a sort of a mood quality, and you know that when Tom Kinney gets home, there's not going to be enough beans in the pot - a queer sadness, I rather liked it.

And then there was a Peter Hurd called "Rancheria", which for all simplicity, for the wide stretches of sky, for the country of New Mexico and Texas, was quite appealing to me. I think maybe I'll ask them if I may have it.

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One of the dearest ones ^g was a Mary Cass^{att}, of mother and child, ~~the~~ the child being rather noticeably better done than the mother, or so it seemed to me. So utterly natural, and relaxed, and the child didn't have any clothes on, it had just had its bath and its momma was getting it dressed. It was quite a dear picture.

And then there was a Child ^g Hassam, called "Golden Afternoon in Oregon". Lacking in the misty quality that you see in so many of Child^e Hassam's, and I think, probably the nicest of his that I've ever seen, with the single exception of the one in Lyndon's bedroom, of Armistice Day 1918.

There was another, by Arthur Davies called "Unicorn", which had a definitely fey quality, like a fairy story, which I myself liked, but it probably wouldn't be universally enough liked to put down here.

Then we spent about an hour, ^g just walking through the museum, which I enjoyed tremendously. And one of the things that appealed to me most was the fact that in about every third room we went to, there was a group of school children - oh, say 20 or 30 strong, with a teacher having them in tow and she would be explaining the pictures to them.

I didn't realize that there was quite that much exposure of school children to art and I think maybe it's probably been going on all along, or is it a new departure? At any rate, it's good for anybody who lives in a town, ^g to know the riches of the town - rather, I should say, the riches of the world because they're certainly compiled there.

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Going to the Metropolitan and trying to see it all, is like trying to read the Encyclopedia Britannica at one sitting - it can't be done. But I have two sort of favorites that I always take a little look through when I'm there, and one is the mummies, but this time I couldn't see them because there's construction going on, and they haven't gotten safely ensconced in their new home yet. The other is the coats of armor that the knights wore in medieval days, and they really must have been just five feet four inches tall. We did see those.

And it's enormously illuminating to go through with people like ^{Rousseau}~~Russell~~ ^{Rorimer}~~Rorimer~~ and ~~Rorimer~~ who can point out not only the deeply significant, wonderful things about all that you're seeing, but also the funny little gossip things.

From the Metropolitan, we went to the Whitney Museum, and there I was met by ^(? d'Harnancourt) ~~Mr.~~ Bower and Mr. Gordon, who took me on a brief trip through, and then to see pictures that they might be able to let us have.

There were two Grant Woods, in a sort of brown sepia. They were unfinished and they were the interior of American farm house, while dinner was being prepared for the threshers. They had a nice, nostalgic quality, but probably not dignified enough for Lyndon's office but perhaps the Fish Room.

And then there was a little American Primitive - just made you merry to look at it, with little old Fords of vintage about 1921, I guess - you know, the infinite detail of the American Primitive. There's something ever so appealing about them.

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Next, it was on to Mary Lasker's for lunch, where she had gathered together, in her charming house that is just like a - the setting for the jewels, ^{are} the pictures ~~the~~ the jewels, some very interesting guests. Anthony Bliss from Metropolitan Opera; and our friends who had accompanied us this morning, Ted ^{Rousseau} ~~Brown~~, the curator; Mr. Foss ^{Burg} ~~berg~~ was along this time, with Mrs. Foss ^{Burg} ~~berg~~; Roger Stevens of Cultural Center; Lem Billings; Mr. and Mrs. ^{Forimer} ~~Rahner~~.

It was the creme de la creme of cultural New York and I felt alien but interested.

Any part of the art world that I participate in, in this job that Lyndon and I have, will be because I really like it, without being able to take the credit for any deep knowledge of it, but if it can highlight, pinpoint, to use a crude word, "advertise art" for me to do it, whether it be paintings or plays or opera, it will be something I will enjoy doing. And will try to sort of keep off of Lyndon.

Mary, so graciously, and kindly, offered to let me have, unknown, something from her house. I'm just not a natural born saleswoman - pusher - and I think she'll just have to pick it up and bring it down here and say "This is where it belongs" before I would do it.

Of all the lovely things in her house, the really the loveliest is the big picture window that looks out over the river, with the boats plying their way up and down - and the grey stretches of that magic city.

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That night, ^{rather early} because the theatre was going to be at 7:30, and that after all, ^{was what I had come to New York for}

Ch name (probably Bennett Carf)
Abe, Ambassador Stevenson, Bennett Cohen, Mary Lasker, joined us, Wendy and Bess and me, in our lovely suite at the Carlisle, and we had some drinks and some sandwiches, and then set out to see After the Fall.

This is the first production of a new repertory theatre of Lincoln Center but because Lincoln Center isn't finished yet, the play was actually held in the Ant^e Washington Square Theatre, in Greenwich Village.

After the Fall ~~is~~, an Arthur Miller production, who has been absent from the theatre for a rather long time, it seems to me. I remember Death of a Salesman, which I'm just enough of a lover of Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams, ^{to} have enjoyed tremendously, if you can use the word enjoy.

I didn't see View From a Bridge or any of his others, but he's been gone a long time.

In this one - well, he sort of saws off the top of his skull and slits open his heart and lets you look in to the agonies and the awareness of a very intelligent man during the last three or four decades. The depression, the Nazis, the war years, the period after when a lot of people were being called up before Congressional committees for questioning about being Communists, ^{He} (He was one of those called), and also the two unsuccessful marriages that he lived through, with much pain - and the one that he was just entering on.

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And if I was number three, I think I'd feel a little shaky.

It was highly auto-biographical, but if one doesn't write about how one has lived, what one knows about, what else is there? I thought it was magnificently written and I want to get it and read it. There was a line aboutholding the future in your hand like a vase. There ~~were~~ ^{were} just any number of magnificent phrases. I like good English. And then it was acted so well by Jason Robards, ~~that~~ that I just wondered why he wasn't a sweating, fainting man at the end of it, because he carried such a load for about two and a half or more hours. The load is principally carried by the protagonist, although the women do have very strong parts - there's lots of strong parts, there aren't any weak parts in the play, it seemed to me.

And there was a little girl named Barbara Loden, who played Marilyn Monroe, and later on, I asked her, "What have you been in before?" And she said, "Nothing, on the stage. I had a part in Splendor in the Grass, in the movie, it wasn't a big part."

~~Eli~~ ^{Eli} Kazan directed it. All in all, I think every last one of them, ~~got~~ got out of it, every dreg of misery, every bit of beauty - and every now and then there was a small moment of humor, but I'm afraid I wasn't quite up to joining in the humor - I was so overpowered by the rest of it.

Of course the play centered heavily on the years that he spent with his second wife, Maggie, who is patterned after Marilyn Monroe, who was his wife in life. And its tenderness, and agony, and torment, and just

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marvelous acting.

At first, I thought I was going to mind it because there were no stage sets, nothing but just some - a big stage with some grey cubicles here and there that one could sit down on. But you became so absorbed in the characters, that the absence of sets was completely unnoticed.

I wonder what the critics will have to say of it. I hardly see how they can brand it as anything but magnificent - and yet, if Marilyn Monroe left a legacy of love, there will be those who will be angry that he wrote it, and there will be those who will say it was bad taste.

After the play was over, we went to the Loeb Student Center, New York University, to a great big room full of tables, where there was a champagne supper... A lot of food put before me and none of it eaten, and practically none of the champagne drunk, because there was a flash bulb going off every minute.

But one or two precious moments, to get to talk to Jason Robards, except that - in a crowd that big - I can't really express what I feel and also a moment to talk with Arthur Miller. Across the table from me, it was Barbara Loden, whom I could tell how wonderful I thought she'd been.

Myrna Loy and Lauren Bacall were there; Lauren Bacall is now Mrs. Mayor Jason Robards; and Robert Wagner came in and sat beside me, with the very sad news that his wife is sick. It doesn't sound like a good prognosis.

And during the play I sat next to that delightful Dr. Carlos Sosa[?]ridig[?]us of the U.N. General Assembly.

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I saw Marietta Tree and I believe Jean Kintner, and Perle Mesta.

Perle Mesta is everywhere.

As far as I'm concerned, the whole evening - what it meant - was that maybe they'll get enough of \$50 tickets and \$70 tickets and \$100 tickets - it being a benefit - to really get the repertory theatre going, and that, I think, will be a good thing. And whatever the critics say, I know this is a magnificent play, although after watching it, you're just as tired as if you'd plowed all day, that is, if you've got any feelings at all.

One of the nice moments of the evening, is when a group of Greenwich Village Democrats, came over and presented me with a little booklet about their own unique part of New York. And also, another nice thing, it's always pleasant to be around Adlai Stevenson.

He escorted me home, probably too late for his hard day's work next day, but not too long for my own enjoyment. And I got back to the Carlyle feeling very self-indulgent and very satisfied.