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Celebrating 175: Aline Saarinen, Article for Harper's Magazine, "Uncle Sam as an Art Expert," 1954

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August 26, 1954

Mr. Frank McCarthy
Appraiser's Office
201 Varrick Street
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. McCarthy,

First I want to thank you for your generous cooperation. It was kind of you to take the time and trouble you did in helping me acquire information for the story I am doing for Harper's Magazine.

Second, you will recall that you said you would be kind enough to help me obtain some additional information. These are the things I wanted to know:

The T.D. number and a quotation on the decision in the case of the Picasso ceramics, which allows them to be classified as "works of art."

The Matisse collage protest--that is, the details of it, what is the particular work, who is the importer and what is the valuation. Am I correct that this case is pending before the Bureau of Customs, but that the Treasury Decision stating their findings will not be made for several months?

The approximate number of paintings which you and the other art examiners on your staff look at annually--and, if possible, an approximate percentage figure of those which are dutiable. If a percentage figure is not possible, would you say the majority are dutiable?

If at all possible, the equivalent figures from Mr. La Rosa and those examiners who deal with sculpture would be of great help.

If you wish to write these answers to me, it is best to address me at Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. If it is easier, you can telephone me here, reversing the charges, at MIDWEST-6-1434 (Detroit, Michigan).

It was very pleasant seeing you and I will call you probably once more when I am in New York again in September. But the sooner I can get the above information, the greater help it will be for me as I must deliver this manuscript by September 15.

Very sincerely yours,

Aline Louchheim Saarinen
Associate Art Critic

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