



Martin Luther King

Date

1966

Primary Maker

Ben Shahn

Medium

Wood engraving on Japan paper

Description

The image of civil rights leader Martin Luther King depicted in this print by Ben Shahn was commissioned by the editors of TIME magazine for the cover of their March 19, 1965 issue. Towards the end of a section at the front of the magazine titled "A letter from the Publisher," Bernard M. Auer provided some details about the image and the commission: "... Martin Luther King was first quoted in TIME in 1956 (March 5), when he was leading the boycott ("This is a struggle between justice and injustice") that eventually ended bus segregation in Montgomery, Ala. This is his third appearance on the cover--the first having been in 1957 (Feb. 18) and the second as our Man of the Year on the first issue of 1964. That choice and story brought us 2,500 letters, more than half of them criticizing our judgement, all showing the intense interest and

involvement TIME readers feel in the issue of race relations. When the news from Alabama--and from all around the U.S.--made Martin Luther King the cover subject for this issue, the editors called on an artist who was particularly appropriate for the assignment. Ben Shahn is as famed in his own medium of protest as King is in his. Lately he has been contributing posters, and lithographs to various civil rights groups. Working from photographs and his own impressions, he turned out his striking gouache study in just eight hours of work, after many hours of thought. He saw his subject mainly as an orator. "This is King today," he said. "He isn't as placid as he was a year ago. I admire the man immensely. He has moved more people by his oratory than anyone else I can think of."

Dimensions

Composition: 15 in. x 18 3/4 in. (38.1 x 47.6 cm) Sheet: 25 x 20 in. (63.5 x 50.8 cm)