



**Biala: Provincetown Summers**  
selected paintings and drawings

curated by Jason Andrew

August 10-September 30, 2018



**Provincetown Art Association and Museum**

Published on the occasion of the exhibition:

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organized on behalf of the Estate of Janice Biala by Artist Estate Studio, LLC, Brooklyn

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**Provincetown Art Association and Museum**

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To learn more about the life and work of Janice Biala visit [www.janicebiala.org](http://www.janicebiala.org)



*Biala at the beach at Wellfleet, c.1940*  
*Courtesy Tworokov Family Archives, New York*

# Biala: Provincetown Summers

by Jason Andrew

“I envy you going to Provincetown for the summer.  
If only I had two lives—I’d spend one by the sea  
and the other traveling the world.”<sup>1</sup>

These were the words of an artist who, at the time of this declaration, had already lived two lives: one, painting in France during the 1930s with her companion the English novelist Ford Madox Ford, and the second, as one of only a few women to gain critical acclaim during the male dominated era of New York School of Abstract Expressionism.

Provincetown loomed large in the life of Biala. It was there that she received her earliest and most informed art training from the highly respected and most revered painter Edwin Dickinson (1891-1978). Not only a destination for Biala, though she would later settle permanently in Paris, Provincetown was a state of mind, an aesthetic touchstone, a place to which she would return again and again over her eight-decade career.

## THE POLISH ÉMIGRÉE

Biala was a Polish émigrée, born Schenehaia Tworkovsky in 1903 in Biala (a small village tucked along a river by the same name in what is now South East Poland). She arrived in New York with her older brother Jacob and their mother on September 26, 1913. Reuniting with their father, a tailor, and their older half brothers and sisters, the family lived on Ridge Street where she became one of the millions of tenement dwellers on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Like many immigrants arriving from ports all over the world, the family Tworkovsky underwent a series of name changes as now Jack and Janice struggled to assimilate to American culture at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“The first years in New York I remember as the most painful in my life,” wrote Jack, “Everything I loved in my childhood I missed in New York, everything that had been painful in my childhood grew to distressing proportions [...] in the new land I had to face a new culture and adolescence at the same time.”<sup>2</sup> Janice most certainly shared her brother’s experience.

Jack and Janice also shared a unique vision of the future for themselves. While still teen-agers, they moved out of their tenement building as soon as they could and sought refuge in Greenwich Village. It was around this time that the pair reclaimed a shortened version of their original family name: *Tworkov*.



*Brother and sister: Jack and Janice Tworkov, c. 1918  
Every stitch of clothing was made by their father.  
Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

## THE YOUNG BOHEMIAN

In Greenwich Village Jack and Janice experienced for the first time in America something like a sense of community albeit “a community of alienated people—runaways from every part of America,” Jack recalled.<sup>3</sup>

When the Brooklyn Museum opened an exhibition of French painting in the spring of 1921,<sup>4</sup> Jack and Janice discovered for the first time the works of Cézanne. The exhibition included fourteen canvases by Cézanne and twelve by Matisse.<sup>5</sup> It was a lasting and profound experience, one after which the pair decided to dedicate their lives to becoming artists. Jack said he “never forgot the impact of Cézanne, whose ‘anxieties and difficulties’ came to mean more to him than Matisse’s liberty and sophistication.”<sup>6</sup> Janice on the other hand, though drawn to Cézanne’s structured compositions, would come to assimilate Matisse’s color and sensibility, writing upon the death of the artist that she “always had Matisse in my belly.”<sup>7</sup>

Deserting his pursuit at Columbia University to become a poet, Jack began studying at the Art Students League of New York in early 1923. Janice registered for art classes at the National Academy of Design later that year. There she would meet Charles Hawthorne who had established the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Hawthorne’s school, the first school to teach outdoor figure painting in America, cultivated artists from across America. That June, Janice convinced Jack to join her and the pair hitchhiked their way to the remote yet thriving town on the Cape with a plan to study with Hawthorne.

## THE FIRST SUMMER IN PROVINCETOWN

That first summer in Provincetown in 1923, Jack and Janice discovered a distinguished colony of artists many of them tucked away in shacks that lined the dunes just as they had done in 1899, the year Hawthorne established his school. The Old New England families and the Portuguese fishermen were colorful subjects and had a live and let live attitude towards Hawthorne’s newcomers. At that time Provincetown was still a prosperous port with hundreds of fishing boats and tippy dinghies filling the bay.

But Jack and Janice both hated painting outdoors. Although both were drawn to the place where the sea meets the dunes, their intellectual attraction toward modernism had them rebelling against Hawthorne’s strict traditional *plein air* approach.

It didn’t take them long to discover the painter Ross Moffett who introduced them to artists Karl Knaths and Edwin Dickinson. “My introduction to modern painting,” Jack recalled, “came from Knaths in Provincetown.”<sup>8</sup> Dickinson would become Janice’s lifelong mentor and friend. It was because of Dickinson, Biala said, that she “found her true way.”<sup>9</sup>

Deciding to stay on, the first year they rented rooms from a Yankee ship captain who had retired from the East Indies Trade. Jack recalls that the Captain and his family asked him to church every Sunday, and he went. It’s uncertain whether Janice went so willingly.



Edwin Dickinson *Portrait of Biala, nee Janice Tworikov* (1924)  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm) Collection of Hermine Ford, New York



## MY NAME IS NOW BIALA

In Provincetown, Janice befriended Blanche Lazzell, Dorothy Loeb and Shelby Shackleford whom she affectionately nicknamed *Dushenka*. Their friendship and correspondence would last their lifetimes. In one of the first letters to Shelby, Janice describes her Provincetown studio and moreover her commitment to painting:

“I actually work my four hours each day, more or less. If I don’t feel like working, I force myself [...] I don’t care what it looks like but I must work. Hell, the beauty of it is that it works both ways. My work is good. Dick [Edwin Dickinson] likes it very much and I am learning to paint and learning to work regularly. It’s the regular kind of plugging that I’ve always been too temperamental to do, and now I enjoy it.

[...] Do you remember where Gertrude [Shilbey] lives? And the big white house right across the street? That’s Miss Matheson’s house, and in back of that is my studio, which is very cozy, very warm, and light. Dick looks after my stoves, my painting and my exercise and his sister after my health, my cooking and my sleep. So you can imagine what efficacy reigns in this house.

[...] Painting is the one thing with me that can’t be touched by anything outside its own realm. Besides, when I’m thru working, I am too tired to do anything but lie back in my very comfortable easy chair—later on I read Dostoevsky. You have no idea how much this man interests me [...] It is such a coincidence that I should have met you and Dostoevsky at the same time, and to have the extremely good fortune of knowing Dick—whose hands, I say, look as if they had been burned in a fire of sorrow, and were now forever pale in memory of it.”<sup>11</sup>

Although that first year spent in Provincetown would be the only time Biala would reside on the Cape with any duration, it would prove to be most critical in defining her path and sensibility. She would retain her ties to those places she loved in Provincetown, Truro, and Wellfleet as well as with those she would call her friends the rest of her life.

During the summer of 1927, Biala participated in the *First Modernist Exhibition* at the Provincetown Art Association. Faced with aesthetic differences among its artist membership and as a result of a petition drawn up by Ross Moffett, Tod Lindenmuth and thirty other artists protesting “the academic conservatism” by the jury for the annual exhibition, the Association mounted separate “Modern” and “Regular” summer exhibitions from 1927 to 1937.<sup>12</sup>

From Biala’s early formative years in Provincetown there exist very few paintings of which *The Violin* (c.1923-1924) is the earliest known work. The painting is also her most technical and academic, and likely finished under the watchful eye of her mentor, Edwin Dickinson. Further, this painting should be viewed as an homage to her mentor, as Dickinson was a noted violinist.

*Provincetown Street* (1929) and *The World* (1929) are two of the earliest known drawings. In both, the influence of Dickinson’s atmospheric and painterly touch is evident, the latter capturing a young artist’s aspirations to travel the world.

By late 1920, Janice was an established young artist with a growing reputation. She was a frequent exhibitor at the G.R.D. Studios in New York, a gallery that would later fuel the careers of many important American artists like Ilya Bolotowsky. She remained at the forefront of the fledgling art colonies of Woodstock and Provincetown generating close friendships with Dickinson, Shackelford, and William Zorach. It was at the suggestion of William Zorach that Janice changed her name to Biala. "I decided to change my name [...] in order not to be confused with you," Janice wrote to Jack. "My name is now Biala."<sup>13</sup>



*Biala, c.1929. Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*



## A LIFE WITH FORD MADOX FORD

Opinionated and tough, the young brunette with a soft Eastern European face was a free thinker of the highest order. She had a passion for life that fueled a rather aggressive social independence. A true bohemian, Biala longed for the time when she would be free from the confines and restrictions of family and society. “If I ever get a hundred dollars I’m going to Europe and stay there,” she wrote to her brother in Provincetown from her apartment on West 15<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City.<sup>14</sup>

Living on the edge with a long series of menial jobs to support her, Biala’s situation grew even more critical with the Wall Street Crash of October 1929. “I got fired at Macey’s [*sic*] and realize myself that I don’t fit into that sort of thing. Everything in modern business is so standardized that there is no chance for an ordinary human being.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Biala realized that painting was the only thing she could do well. “If there were anything else I could do. I’d do it.”<sup>16</sup>

Then in April 1930, she caught a break and at the invitation of her poet and New York friend Eileen Lake and her husband, Biala left for France.<sup>17</sup>

It would seem that Biala always had a fascination with France. As a teenager she had collected “as many books as one could find on the subject.” These well-worn novels and picture books, tucked secretly under her bed, fed her already excessive imagination. *The Three Musketeers* was her favorite. She would later tell French art critic André Malraux that it was because of Porthos that she became an artist.<sup>18</sup>

“Of all the people I know, I think you would enjoy Paris most,” wrote Biala on April 30, 1930, the very day she arrived in Paris, in what would be the first of a lifetime of letters from France to her brother.

“And believe me, you should get a little more interested in coming here. I don’t mean for the gay ‘bohemian life’ and the conversations on art and art itself [...] but for the loveableness of Paris, and its physical beauty, which is perverse and grand at the same time. I have already seen a good deal of the left bank as far as the Louvre on foot in an effort to get my bearings [...] I can’t describe the food [...] except that it is just what Porthos must have eaten [...] And there are flowers everywhere, of varieties I have never seen. I haven’t got the time to tell you any more, because we’re going out.

Love, Janice.”<sup>19</sup>

On a fateful afternoon on May Day 1930, encouraged with the promise of meeting Ezra Pound, whom she admired, Biala attended a salon at the apartment of the English novelist Ford Madox Ford. Instead of meeting Pound, she found herself next to Ford. Legendary among writers, artists and the transatlantic intelligentsia, Ford sat himself along-side Biala at the edge of the long divan, and for a moment in the dim light the pair “seem to be alone...” recalled Ford in his collection of poems dedicated to Biala.<sup>20</sup> Their meeting was the kind of spontaneous theater—a chapter straight out of one of Ford’s epic novels. In fact, it is not far fetched to think that Ford was meeting in the flesh his fictional character Valentine Wappon, the young suffragette heroine from his tetralogy of novels *Parade’s End*.



*Biala and Ford at the Villa Paul, c.1930. Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

Their afternoon extended into dinner at the invitation of Willard Trask, and later Ford took Biala and Eileen out dancing. Those close to Ford reported knowing straightway that he was in love with Biala. Biala too was quite taken by Ford and before long, the hours stretched into days and days stretched into weeks and then years. She was twenty-six and he was fifty-seven. He would share with her all he knew, and she would become his most fierce advocate.

Reveling in the new life in France she so desperately desired, Biala did her best to remain connected with her family and friends in America.

Letter to Shelby Shackelford, August 9, 1930:

“Darling, I can’t write impressions because there are too many of them. All I can say is that this is the most beautiful country I ever imagined ever, and the most human to live in, and I never want to leave it. I am thinking of getting a job here, and settling down until I can become a French citizen. What do you think of that? Life is so much easier here, you have no idea. How long is it since you’ve been here? Because I cannot see why you aren’t longing to be back. It must be because you’ve forgotten. I suppose I’ll get over it and get homesick for America, but I might not.

I have seen very few pictures due to the fact that the good galleries are closed during the summer, and have seen no Lurçats.<sup>21</sup> My present passion is Utrillo, and you remember how I used to dislike him. But French painting becomes much more clear in France, because it is so exactly like France. You know Shelby, it seems to me now that America will never produce painters as good as the French [...] Why shouldn’t the French paint well—they have a most beautiful country to live in. They have marvelous cooking, good wine, a leisured and ordered life. They have everything to make them happy and tranquil, why shouldn’t they paint. Even [though] the nights on which they make love is ordered and approved of. Did you know that Monday and Thursday is a half holiday, because Saturday Sunday and Wednesday nights are the nights for love making and so on and so forth.

There was a great exhibition of everything of Delacroix’s at the Louvre recently, and I think it’s still on.<sup>22</sup> I went to see it—but the canvases are so immense, and the subject matter so repellent to me—that all I could see after I could clear my vision of the horses and lingerie, was that he was a marvelous painter. About his design I can’t tell, as I should have had to spend a year looking at a single picture. But every now and then, out of this vast mess, a head would stand out so beautifully painted you didn’t know what to do with yourself.

I also saw Manet’s “Olympia” at last and it is certainly a marvelous painting, I’ve suffered a change of heart about that man. He was too stupid. He had this marvelous gift for painting but I get a sense of emptiness in his canvases now, and I imagine he was too clever anyway. There are two extraordinary beautiful Cézannes in the Louvre. They can’t be described of course. But the most beautiful thing I’ve seen is Paris itself and that’s that.

[...] How are my friends the Dickinsons? I wrote them but got no answer, the bastards.

Love, Janice



Biala, *Portrait of a Writer (Ford Madox Ford)*, 1938  
Oil on panel, 32 x 25 ½ in. (81.3 x 64.8 cm) Collection of the Estate of Janice Biala, New York

Biala's early years spent on the Cape with the sea and dunes made strong impressions on her sensibilities, conditioning her for a lifetime of regular sojourns and love for the sea. In January 1931, she and Ford began making frequent trips to the South of France. It was there that Biala discovered a similar light. Toulon would be their place and at the Villa Paul on Cap Brun they had their view, with the sea below them "like ruffled satin and the mistral sings an infinite number of lays in Latin," as Ford wrote.<sup>24</sup>

As early as 1932, despite her struggle to sell pictures, Biala was exhibiting in Paris.<sup>25</sup> One such exhibition was held at Parc des Expositions. Titled "1940," the exhibition fashioned itself at the cutting edge of modern painting and included work by Jean Arp, Piet Mondrian, Francis Picabia, and Jacques Villon among others and featured a retrospective of some fifty-nine paintings by Theo Van Doesburg. Alexander Calder is the only other American invited. Biala was represented by four paintings.<sup>26</sup>

Word of her inclusion was reported in the *The New York Times*,<sup>27</sup> and Biala rebuked the review stating, "[...] The damn fool had to give me the wrong name (I do not sign myself Janice Ford Biala,) and what hope is there when someone thinks one paints like a slow dance of joy or some such twaddle!"<sup>28</sup>

A novel could be written on the life of Biala as the last companion of Ford Madox Ford. During their time together his prose and her paint interwove a canvas artistically rich and historically significant for both writer and painter. Ford introduced her to all the artists forging a new Modernism including Brancusi, Matisse, Picasso and Gertrude Stein (who Biala thought a "hateful bitch"<sup>29</sup>). Ford told Ezra Pound that Biala was "rather modern."<sup>30</sup>

"The years I spent with him were a long passionate dialogue," Biala said.<sup>31</sup> Together they practiced their art and lived by it "in the teeth of every disaster."<sup>32</sup> Biala remained at his side until his death on June 26, 1939.

Following the death of Ford, Biala wrote to Jack:

"I can't come back yet. In the first place I want to paint. In the second place, all my history that counts took place here. And Ford is alive and with me in all the places that we loved here. I am doing everything that Ford would have done with me. If you like, I am sort of carrying on his life for him... Ford hasn't stopped needing me. I have to look after his literary life and I have to paint too... I hope some day you will understand that Ford and I were true lovers and what seemed incongruous and shocking to you was a misfortune we had to put up with, and was something that wasn't really so important beside the thing we created between us."<sup>33</sup>

Biala's commitment to Ford did not soften at his death, which all but heralded the outbreak of World War II. In a heroic effort as war began consuming all of Europe, Biala, a Polish Jew, traveled back to the South of France, which was in Mussolini's cross hairs. There she made the daring rescue of Ford's manuscripts and library. After weeks in hiding in Nice with Hitler's regime pressing in, Biala fled France the first week of November 1939 on one of the last boats from Bordeaux heading

to New York. ‘There is in life nothing final’, Biala wrote. And so carrying Ford’s memory, Biala returned to America with every intention of remembering and returning to France.

## A RETURN TO AMERICA



*Biala with the Dickinson Family, Truro (L to R: Helen, Biala, Pat, Constant, and Edwin), c.1940.  
Courtesy Tworokov Family Archives, New York*

Returning to New York she tried desperately to restart her life while looking after Ford’s literary legacy. Seeking a place to heal, she returned to the Cape and spent the summer in Truro with the Dickinsons.

Letter to Shelby Shackelford, September 22, 1940:

“I enjoyed my stay with the Dickinsons enormously. In the first place I have no association with Ford there, so I relaxed for the first time since his death. And I love the smell of the sea—and you know how fond I am of Dick. And I was very touched to see that he is as fond of me. I always wanted to know Pat better and I cannot tell you the respect and admiration I have of her. I think she is one of the most remarkable women I have ever met. You will laugh, I am sure, when I tell you that I have almost a feeling of awe about her. Their life is full of hard work and not too many of what the world calls blessings—but I think it’s a good life they lead—and they are a magnificent little cell in a very bad world. I am very fond of the children, and you’ll be pleased to know they of me. I taught them textile design and Patsy taught me how to do a handspring, which I always wanted to know. I was shocked at first at their appearance—but I got used to it and I see now that they are just the kind of children Dick would have. And Pat too. Isn’t it typical that Constant drops an anchor every night when he gets into bed and draws it up again when he wakes up?





Edwin Dickinson, *Janice at the Beach* (1940), Oil on canvas, 19 x 15 in. (48.3 x 38.1 cm)  
Private Collection; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

I never went into Provincetown, having a horror of meeting the people I know and convinced they wouldn't know me from Adam. Dick thought it very wrong of me and took me to a party in Wellfleet, where I damn well had to meet them. Everyone knew me alright [sic] and I discovered that the mere fact that we knew each other even slightly 15 or 16 years ago made us all old friends. It was rather touching. I renewed acquaintances with the L'Engles<sup>34</sup> among other having previously met them in the street. Lucy doesn't like me anymore than she used to—and Bill does. He told me so. I rather like them both and wish we could be friends.

I met Ms. Hawthorne on the journey back and was touched by her timid invitation to come to see her. I will. She's gotten very old and I imagine she is lovely.

That was the only time I met anybody. The rest of the time, I didn't see anyone but the Dickinsons. I wish you'd been there too. More when I see you, sometime this week. I haven't been working since I've been back and I'm pretty restless.

Love, Janice

*The Dune Shacks* (c.1940), seems to reflect the solitary and emotional turmoil Biala must have been enduring at the loss of Ford. The simple drawing masterfully captures a set of dune shacks solemnly sitting high on the sandy dunes.



Biala *The Dune Shacks* (c.1940), graphite on paper, 8  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11 in. (22.2 x 27.9 cm)  
Collection of the Estate of Janice Biala, New York

## A WOMEN AMONG MEN: BIALA AND THE NEW YORK SCHOOL

Recharged and set to re-establish her career, Biala returned to New York. There she met the Alsace born painter Daniel 'Alain' Brustlein who was also a noted cartoonist for *The New Yorker*. They married on July 11, 1942, and the couple was active amongst the artists who would later be identified as The New York School, developing a particularly close relationship with Willem de Kooning.

Biala and Brustlein were among the first collectors of de Kooning's work. "So when Alain and I were married," Biala explained, "Alain said 'Well if [de Kooning] is as good as you say he is, and if I like his work, I'll buy one of his pictures.' Alain was the millionaire of the group since he worked for *The New Yorker*. So sure enough we went over there to de Kooning's loft and he saw a picture [an abstract painting of 1938] that he liked and he bought it. This was probably in 1942 [...] we bought a number of pictures from de Kooning because he needed the money," Biala recalled.<sup>36</sup> It was Biala and Brustlein that turned an otherwise "melancholy" wedding day into an event for Elaine and de Kooning by "throwing a spontaneous, informal and extremely simple wedding lunch for the little party at a cafeteria."<sup>37</sup> Biala even persuaded her own gallerist, George Keller of the Bignou Gallery, to visit de Kooning's studio.

Biala participated in many Annual Exhibitions of American Painting including *American Painting: 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition* in St. Louis, while at the same time keeping close ties with galleries in Paris. In 1947 alone she opened two solo exhibitions, one at the Bignou Gallery in New York and the second at the Milwaukee Museum of Art. Later that year she and Alain boarded the *de Grasse*, one of the first passenger boats to sail to Europe after the war. They befriended the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson on the crossing and for a time, used his studio in Paris as theirs.

"I still find in France all the things I'd hope for," Biala wrote, "at any rate, I'd have no use for Paradise if it wasn't like France."<sup>38</sup> Despite the bond she had with Paris she never felt bound by ties of nationality. In an article featuring herself, Joan Mitchell and Shirley Jaffe, Biala stated: "I always had the feeling that I belong where my easel is. I never have the feeling of nationality or roots. In the first place, I'm an uprooted person. I'm Jewish. I was born in a country where it was better not to be Jewish. Wherever you go, you're in a sense a foreigner. I always felt that wherever my easel was, that was my nationality."<sup>39</sup>

"Her transatlantic life was not by choice," explains Hermine Ford. With the rise of McCarthyism, all naturalized citizens, which included Biala and



*Biala and Brustlein boarding the de Grasse for France, c.1947  
Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

Brustlein, were required by law to live in the United States. “Biala and my uncle pushed the limits of the law by spending two years Stateside and two years in Europe. I remember it was my mother’s job to find them places to stay. It was always an eventful scene—scrambling to find them accommodations. Eventually, they purchased a small farmhouse in Peapack, NJ. And when they were in Paris, it was up to their dear friends the Duvoisins to maintain that place! We always went to the boat to meet them and we always went to the boat to see them off.”

Hermine further explains, “New York was not where she most wanted to be, this was upsetting to all of us but especially my father, Jack. Where Biala most wanted to be was Paris. But Provincetown was her compromise. It was one of the only places she loved in America. I think she thought of the Cape and the small townships that surrounded it as provincial Europe. At least once, I remember Biala arriving in Provincetown direct from Paris.”<sup>40</sup>

Through such vivid letters back and forth from Paris to New York, Biala kept up with all things happening in New York and was often very amused by the theories and philosophies being shared among the amalgamation of artists calling themselves the New York School. In response to one such letter Biala wrote:

Letter to Jack, April 8, 1949:

“Dear Professor Tworkov, Professor Brustlein and myself read with great interest your paper on the new ‘metaphysical space’ invented by Professor de Kooning. We note with some surprise that notwithstanding all the interesting and admirable qualities of this new space that you so eloquently describe, that it seems nevertheless to exercise a depressing effect on the bystanders and has the quality of robbing them of their self-confidence. With regard to this peculiarity I would suggest that it has great potentialities for use in World War III. I think, it could and should be used as THE secret weapon against the enemy with further research and study the metaphysical space bomb could be developed and rained on Moscow in our new Super Duper Flying Fortresses. This new bloodless way of making war would have been impossible of course in the Pre-Mondrianic Age or even in the Picasson Era—but with our new advances in the romantic and spacion field, the sky is the limit!”<sup>41</sup>

And so Biala made the most of her transatlantic life maintaining a studio both in America and Paris and exhibiting regularly in both places.

On one of her extended returns to New York, Biala was one of only three women—the other two being Louise Bourgeois and Hedda Sterne—invited to attend a private, closed to the public, discussion known to history as the *Artist’s Session at Studio 35*. Held in April 1950, the premise was to discuss formally and among friends, the ideas defining the current movement in abstract art in New York. Robert Motherwell suggested three possibilities: *Abstract Expressionism*, *Abstract Symbolist*, and *Abstract Objectionist*. Discussion continued among the group that included in addition to Biala, James Brooks, Willem de Kooning, Jimmy Ernest, Herbert Ferber, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Pousette-Dart, Ad Reinhardt, David Smith among others.

During the discussion, Biala voiced her reservations about the direction of painting in New York:

“Like many of us, I was raised on the notion of ‘painterliness’—that what is most moving in painting is... its painterly qualities. But when I think of the art that I love—for example, the art of Spain, with its passion and noblesse—I wonder if ‘painterliness’ is not meant to serve something beyond itself...”<sup>42</sup>



*Biala, 1956. Photo: Rudy Burckhardt*

## AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

Meanwhile, Biala became the person every American artist wanting contact in France would come to see. These included Norman Bluhm, Sam Francis, Shirley Jaffe, Bill Jenkins, Milton Resnick, critic Harold Rosenberg and the occasional run in with Joan Mitchell.

“I had a little session with Joan Mitchell a couple of months ago. She told me among many other disagreeable things about my painting, that if she had me for a student for six months, what a painter she would make of me!”<sup>43</sup>

During this time, Biala’s letters are crammed with the announcements and complaints of these Americans arriving by the droves to her front door. “I wanted to catch up on my work this month while Paris is deserted of Americans!” she wrote.<sup>44</sup>

She had this to say when Robert Motherwell opened a show in Paris:

“I just received an invitation for the opening of Motherwell’s collage show. What I like about my comp-artists is that as soon as they get here, you become a buddy of theirs. Motherwell never sent us an invitation to a vernissage of his before, but here they are all so terrified that the French won’t show up that they corral all the Americans in town!”<sup>45</sup>

Critic Harold Rosenberg was among her many visitors, hosting him and his family on his first visit to Paris in 1951 (a year prior to him coining the term “action painting,” which would come to define a new era in American painting).

Letter to Jack Tworckov, August 10, 1951:

“We enjoyed Harold’s visit immensely [...] It’s his conversation that gave us so much pleasure—he announced to us among other things that the Universe no longer exists. Perhaps that is not news to you—but it came as a great shock to me—and I haven’t got over it yet. It’s full of possibilities when you come to think of it.”

In 1953, Biala opened the first of many solo exhibitions at the famed Stable Gallery. *The New York Times* called it “one of the most exhilarating and satisfying events of the whole season.”

“For one thing, Miss Biala is such a good painter, laying on paint-color with singular sensibility, in ample but never redundant brush-strokes, and grasping firmly both the imaginative and the description elements of her themes [...] The mood of these pictures is one of distant intimacy.”<sup>46</sup>

That year, Biala and Brustlein rented Rosenberg’s apartment on East 10<sup>th</sup> Street. There she painted a large canvas titled *Two Young Girls* (1953), which featured the portraits of her two nieces Hermine and Helen, as well as the Rosenberg’s cat that the nieces called “Uncle Pickle.”<sup>47</sup> Biala painted a variation on this composition five years later as seen in *Two Young Girls* (1958).





*Biala and Alain in Paris, c.1949*  
*Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

Yet as Rosenberg's allegiances became intertwined with the rising market for abstract expressionism, Biala's relationship with him floundered. Likely responding to the critic's categorical classification of her work as *School of Paris*, she penned this prickly letter to Rosenberg:

“Dear, dearest, darling, beloved HAROLD, the understudy of [Clement] Greenberg, When you are frying on a mountain of molten roses in the Gardens of Hell, for your sins of omission and commission, as the Good Book hath it, Hedda Sterne, Daniel Brustlein, and I, will out of our well known *School of Paris* good taste, tastefully turn our heads away from your suffering. We will, however, indulge in quiet, sensuous enjoyment of same.

In the hope this finds you in the pink (To yours and irrevocably tasteful as you see) I am your devoted friend in God (a just one, I hope),

J. B.”<sup>48</sup>

As the years pressed on, Biala enjoyed her all too brief visits to her beloved sea and dunes on the Cape. She routinely took detailed notes in drawings like *Study for “Provincetown (The Unitarian Universalist Meeting House)”* (c.1957) and *Beach Study* (c.1957). These studies were journals of time and place. They would eventually be fully realized in paint at a later date. In the collage, *Provincetown* (1957), Biala replicates the feel and quaintness of what was once the small village by the sea in paint and torn paper.



Biala, *Provincetown* (1957), Torn paper collage and paint on canvas, 15 x 20 in. (38.1 x 50.8 cm)  
Collection of Mr. Jeff Forster and Sandy Deacon, courtesy Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

In 1954, Jack Tworkov walked down Commercial Street to the moors West of town. He acknowledged the changes affecting the small town, but realized that “what I came for was still here [...] There is a quality of light that you get nowhere else because the bay and the dunes act like mirrors to the sky.”<sup>49</sup>

A few years later, in 1958, the Tworkov family purchased a house on the West End.<sup>50</sup> Receiving the news in Paris, Biala send off a joyous letter capturing her enthusiasm, “Hurrah for la famille Tworkov! [...] Provincetown and that part of the cape [...] arouses all my patriotism. In fact the only patriotism I have.”<sup>51</sup> Biala’s painting *The Beach* (1958), is not only a masterpiece at the height of her gestural period, but could also be seen as celebrating good news.



Biala, *Beach* (1958), Oil on canvas, 49 x 32 ½ in. (124.5 x 82.6 cm)  
Collection of Art Enterprises, Ltd., Courtesy McCormick Gallery, Chicago, IL



In 1959, Biala was featured in a three-person exhibition in Provincetown alongside Edwin Dickinson and Jack Tworkov. “This show at HCE Gallery,” wrote Dore Ashton in *The New York Times*, “presents paintings and drawings by three artists who lived and worked in Provincetown some thirty-years ago and are still coming back.”

“Biala exhibits recent gouaches, some suggesting views seen during her recent stay in Europe. But the early Provincetown experience has not been forgotten, for in several of the best paintings, Biala keeps to the tonal palette the Cape Cod ambiance demands, using it with great finesse.”<sup>52</sup>

When amendments were made to the McCarran Act in the early 1960s, Biala and Brustlein ended their mandatory stays in America and purchased a one-story stable in Paris’s 7<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. Accessible through a courtyard, and later converted to two stories, this would serve as home and studio for both artists for the rest of their lives. Still, Biala would rarely miss an opportunity to visit the Tworkovs on the Cape. “I can truly say that she loved Provincetown,” explains Hermine Ford, “The light, as for many others, reminded her of the light in Provence and the Riviera.”<sup>53</sup>

As Biala settled into her full life in Paris, the sea and the dunes of Provincetown and the Cape may have been miles away, but they were only a step and a brush away when she was in her studio. Often she worked on compositions from photographs. During a visit, likely around 1962, Biala made several drawings and collages that featured a friend of the family named Dana. Various compositions capture the young friend standing in a doorway, or on a patio, or an interior but always Dana is seen in a swimsuit pulling a brush through her hair. These studies played a vital role in the development of the much later fully resolved painting *Dana* (1962-1974).

When a series of photographs arrived in a letter to Biala in Paris featuring a beach day in 1967 with her grandnephew Erik Moskowitz, she worked feverishly from the photographs and her collective memory of the Bay of Provincetown to capture essentially her grandnephew taking some of his first steps in the slipping tide. “I did get the snapshots of Eric [sic] and wrote Hermine about them,” Biala wrote, “He does look like a most engaging baby and I am looking forward to making his acquaintance.”<sup>54</sup>



L: Hermine Ford with her son Erik Moskowitz in the Bay of Provincetown, 1967, Photo courtesy Tworkov Family Archives.  
R: Biala, *The Bathers*, c.1967, Oil pastel on paper, 4 5/8 x 6 3/8 in. (11.7 x 16.2 cm)

In the same letter, Biala conceded her longing to see the Tworkovs. “It is strange how destiny works,” she wrote, “if you take one road it leads you to one place. If you take another it leads you to an entirely different one. I left America [in 1930] to pass three months in Europe and my whole life was changed by that little trip, which turned into a stay of 37 years!”



Biala. *Arbre et la Mer: Provincetown* (1967), Oil on canvas, 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (34.3 x 34.3 cm)  
Collection of the Estate of Janice Biala, New York

*Arbre et la Mer: Provincetown* (1967) was also painted that year likely from a combination of sketches, a photograph, and her memory of taking long walks along the familiar shoreline on the bay side in Wellfleet with Provincetown’s Pilgrim Monument off in the distance. This was a composition Biala would paint again and again, sometimes including a figure and sometimes including a sailboat and sometimes just a lone tree.

## PROVINCETOWN: A LASTING CONNECTION



*On the porch: Biala with her grandnephew Erik Moskowitz and Jack Tworkov at the Tworkov's home at 30 Commercial Street, Provincetown, c.1972. Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

As time passed, Biala continued to reminisce with her brother about the old days of Provincetown and share concerns for its future.

Letter to Jack Tworkov, September 4, 1970:

“What you say about Provincetown is very sad, but it is the fate of all sea resorts. The Riviera here in France, which used to be so beautiful, has now become a horror according to everyone who’s been there –cheap imitation skyscrapers (of 8 or 10 floors) all over the beautiful landscape, the clean water of the Mediterranean polluted by every kind of filth [...] and of course the cars! I think that is the principal cause of the end of our civilization. When I think how idealistic we use to be—wanting the working man to have a better life, artists to have money, social justice. And a good deal of what we wanted has come true. And it has made the world a stinking pesthole. If even half of what we’re threatened with comes true we’ll be well out of it.”





*Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004), Portrait of Biala, c.1965  
Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

Despite the changes that time brings, one of the final letters from Biala to Shelby Shackleford illustrates how beautifully she remembered and revisited her beloved Provincetown:

A letter to Shelby Shackleford in Wellfleet from Biala in Paris, February 26, 1982:

“I’ll bet it’s beautiful outside your windows. I’ve been painting Herring Cove on the ocean side in Provincetown and have just finished at long last one of them—30 inches height by 77 inches wide. Just sky, sea and beach with a few gulls barely visible over the water. It’s a hellish kind of composition to make work—because nothings happening anywhere, but I think I made it.

I thought I was wasting my time in Provincetown on account of not being able to walk, but the sketches I made sitting in the car facing the ocean while Jack, Wally and Alain walked on the beach turned out to be sufficient for several pictures. I would never have thought of doing this picture face on like that if I hadn’t been sitting in the car and only drawing what I could see from the window.

Throughout a career that stretched over eight-decades and spanned two continents, Biala’s paintings retained an intimacy rooted in the Old World. A sensibility that began with memories of her childhood in a Polish village, broadened by the community of immigrant artists that she discovered in downtown New York, focused by the very delicate hand of Edwin Dickinson, and lastly shaped by a calculated assimilation of French painters like Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse and George Braque.

Provincetown and the Cape were an enduring source of inspiration as the sea and the dunes were among her favorite subjects, which included the bridges and architecture of Paris, the canals and facades of Venice, and the bullfights of Spain.

And so she returned at intervals to traditional themes of interiors, still-life, portraiture and landscape but did so with abstract flare, and directness. As critic and historian Michael Brenson noted Biala was “a blend of intimacy and exile.”<sup>55</sup>

—Jason Andrew, Brooklyn, 2018

Jason Andrew is the Manager and Curator for the Estate of Janice Biala. He has lectured, curated, and published extensively on the life of Biala. He is also the founding partner at Artist Estate Studio, LLC, which manages in addition to the Estate of Janice Biala, the Estate of Jack Tworokov, Estate of Daniel ‘Alain’ Brustlein, and The Elizabeth Murray Estate, among others.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Jason Andrew, curator and manager of the Estate of Janice Biala would like to thank Hermine Ford and Helen Tworkov, the nieces of Janice Biala, for their ongoing trust and commitment. Thanks should also be extended to Mira Schor, Julia K. Gleich, Quentin Langley, and Norman Jabaut for their support and keen editing skills. Also thanks to: Artcore Fine Art Services, Moro Conservation Studio, and Paper Conservation Studio, Inc., Jason Mandella, General Art Framing, and lastly a special thanks to Michael Prodonau and Constantine Manos for their keen eye, friendship, and support.

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov from Biala, June 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Tworkov, "On My outlook as a Painter: A Memoir," *Leonardo* 7 (Spring 1974), p.112.

<sup>3</sup> *Leonardo* 7, p. 112.

<sup>4</sup> "Paintings by Modern French Masters Representing the Post Impressionists and Their Predecessors," Brooklyn Museum, March 26-April 1, 1921.

<sup>5</sup> Ashton, Dore. *The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning*. (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1973) p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ashton, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Jack, Thursday, December 22, 1966. Further confirmation of her acquaintance with Matisse, in a letter of July 31, 1949, Biala writes, "I met Matisse the other day and spent 2 ½ hours in his house in the company of a *Life [Magazine]* photographer who was taking pictures of him. But I won't tell you about it now. I also shook Picasso's hand the following day in the same unsavory company." The photographer was Gjon Mili and the portraits were published in an article "The Old Men of Modern Art: Their passing will mean the end of a memorable era," "December 12, 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Jack Tworkov interviewed by Irving Sandler, August 11, 1957, reprinted by permission from The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2000.M.3).

<sup>9</sup> Barotte, René. "Janice Biala est devenue peintre grace à Porthos..." *L'Intransigeant*, Paris, May 30, 1967, p. 5B.

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Shelby Shackelford, Thursday, November 6, 1924.

<sup>12</sup> The first modernist exhibition occurred, therefore, a year later, from July 2 to 25, 1927, with a committee in charge that included Floyd Clymer, Edwin Dickinson, Lucy and William L'Engle, Charles A. Kaeslau, Karl Knaths, Blanche Lazell, Ross Moffett, Tod Lindenmuth, Dorothy Loeb, Ellen Ravenscroft, and Agnes Weinrich. The central issue of the petition was stated as follows: "Considering the fact that there are, in Provincetown, two groups, each having different opinions as to what forms of painting are most likely to manifest genuine artistic merit, we regard it as unfair and out of keeping with American tradition for representatives of either group to be the sole arbiters as to what paintings shall be shown in the galleries of the Association." (Josephine C. Del Deo and Ross Moffett, *Figures in a Landscape: The Life and Times of the American Painter Ross Moffett, 1888-1971* (Virginia Beach: Donning Co., 1994). As a result of this petition, through a process of voting and discussion, a motion was passed at a meeting of the officers held on July 15, 1926, stating: "That, in the future, that in addition to the regular annual show directed by the vice-presidents and their jury, another show of equal duration shall be held by the moderns directed by a committee selected by them from their numbers." (Ross Moffett, *Art in Narrow Streets: The First Thirty-Three Years of the Provincetown Art Association, 1914-1947* (Falmouth: Kendall Printing Co., 1964), p. 46.)

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Jack. Monday, January 27, 1930.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Jack. Friday, January 3, 1930.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to Jack. Wednesday, October 23, c.1929. This letter was dated one day prior to the Wall Street Crash of 1929 known as *Black Thursday*.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Jack. Friday, January 3, 1930.

<sup>17</sup> Eileen Hall Lake was an American poet, born in Antigua. She married Dr. Michael Lake and her first collection of writings *The Fountain and the Bough* (1938) was dedicated to him.

<sup>18</sup> Barotte, René. "Janice Biala est devenue peintre grace à Porthos..." *L'Intransigeant*, Paris, May 30, 1967, p. 5B.

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- <sup>19</sup> Letter to Jack. Monday, April 28, 1930.
- <sup>20</sup> *Fleuve Profound: Nuitee a l’Americaine*, a poem by Ford Madox Ford reprinted in *Buckshee: last poems of Ford Madox Ford*, Cambridge: Pym-Randall Press, 1966, p.5.
- <sup>21</sup> Jean Lurçat (1892–1966) was a French artist noted for his role in the revival of contemporary tapestry.
- <sup>22</sup> “Exposition Eugène Delacroix: peintures, aquarelles, pastels, dessins, gravures, documents,” Musée Nationaux, Palais du Louvres, Paris, France, June 1-July 31, 1930.
- <sup>24</sup> *L’Oubli—, Temps de Sécheresse*, a poem by Ford Madox Ford reprinted in *Buckshee: last poems of Ford Madox Ford*, Cambridge: Pym-Randall Press, 1966, p.15.
- <sup>25</sup> Letter to Jack. Friday, January 15, 1932: “I’m exhibiting in several places but my things seem very dull to me. I’ve been doing my best getting ‘on the make’ in the hope of selling something so as to send it home, but every body is too broke and I feel too blue. It’s a humiliating job anyway.”
- <sup>26</sup> The four works exhibited by Biala were titled: “Le rocher,” “Nature morte,” “Tete verte,” and “Couleur de rose.”
- <sup>27</sup> Harris, Ruth Green. “Les Americains’ in Paris.” *The New York Times*, Sunday, February 28, 1932.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter to Jack, Saturday, April 9, 1932.
- <sup>29</sup> Letter to Jack. Monday, August 17, 1931.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter to Ezra Pound. March 8, 1933, reprinted in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, edited by Richard M. Ludwig, Princeton University Press, 1965, p.218.
- <sup>31</sup> Saunders, Max. “Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume II.” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.371.
- <sup>32</sup> Janice Biala in Sondra J Stang, ed. “The Presence of Ford Madox Ford.” (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 1981), p.197-198.
- <sup>33</sup> Letter to Jack and Wally Tworkov, June 30, 1939.
- <sup>34</sup> William (1884-1957) and Lucy L’Engle (1889-1978) met in Paris. They spent the first of a lifetime of summers in Provincetown in 1916 where Lucy studied with Charles Hawthorne. The couple became friends with William and Marguerite Zorach who were also spending their first summer in Provincetown in 1916.
- <sup>36</sup> Stevens, Mark and Annalyn Swan. “de Kooning: an American Master.” (New York: Alfred A. Knof, 2004) p. 177.
- <sup>37</sup> Stevens, Mark and Annalyn Swan, p. 197.
- <sup>38</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov, December 3, 1947.
- <sup>39</sup> Brenson, Michael. “Three Who Were Warmed By the City of Light: Biala, Joan Mitchell, Shirley Jaffe,” *The New York Times*, Sunday, June 25, 1989.
- <sup>40</sup> Interview with the author, July 28, 2018.
- <sup>41</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov, April 8, 1949.
- <sup>42</sup> “Artist Session at Studio 35,” in *Modern Artists in America*, First Series, eds. Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, Inc., 1951), p.17.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov, August 2, 1965.
- <sup>44</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov, August 10, 1951.
- <sup>45</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov, October 3, 1961.
- <sup>46</sup> Preston, Stuart. “Biala at Stable Gallery,” *The New York Times*, Sunday, May 3, 1953.
- <sup>47</sup> Email to the author, July 29, 2018.
- <sup>48</sup> Letter to Harold Rosenberg, March 14, 1966.
- <sup>49</sup> “Something for all: Provincetown,” *Newsweek*, Vol. LVIII, No. 5 (July 31, 1961), p. 81.
- <sup>50</sup> The Tworkov’s purchased 30 Commercial Street in summer of 1958.
- <sup>51</sup> Letter to Jack Tworkov, August 29, 1958.
- <sup>52</sup> Ashton, Dore. “Cape Cod Activity: Art and Artists Thrive at Provincetown,” *The New York Times*, August 30, 1959.
- <sup>53</sup> Email to the author, July 9, 2018.
- <sup>54</sup> Letter to Wally Tworkov, November 18, 1967.
- <sup>55</sup> Brenson, Michael. “Biala at Kouros Gallery,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1990.

- Catalogue of Works -



*The Violin, 1924*

Oil on canvas

22 x 20 ¼ in. (55.9 x 51.4 cm)

Estate No. 680

Town of Provincetown Art Collection, Provincetown, MA, Gift of Jay and Pat Saffrom

This painting is the earliest known painting by Biala, who at the time she completed this work was signing her name Janice Tworkov. The painting is also her most technical and academic and likely finished under the watchful eye of her mentor, Edwin Dickinson. Dickinson was an accomplished violinist and this painting, likely depicting the exact instrument he owned, should be seen as an homage to her mentor and friend.





*The World*, 1929  
Graphite on paper  
12 x 13 ½ in. (30.5 x 34.3 cm)  
Estate No. 376

In this early work as well as *Provincetown Street*, 1929, the influence of Edwin Dickinson's atmospheric and painterly touch is evident. Signed "Janice Tworkov," the drawing predates the moment she decided to change her name. In a letter to her brother dated January 3, 1930, and at the suggestion of William Zorach, Janice announced, "I've decided to change my name [...] My name is now Biala." By focusing on the daily newspaper and highlighting "The Word," Biala forecasts her hope and desire to travel the world. "If I ever get a hundred dollars I'm going to Europe and stay there," she wrote.



*Provincetown Street*, 1929  
Graphite on paper  
12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm)  
Estate No. 375

*View of the Bay: Provincetown, c.1929*  
Graphite on paper  
12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm)  
Estate No. 646



*Snow Storm Over The Dunes, c.1929*  
Graphite on paper  
12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm)  
Estate No. 647





*Biala wearing her love of Spain, c.1932. Courtesy  
Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

*Jeune Femme*, 1933

Oil on panel

25 ½ x 21 ½ in. (64.8 x 54.6 cm)

Estate No. 571

On May Day 1930, Biala met and fell in love with the English novelist Ford Madox Ford. She was twenty-six and he was fifty-seven. He would share with her all he knew, and she would become his most fierce advocate. This work was painted during one of the couples long and frequent sojourns to the South of France. It was there that Biala discovered a similar light of the Cape. Toulon would be their place there and at the Villa Paul on Cap Brun they had their view, with the sea below them “like ruffled satin and the mistral sings an infinite number of lays in Latin,” as Ford wrote. In this rare self portrait painted at the Villa Paul, Biala captures herself wearing her love of Spain in a new hat.





*Biala and Ford at the Villa Paul, their place in Toulon, France, c.1935. Courtesy Tworikov Family Archives, New York*



*Portrait of a Writer (Ford Madox Ford), 1938*  
Oil on panel  
32 x 25 ½ in. (81.28 x 64.8 cm)  
Estate No. 107

This portrait is the third and last major portrait Biala painted featuring her companion Ford Madox Ford. During their time together his prose and her paint interwove a canvas artistically rich and historically significant for both writer and painter. Ford introduced her to all the artists forging a new Modernism including Brancusi, Matisse, Picasso and Gertrude Stein. “The years I spent with him were a long passionate dialogue,” Biala said. Together they practiced their art and lived by it “in the teeth of every disaster.” Biala remained at his side until his death on June 26, 1939. And there after became his literary advocate.





*Nature morte au cremier Louis XVI*, 1952

Oil on canvas

20 x 39 ¾ in. (50.8 x 101 cm)

Estate No. 566

Biala established early in her career intimacy rooted in the Old World. A sensibility that began with memories of her childhood in a Polish village, broadened by the community of immigrant artists that she discovered in downtown New York, focused by the very delicate hand of Edwin Dickinson, and lastly shaped by a calculated assimilation of French painters like Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse and George Braque. This still-life reflects the all these interests and affinities and perhaps, as an homage to her decade at the side of the English novelist Ford Madox Ford, Biala paints a white porcelain French cremer as he was always fond of elegance and neoclassicism of Louis XVI furniture.



*Beach at Wellfleet*, 1952  
Oil on canvas  
46 ½ x 19 ½ in. (cm)  
Estate No. 226



*Beach at Wellfleet*, 1954  
Oil on canvas  
18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61 cm)  
Estate No. 248

This work was included in the exhibition *Provincetown: A Painter's Place* organized by the American Federation of Arts in 1962. The exhibition traveled to multiple states including Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Utah, and Pennsylvania over a two-year period.



*Yellow Still Life*, c.1955

Oil on canvas

64 x 51 in. (162.6 x 129.5 cm)

Estate No. 035

When the Brooklyn Museum opened an exhibition of French painting in the spring of 1921, Janice discovered for the first time the works of Cézanne and Matisse. The exhibition included fourteen canvases by Cézanne and twelve by Matisse. It was a lasting and profound experience, one after which both Biala and her older brother Jack Tworkov decided to dedicate their lives to becoming artists. Jack said he “never forgot the impact of Cézanne, whose ‘anxieties and difficulties’ came to mean more to him than Matisse’s liberty and sophistication.” Janice on the other hand, though drawn to Cézanne’s structured compositions, would come to assimilate Matisse’s color and sensibility, writing upon the death of the artist that she “always had Matisse in my belly.” In this painting we see Biala’s perfect assimilation of both the School of Paris and the New York School of Abstract Expressionist.





*(Contact Sheet) Biala in her studio, 1956. Photo: Rudy Burckhardt*



*Red Interior with Child*, 1956

Oil on canvas

33 x 26 in. (83.8 x 66 cm)

Estate No. 072



*Biala with her niece, Hermine on the beach in Fire Island, c. 1942  
Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*

Her entire life, Biala was drawn to the sea. When she wasn't able to make the trip to her beloved Cape, she would make daytrip sojourns to the beaches of Fire Island. Even in less ideal conditions, like this stormy day at the beach, she reveled in her time at the shore.





*Fire Island, Stormy Beach, 1956*  
Oil on canvas  
9 x 11 in. (22.9 x 27.9 cm)  
Estate No. 177



*Le Grande Plage (The Grand Beach)*, c.1957  
Collage, torn paper and graphite on handmade paper  
20 x 25 ¾ in. (50.8 x 65.4 cm)  
Estate No. 209



Untitled (Beach Study), c.1957  
Graphite on paper  
9 3/4 x 11-5/8 in (24.7 x 29.5 cm)  
Estate No. 645

Biala enjoyed her all too brief visits to her beloved sea and dunes on the Cape. During these visits she routinely took details notes in drawings like this one and *Provincetown (Public Library)* (c. 1957). These studies were journals of time and place and would eventually be fully realized in paint at a latter date. In this her notes read: "sky blue grey / sea darker blue grey with delicate white beaches / poles dark grey to black/ slats paint rust color to grey dark & deep / sand white to biscuit, grey & dark little spots of all color quite dark / greens sage green, to dark.



Study for "Provincetown (Public Library), c.1957

Graphite on paper

12 x 8-5/8 in. (30.5 x 21.9 cm)

Estate No. 642



Provincetown, 1957  
Collage, torn paper and paint on canvas  
15 x 20 in. (38.1 x 50.8 cm)  
Estate No. 545

Collection Jeff Forster and Sandy Deacon, courtesy Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York



*The Beach*, 1958

Oil on canvas

49 x 32 ¼ in. (124.5 x 90.2 cm)

Estate No. 014

On loan from the collection of Art Enterprises, Ltd., Courtesy of McCormick Gallery, Chicago  
Painted at the height of her most gestural period, this work is created with an abstract flare and directness that won her acclaim among her male dominated colleagues of New York School of Abstract Expressionism. In 1958, the year this work was painted, Jack Tworkov purchased a home at 30 Commercial Street in Provincetown. Receiving the news in Paris, Biala send off a joyous letter capturing her enthusiasm, "Hurrah for la famille Tworkov! [...] Provincetown and that part of the cape [...] arouses all my patriotism. In fact the only patriotism I have." Biala's painting *The Beach* (1958), is not only a masterpiece at the height of her gestural period, but could also be seen as celebrating good news.





*Two Young Girls (Hermine and Helen)*, 1958

Oil on canvas

36 x 28  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (91.4 x 73 cm)

Estate No. 240

In 1953, Biala opened the first of many solo exhibitions at the famed Stable Gallery. *The New York Times* called it “one of the most exhilarating and satisfying events of the whole season [...] For one thing, Miss Biala is such a good painter, laying on paint-color with singular sensibility, in ample but never redundant brush-strokes, and grasping firmly both the imaginative and the description elements of her themes [...] The mood of these pictures is one of distant intimacy.” That year, Biala and Brustlein rented critic Harold Rosenberg’s apartment on East 10<sup>th</sup> Street. There she painted a large canvas titled *Two Young Girls* (1953), which featured the portraits of her two nieces Hermine and Helen, as well as the Rosenberg’s cat that the nieces called “Uncle Pickle.” Biala painted a variation on this composition five years later as seen here in *Two Young Girls* (1958).





*Hillside (Provincetown)*, 1958  
Oil on canvas  
28 ½ x 36 in. (72.4 x 91.4 cm)  
Estate No. 012

In this painting, Biala turns her focus away from the sea and into the hillside of the dunes where gesture and paint amass to represent the intertwining of scrub oak and pitch pine. This work was included in the exhibition *Provincetown: A Painter's Place* organized by the American Federation of Arts in 1962. The exhibition traveled to multiple states including Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Utah, and Pennsylvania over a two-year period.



*View of the Bay: Provincetown, c. 1965*  
Torn paper collage with paint on canvas  
15 x 18 in. (38.1 x 45.7 cm)  
Estate No. 560

Collection of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum  
Gift from the Estate of Jack Tworkov, 2014





*The Pier (Dinghy Bay I)*, c.1967  
Graphite and oil pastel on paper  
14 x 16 ½ in. (35.6 x 41.9 cm)  
Estate No. 622

*The Pier (Dinghy Bay II)*, c.1967  
Graphite and oil pastel on paper  
14 x 16 ½ in. (35.6 x 41.9 cm)  
Estate No. 624



*The Pier (Dinghy Bay III)*, c. 1967  
Graphite and oil pastel on paper  
14 x 16 ½ in. (35.6 x 41.9 cm)  
Estate No. 625





*Provincetown Harbour*, c.1963  
Oil on canvas  
27 ½ x 66 in. (69.9 x 167.6 cm)  
Estate No. 068



*Arbre et la Mer: Provincetown* (Tree and the Sea: Provincetown), 1967

Oil on canvas

13  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (34.9 x 34.9 cm)

Estate No. 169

This work was likely painted from a combination of sketches, a photograph, and Biala's memory of taking the walk along the shore on the bay side in Wellfleet with Provincetown's Pilgrim Monument off in the distance. This was a composition Biala would revisit again and again sometimes including a figure and sometimes including a sailboat. A small study, torn from a notebook, hangs near by.



*Long Point*, c.1967  
Oil on canvas  
10-5/8 x 16-1/8 in. (27 x 41 cm)  
Estate No. 679





*Biala's niece, Hermine Moskowitz with her son Erik, Bay of Provincetown, August 1967  
Courtesy Tworok Family Archives, New York*

When a series of photographs arrived in a letter from Provincetown to Paris featuring a beach day in 1967 with her grandnephew Erik, Biala worked feverishly from the photographs and her collective memory of the bay of Provincetown to capture essentially her grandnephew taking some of his first steps in the slipping tide.



*Bathers (Mother and Child)*, c.1967  
Graphite and oil pastel on paper  
9-3/8 x 8-5/8 in. (28.8 x 21.9 cm)  
Estate No. 659



*Bathers (Mother and Child)*, c.1967

Oil pastel on paper

9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (24.8 x 33.6 cm)

Estate No. 658



*Cuisine Fond Blanc (The White Kitchen)*, 1969

Oil on canvas

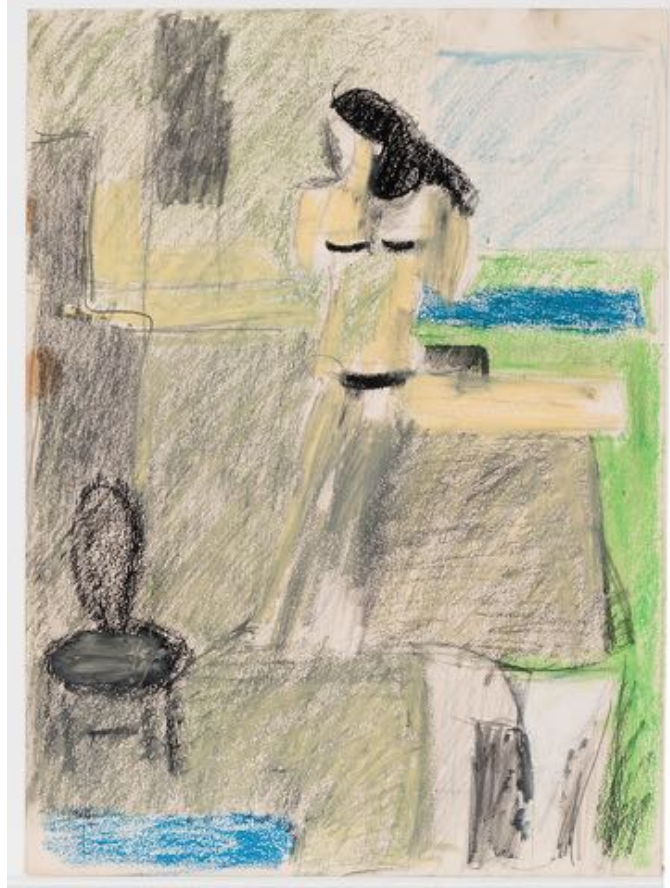
36 ¼ x 28 ¾ in. (92 x 73 cm)

Estate No. 073



*La Maison Blanche de Provincetown dans un Circle*  
(The White House, Provincetown, in a circle), 1973  
Oil on canvas  
28  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 21  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (71.1 x 54 cm)  
Estate No. 073





*Study for "Dana," c.1962*  
Graphite and oil pastel on paper  
13-5/8 x 10-3/8 in. (24.6 x 26.3 cm)  
Estate No. 628

*Dana*, 1962-1974

Oil on canvas

64 x 51 in. (162.6 x 132 cm)

Estate No. 018

As Biala settled into her full life in Paris, the sea and the dunes of Provincetown and the Cape may have been miles away, but they were only a step and a brush away when she was in her studio. Often she worked on compositions from photographs. During a visit, likely around 1962, Biala made several drawings and collages that featured a friend of the family named Dana. Various compositions capture the young friend standing in a doorway, or on a patio, or an interior but always Dana is seen in a swimsuit pulling a brush through her hair. At least three studies played a vital role in the development of the much later fully resolved painting *Dana* (1962-1974).





*Biala in her Paris Studio, c. 1980s. Photographer unknown.  
Courtesy Tworkov Family Archives, New York*





*Fire Island*, c.1980

Oil on canvas

59 x 59 in. (149.9 x 149.9 cm)

Estate No. 693

Private Collection





*Low Tide, Provincetown*, c.1980-81  
Oil on canvas  
28  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 39  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (73 x 100.3 cm)  
Estate No. 685

Private Collection



*Cape Cod Fog*, 1982  
Oil on canvas  
39 ¼ x 39 ¼ in. (99.7 x 99.7 cm)  
Estate No. 584

Private Collection

In one of her last letters to her friend, Shelby Shackelford, Biala gives an account of painting this work:

A letter to Shelby Shackelford in Wellfleet from Biala in Paris, February 26, 1982:

“I’ll bet it’s beautiful outside your windows. I’ve been painting Herring Cove on the ocean side in Provincetown and have just finished at long last one of them—30 inches height by 77 inches wide. Just sky, sea and beach with a few gulls barely visible over the water. It’s a hellish kind of composition to make work—because nothings happening anywhere, but I think I made it.

I thought I was wasting my time in Provincetown on account of not being able to walk, but the sketches I made sitting in the car facing the ocean while Jack, Wally and Alain walked on the beach turned out to be sufficient for several pictures. I would never have thought of doing this picture face on like that if I hadn’t been sitting in the car and only drawing what I could see from the window.”



*Herring Cove*, 1983

Oil on canvas

29 ½ x 77 in. (74.9 x 195.6 cm)

Estate No. 690

Private Collection



*Pilgrim Lake*, 1983-84  
Oil on canvas  
57 ½ x 45 in. (145.4 x 114.3 cm)  
Estate No. 044





*Provincetown Harbour*, 1985  
Oil on linen  
59 x 59 in. (149.9 x 149.9 cm)  
Estate No. 601

Private Collection



*Provincetown, 1990*

Oil on canvas

51 x 64 in. (129.5 x 162.6 cm)

Estate No. 137

Private Collection, New York

Painted sixty-seven years after her first visit, this is believed to be the last large work Biala made featuring her beloved Provincetown.



*Biala in Paris, c. 1995. Photo: Martine Franck*

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