In Memory Of . . .

AN INTERNET EXHIBITION OF SOME WORKS BY
FRANZ BAUM
1888-1982
artist and art instructor
ABOUT THIS WEBSITE:

First, this has been the project of the artist’s youngest daughter, Valora.

Second, she regrets that, though some of the pictures shown originally had color when she photographed them years ago in Franz’s studio, she only had black and white film in her camera at the time. Therefore, they appear as black and white images. She photographed them as a casual record, not to be placed on the internet (which didn’t yet exist).

These pictures are offered simply as examples of the style and talent of the artist and are not gallery-perfect reproductions—nor are they his greatest works but for a few.

BIOGRAPHY:

Franz Maximilian Baum was born in Wiesbaden, Germany January 14, 1888, the second son of Julia Anna Bloch, a well known concert pianist, and Hermann Baum, the owner of a linen mill and imported fabric business. Franz told Valora that he “ran away from home at an early age”, but nonetheless, some biographical data has him learning French and Italian languages in Lausanne in 1907. From 1908 to 1914 he studied at art academies in Stuttgart and Munich, exhibiting works at the Secession Exhibition in 1912. Then followed four years of mandatory military service. While enlisted he became an accomplished horseman, and eventually led a mounted scout troupe during the First World War. At one point, caught in a fierce battle, he was so badly wounded he was left for dead on the field. A Catholic nun, searching for survivors, found him still alive and rescued him. This was the end of his military exploits.

The initial army hospital sent him to Stuttgart to recover
further from his war injuries, during which time he encoun-
tered Rudolph Steiner and became a Steiner pupil. (Later,
Franz was especially interested in the philosophy of Teilhard
de Chardin.) In the following years he continued his art
instruction in Munich, and went to Paris to study at the
Sorbonne as well. He also took classes at a veterinary school
where he learned about the inner structure of horses. In 1924
he was commissioned to paint a large mural for the Munich
Oktoberfest at the Hippodrome.

About 1930 he acquired a part-time teaching position
at one of his old alma maters, the Royal Academy of Art,
Munich, and it was there in 1931 that he met his future wife,
Abby Beveridge, a fashionable young American who had
enrolled to study sculpture. They married in 1934. At that time
Franz was also teaching riding and dressage at a large stable.
He was a longtime member of the expressionist group of the
Neue Münchner Secession, was an exhibitor at the
Glaspalast and other principal galleries of Munich, Hamburg,
Frankfurt, and beyond. He was a man with two part-time jobs
he enjoyed very much: a thriving career as an artist; a house
in Polling (where he also painted several large outdoor
murals); a lovely wife; a lively circle of intellectual friends; and
in 1937, his first child, a baby boy. But Germany was
increasingly in the throes of Nazism. Franz drew anti-Hitler
political cartoons, some of which were published in the more
liberal newspapers until such forms of opposition became
impossible. With Abby by his side, daughter of the then late
U.S. Senator and Pulitzer Prize winner Albert J. Beveridge, and
because of his military service during the First World War, the
artist thought he had a certain immunity others didn’t have—but
this would only stretch so far. Though he himself was
disinterested in Judaism and his parents had been primarily
secular with Catholic overtones, many before them had
followed the Jewish religious tradition. His name finally
appeared on The List (i.e., who else should we eliminate?)

Warned by the resistance that he was in great peril, within
a few hours he was gone, leaving Abby to move the house,
his studio, herself, and her toddler son—with the help of the
underground. The baby could not be his father’s child and
cross the border. Providing they both made it, they would
meet up again in Seattle, Washington; and there they lived for
the next four years, during which time two more children, both daughters, were born. Franz exhibited some of his work in a one-man show at the Seattle Art Museum during February of 1940, "... large landscapes and animal drawings by a prominent Bavarian artist who has recently settled in Seattle."

Yet the geographical area proved un-settling, being cold and overcast much of the time, and one day the artist set off to see what else he could find. In the summer of 1943 the family rented a house near Seabright beach in Santa Cruz, California, and by November, bought a country home a few miles inland.

During the following fourteen years he was given one-man exhibitions at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco (Sept. 22–Oct. 21, 1951); at Montalvo in Saratoga, California (March 4–31, 1956); at the Oakland Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Art, and other Bay Area art museums as well. His work was also shown at The Institute of Modern Art in Boston, and the Cleveland Art Institute in Ohio. He continued to paint daily, taught privately, and after his marriage failed in 1954, began to teach a variety of evening art classes for the Santa Cruz Adult Education Dept. In that era, there was not yet a local J.C. or university. He was also one of the founders of the Santa Cruz Art League.

So Franz was not doing too badly where he was. However, sustenance for his later years had to be considered. His early service in the German military and perhaps war injuries as well, entitled him to receive a fair pension; and there was also a sum being offered by the German government to those who had been forced to leave due to Nazi oppression. But these monies would only be given if he were to return to Germany. In 1958 at the age of seventy he did this, settling in Tegernsee, Bavaria, where he continued to paint, exhibit, and teach privately for the rest of his life.

Franz Baum died in 1982 at the age of 94.
The center horse, top row, horses just to the right of it, bird painting on second row, and circus riders beneath it, were originally in color.
Franz painted birthday cards for his family members to commemorate the occasion. In this case, it was a somewhat larger offering—roughly seven by ten inches—painted for Valora’s first. It has been included here to help offset the shortage of color in this presentation. Initially, he called her “Valerie” rather than “Valor” as her mother did (though neither name was ever inscribed on her birth certificate). Born the day after Pearl Harbor, Dec. 8, 1941, she came into this world at a time of great national and global turmoil. The city of Seattle was in blackout mode, as Japanese submarines had been spotted off the West Coast, and all Germans living in the Seattle area who had not yet become U.S. citizens were immediately rounded up and sent to internment camps, Franz among them. This happened in the evening shortly after Abby left for the hospital to give birth. He had stayed behind to secure a babysitter for his two older children when the officials arrived.

Valora’s father never appeared during his wife’s difficult
Quotations from some of Franz’s letters

December 15, 1941: Letter to Abby from the internment camp:

“When are you going home (from the hospital)? I am not sure that I am home for Christmas. Things are developing very slowly... I don’t think at all, that any real difficulties could arrive for me. It would not just be an honor for others.”

He mentioned his now “3” children, and said:

“How wonderful, the idea, even if we have to suffer, that they have to build up a completely new era, with another kind of spirit, not eighteen-hour labor. The next day, why became apparent when she was handed a Seattle newspaper which contained an article about the rounding up of all noncitizen Germans.

Just before Franz left his house with the arresting officers on Dec. 7, he grabbed his anti-Hitler political cartoons. This would be all the evidence he needed to make his position clear. But after giving them to the officials at a hearing held March 5, 1942, the cartoons were never seen again.

As soon as Abby was able, she went about the business of seeing what she might do to get him out, meeting with officials on the East Coast (she took a train back east), and writing letters. After three and one-half months of the immensely trying ordeal, a letter from Eleanor Roosevelt on his behalf set him free.
with hate, not with the destructive spirit of machines, destroying at
the end everything they created, but with a new kind of character,
with love, responsibility, and ethic and moral sense. Happy to lead
them with higher ideals out of this chaotic world, which I fear
quakes like the world described in the revelation.”

December 3, 1969: Letter to Valora

“Are you becoming aware that for artists learning never stops?”

December 4, 1971: Letter to Valora

“.....and later on in California, all sorts of animal companions as
your constant friends who you could trust in any way. What they
spoke to you, to that child, and later on, their wisdom, their prayers—
don’t forget. Let their spirit and goodness forever remain a part of
you, quieting and balancing your mind in controversial situations.”

Franz, about 1936
The Images
"Greene Wagen"
(Haimhausen)
F. Baum
5/10
This Franz Baum painting was photographed in his studio during the 1970s. Some paint brushes got in the way on the left. They almost seem to belong to the actual creation. (Orig. was in color.)
Given to Valora for her 8th birthday.
One of Franz’s last works. I’m sure it had a name, but I don’t know what. I like to call it, “Spirit Moving On”.
Given to Abby the year they were married.
A piece of memorabilia found in the Legion of Honor archives:

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Shipped via: Hand
Prepaid: Collect

Date Received: Intervals: June 21, 1951 to September 17, 1951

Insurance: Museum Policy

Lent for: EXHIBITION OF FRANZ BAUM BRUSH DRAWINGS

Registrar: Fenton Kastner.

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Abby at sixteen. After she was married, she changed her first name to “Gloria”.

View looking across the lake from Tegernsee

Photo by Valora Tree
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