

April 14, 1949

Dear Jim,

I find myself between paintings and regretting that I have not written you for a long time, so I write you now to tell you what has been happening here and to find out what you have been doing. The past few months have been filled, for me, with calamities and re-surrections. You will remember that when you were last here I was about to build a studio in the garage. I started to do so soon after you left and I cut numerous windows and procured two magnificent large glass paneled doors and installed them, and in general I almost completed the work I had to do. I already had visions a chain of glorious and spiritual paintings and films passing through these magnificent doors when I received a letter from the lawyer of the owners of the property next door. It seems that the garage falls partly on their property and that my landlady had free use of the property under question so long as the garage stood and was used as a garage. Any repairs or remodelling would be considered as a violation of this easment. As it turns out we have violated the easment and the owners of the property (the Baptist Divinity School) feel that this is an opportunity to rid themselves of the garage (my studio) for various reasons. There is little I can do by way of appeal because the Baptist divinity school is run by a board of trustees and it is not as if there was one man whose resistance I would have to break down. I was told I had better stop working on my studio until they had a board meeting to decide what they are going to do. That was about six weeks ago and I haven't heard from them, though I think I will contact them today. The garage is scarcely worth moving into undisputed territory and I certainly have no desire to live here, now denied my studio. I don't know where I can move, and I am quite put out by the whole business. Possibly it will be all right, though I doubt it.

Also, I had been worrying over the fact that I had no money and no likelihood of ever getting any. In confidence a friend of mine described to another friend of mine that I was being "ground by poverty". Naturally, living in Berkeley, the remark was repeated to me almost immediately. I reflected on the truth of the statement and I recognized that my poverty which had previously ^{been} passive and whining had now become aggressive and only too willing to insidiously interfere with everything I hope to do. Virtually, I have gone as far as I can and can go no further without defeating this poverty. I do not know if you know what I mean by this, it is certainly something new to me, but I believe that faith and hope had placed my poverty in a subserviant position but that the time has come to cope with it. To this end I wrote Hilla Rebay (one of my hopes) and demanded (nicely, of course) that she tell me one way or another whether she intended to send me money. Her reply, with ~~XXXX~~ ill-concealed rage, informed me that she no longer gives money and that I should get up at 5 a.m. and paint until 8 a.m. and then go to work at a respectable job. She then informed me that she gets up at 1 a.m. (3 a.m., if late) and does upwards to 16 hours of work, and there was the intimation that if she does it I certainly can. For good measure she threw in some derisive remarks about Fischinger and how poor his film has become. The ~~XXXXXX~~ embarrassment that I felt having to ask for money now was justified, though I did write her again to tell her, in effect, that I did not need her old money, but that I hoped that I might continue to exhibit ~~at~~ the Guggenheim. I really enjoy exhibiting there, for one thing it is the only place in the world where I can exhibit and secondly I firmly, more than ever, believe in the superior value of non-objectivity. She did, however, send me a whole rack of books--Kandinsky's ON THE SPIRITUAL IN ART, ~~XXXXX~~ POINT LINE AND PLANE, two Kandinsky memorials, a pamphlet on Moholy-nagy, the complete Guggenheim catalogue, a mess of color reproductions of her own work and lists of public comments. I read the Kandinsky and was disappointed to find that his writings fall short of intelligence though he occasionally

has something of interest to say. Speaking of reading, I have been reading quite a bit of H. Rider Haggard lately and I am sure you would enjoy doing the same for there is much there that you would find in compliance with certain ideas that you have. I suggest you read SHE (you remember that Jung speaks highly of the work particularly as evidence of the anima manifest) or CLEOPATRA, or AYESHA; THE RETURN OF SHE. He has written hundreds of other books probably as good or better than these but I have not been able to obtain them. If you do read him I think you will be pleased to find that his images are unusually visual and quite beautiful (not his literary images, his visual images.)

By way of the resurrections that I mentioned I have turned towards trying to make some money from cartooning but I have not yet seriously begun due to a scarcity of cartoon ideas but I am now in contact with a couple of professional gag-writers and expect to begin in earnest. And also, and this may make you stop and wonder, ~~my~~ my father, strangely attuned to my emotional ebbs, has confronted me with a business proposition, though I have not seen or spoken to him for at least a year. It seems that he bought some property in a fairly exclusive district around here and is willing to split the profits with me if I will undertake to contract the building of three houses on this land. Or rather, supervise the job and take care of the details inasmuch as I ~~am~~ would be unable to actually become a licensed contractor. I would stand to make about \$3000 on this first deal but I have to promise to reinvest the money in a similar venture if this one works out. It all seemed rosy and I agreed, though now I have ~~my~~ doubts. My father shows signs of acting up again and I don't know if I can put up with it, no matter what promise there will be. We will have to see.

I have been contemplating for some time the possibilities of television as a means of employing my talent and making some money out of it. Frank Stauffacher and others ~~of~~ have been trying to get a start in this direction and I am stimulated to try my hand at it. I have in mind a number of one minute advertising films (generally just abstract design and playing with the products name) and I shortly plan to make one or two ~~XXXXXXXX~~; I have been offered the use of a camera. If ~~it~~ I don't get the one promised I can probably use Frank's, inasmuch as he is somewhat interested in my idea. What do you think of the idea?

There is to be a private showing of abstract films at the museum tomorrow for Mark Tobey who is down here for some ~~time~~ cultural round table on art and the public. I ~~have~~ heard some of it on the radio, it seemed completely futile; though I was amused to hear Frank Lloyd Wright, Marcel Duchamp, Tobey and others on the radio. I will probably go to this showing, ~~and~~ Frank asked me to show my film, because it had really been a long time since I have seen abstract films (I would certainly like to see Frank's ZIG ZAG again) and to meet Tobey, who I do not admire but I am shamefully impressed when beholding a "successful" artist.

As an afterthought on my miseries I must mention that a big wind broke one of my magnificent ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ garage doors at precisely the same moment that I was reading Rebay's letter. Symbolic? And I have been beset by ping-pong players. A new Fraternity has moved in, and though they are superior in every way to the one that you are familiar with they seem to have a mania for ping-pong which they play in the basement. In as much as this seriously interferes with my freedom in going to my bathroom, for I practically have to break up a tournament every time I go down there, I am fast developing an obsession about ping-pong. My bowels contract convulsively and my pepsin flow restrains at the mere sound of ping-pong ball in activity.

Let me hear from you concerning latest developments with your films (no gag intended) and what else you have been doing. My own work, up to the present, has been very gratifying and I regret that you are not here to see it. I also regret that my letter is fraught with my troubles, etc. for in a larger sense these things mean nothing to me and I am somewhat ashamed ~~for~~ at being a party to them.

P.S. Regards to John, wife, and child.

Sincerely,

Jordan

Oh yes, signed with vogel to distribute my film and I regret this also.