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ART FRONT

CALL FOR AN AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

RIVERA'S MONOPOLY

BY

MARY RANDOLPH

SOME CHANCE!

BY

STUART DAVIS

TEMPERA PAINTING

BY

STEFAN HIRSCH

DRAWINGS BY JOE JONES ● WILLIAM GROPPER ● MURRAY HANTMAN

THE UNION

THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE WAGE CUT

THE first decisive victory on the W.P.A. Projects was won by the white-collar and professional workers. The wage-cut was rescinded. The so-called maximum pay of \$94.00 a month on works-projects was increased 10 per cent to \$103.40.

The project workers have every right to their elation over this victory. It was gained after a fight in an organized manner against an attempt to lower their already barely sufficient living standard. It was gained by fighting in the traditional manner of organized labor. The August days in New York City were filled with constantly recurring project local picket lines, mass demonstrations and a splendid mass two-hour stoppage. The resentment of the project workers against the pay-cut manifested itself in increasing protests and demonstrative actions, until the administration, fearful of the general effect of the workers' hostility, acceded to the demands of the City Projects' Council, the organization of white-collar and professional relief workers.

It was no mean battle. Since the beginning of the public projects, the administration had already cut wages twice, and this time it mobilized every force to break possible protest. Supervisors and time-keepers attempted to intimidate the workers on their individual projects. Bulletins were issued threatening to fire any workers participating in the protests. General Johnson, in public statements, pleaded and bullied. He professed unofficial sympathy but official incapacity. He called it a strike

against the government. He called the protesting workers "agitators unfit to live". He issued the infamous "Work or Starve" edict. The workers were not frightened. They realized that the proposed wage-cut was part of a continuing process that could only end, if it were not checked, at starvation pay and forced labor. They chose not to work and starve, but to fight to work at decent wages. They relied on their own fighting strength and they won!

The role the artists played in the activities was responsible in no small part for the successful conclusion of the struggle. The alertness of the artists, organized in the Artists' Union, evidenced itself in the many emergency meetings that were held, the strike committees that were set up and the leaflets that were issued. The courageous response of the artists to the need for demonstrative action was proved in the test.

At a time when the metropolitan press was picturing the fight against the wage-cut as demoralized and lost, the news that 83 artists were arrested on the picket line demanding their three-week back pay and rescinding of the wage-cut, crashed into the papers. More than 150 artists had participated on this picket line, in front of the art project administration offices. The protest of the artists popularized anew the fight against the plans of the administration and encouraged the other white-collar and professional groups to act. That evening, at a

meeting of the City Projects' Council, the central white-collar and professional relief workers' organization, 1,500 workers, filled with enthusiasm over the artists' action, voted for a two-hour stoppage. The following Wednesday, more than 1,000 architects, artists, actors, teachers, writers and clerks participated in a mass-stoppage picket line outside the Works Progress Administration offices of General Johnson. Many projects, unable to participate, sent telegrams of support. General Johnson, who came to New York to crack down, made immediate concessions. The next day all workers on the W.P.A. projects were given a \$13.00 bonus. It was no coincidence that this bonus was equivalent to the cut for August pay. Two weeks later, faced with the growing protest, Johnson very quietly announced the 10 per cent increase above maximum rates effective as of September 1.

The main battle to secure professional wages and better conditions is not over. The victory should be an impetus toward further organization. Every project must be organized 100 per cent. Every project workers should realize that the material fruits of struggle belong only to organized effort. General Johnson, in an address, later, before administration employees, insisted that the rescinding of the wage-cut must not be considered due to demonstrations and picket lines. But the project workers know better! The project workers will go on toward further organization and further struggle for decent wages and conditions!

NATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

UNTIL the establishment of present work-relief art projects the private art galleries were the only sources, besides personal patronage, of providing for the artist. The private art gallery, in its peculiar position of monopoly of the works of individual artists, was also supposed to carry the burden of disseminating a wider appreciation of art. The art museums in art-conscious cities of the United States in the period of by-gone prosperity drew their mushroom growth mainly from the reserve supplies of these entrepreneurs of individual art.

At present, due to the dearth of rich buyers with art collectors' instincts, the reduced municipal budgets and philanthropic grants, the galleries are left holding their bag of tricks—ignored and unwanted. Curiously enough, some of them, to meet the changed conditions, call themselves cooperative galleries and demand, as their share, tribute of so many dollars per month for every picture exhibited of the work of their former favored proteges. The more prominent ones still keep up their pretence of interest in pure art of maintaining "free" window displays to catch some possible buyer for the gallery's best-seller or number one painter. They frankly discourage the younger artists by pointing out to them, the futility of exhibition. A few dealers hopefully wait to make capital of some new prize-winner. There, too, chance is against them. Prizes go invariably to some already monopolized artist. Their one-man and group shows are only occasionally attended by a few fellow artists. Their once proud claims of being the missionaries of contemporary art are now completely forgotten. Slowly the great names of art gallery history are disappearing from 57th Street and the art galleries, the last citadels of private ownership in art, have permanently lost their domain of influence and importance in the art world.

While the art world about 57th Street was crumbling, the artists began to see beyond this famous

art street's horizon and realize that only the artist can define the artist's need and the conditions necessary for his maintenance as an artist. About two years ago, banding together, a few of them formed the nucleus of an organization for the betterment of their economic position which is now known as the Artists' Union. This organization began to press the government to fulfil its responsibility to unemployed artists, as part of the government's responsibility toward providing for all unemployed workers. They pressed for art projects—a chance to utilize their abilities and talents. They also asked for weekly wages. In the course of the agitation for employment of artists, they began to understand that sympathy in official circles toward art, as well as everything else, was always on the side of organized groups because of their resultant pressure.

The artists did not hesitate very long about using this new form of approach to solving their economic problems. They sent telegrams to Washington demanding projects, they demonstrated, they picketed. As direct as the action was, so, in proportion, were the fruits of that action. Projects were instituted and increased. In parts of the United States where artists gathered together and formed organizations based on this primary basis, there art projects sponsored by the government began to exist to take care of some of the unemployed artists as a result of their petitions, delegations and direct demands. That this is beginning to be understood even by the artists in sparsely settled regions is evident by the increasing numbers of requests from all parts of the country from individuals and artists' groups to the National Correspondence Committee of the New York Artists' Union, asking them for information about the Union and advice as to how to organize out of their fund of organizational experience.

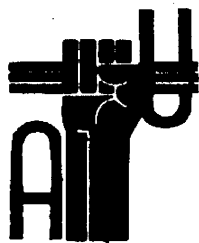
At the present writing, there are organizations on the same basis as the Artists' Union of New York—the Boston Artists' Union, The Baltimore Artists' Union, The Federated Art Workers of Philadelphia,

The Minnesota Artists' Union and the Ulster County Artists' League of Woodstock. Many other art groups about the country have begun their organizational process and inquiries have come from Dayton, New Orleans, Milwaukee, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Gloucester, Santa Fe, Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. By the numbers of letters received, we feel assured that the coming fall season will witness a rapid growth of artists' unions throughout the country.

Numerous questions are asked about the Union. Some deal with organizational technicalities; some with the artistic and esthetic standards of the new organization; some with particularly local problems. In the belief that the collective problems of both the established and newly organized groups will be of great educational value and interest to all readers of ART FRONT, ART FRONT, as the official publication of the New York Artists' Union, will open its pages to correspondence and articles from our fraternal artists' organizations. To meet the general call for information about the Artists' Union, the ART FRONT will publish in forthcoming issues questions and answers regarding the organizational and artistic problems, confronting all artists' organizations fighting for the economic security of artists.

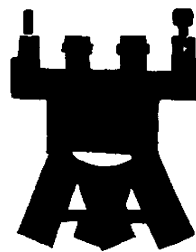
The advantage to the arts and culture of this country, by the encouragement of the "public use" of art and the employment of artists in this function, demands that all artists and artists' organizations take an active part in the formation and development of art projects. With the combined strength, pressure, and influence of many well-organized artists' unions throughout the country, the artists will be able to secure a National Permanent Art Project for all artists.

Write to the National Correspondence Committee of the New York Artists' Union, 60 West 15th Street, New York, N. Y., concerning the artists' particular problem in your city—on how to organize, secure projects, and help win better wages and conditions on your local project.



ART FRONT

NOVEMBER
1935



An American Artists' Congress

WHEN we hear of the fantastic goings on in fascist countries in respect to culture, we shudder and perhaps deliver ourselves of pious wishes that nothing of the sort might happen here. We want no Hitlerian burning of the books; we want no burlesque Caesar marshalling fascist legions to make Rome the mistress of the world at the price of the extermination of mankind. And so it is with enthusiasm and pride that we greet the Call for an Artists' Congress.

Artists, like all other people whom the pressure of recent events has made politically literate, recognize fascism and war as the two greatest enemies of culture. American artists are not so naive as to believe that these pestilences will leave the United States untouched. A clever demagogue, backed up by powerful financial interests, can whip up a violent chauvinism by demanding that America become a martial nation. He can preach hatred of the Negro, Jew and alien, build up a large following by opening up soup kitchens, dispensing uniforms and preying on the demoralization of various social classes. He can promise anything to anybody. Behind this veil of confusion and misdirected hate he can accomplish his major task—the destruction of the militant organizations of the working class and the mobilization of the people for a war of imperialist aggression.

The fascist program fears the clear light of culture. It lives on lies. It battens on ignorance and prejudice. One can imagine the fate of art produced under such conditions. Imagine the art produced under the arbitrary dictates of Cultural Leaders Jonas Lie and William Randolph Hearst!

The Artists' Union is primarily an organization for economic aims. We are interested in bettering the living standards of our artists. Nevertheless, we recognize that economic action is only one phase of the battle of today. The prospect of a barbarous fascism necessitates a firm stand of all progressive elements against this political throwback to the Dark Ages. The Artists' Union unreservedly supports the Call for an Artists' Congress and hopes that it will mobilize the best and most intelligent artists in the country behind its program.

Holding The Mirror Up To Hearst

THE bystanders who watched the artists and writers picketing the *Daily Mirror* offices Thursday afternoon, September 12, might have imagined that they were very touchy people. Say only a word and 150 of them besiege your building. You can't threaten, abuse, bully or slander them. They walk in front of your place, shouting the truth about themselves and about you. They hate you, orderly and gaily, but vigorously. And the delegation that finds you have sneaked the back way out of your appointment with them doesn't like you, either. Strange sensitivity! The police, for example, do not understand such moods. The police, when puzzled, see monsters. Their testimony converts artists on line into one big dragon. These sad-faced comedians did not arrest merely 47 artists and writers for picketing. They were trying to jail a mental attitude which they mistook for disorderly conduct.

But the artists were angry for a good reason. On September 1st, the Sunday edition of the *Daily Mirror*, a Hearst publication, carried the first of a series of syndicated articles on Greenwich Village "life", by one Fred McCormick. The articles began as a mixture of the Hearst idea of glamor and the Hearst idea of moral criticism. The kettle was being scalded black by the chamber pot. However, Greenwich Village was only bait. What irked the *Mirror* was that artists and writers on work-relief projects were not only on the payroll, but that they were asking for decent wages or demanding to be paid at all. Pay is what shocked Mr. McCormick. Culture was all right, if it could live on crumbs concealed in Mr. Hearst's napkin; but artists asking for money were better dead than alive. "Hobohemians" "chislers" "boon-dogglers biting the hand that feeds them"—were some of the original expressions of the composite indignation of the Hearst happy family. The Artists' and Writers' Unions were designated as the scorpion holes out of which the ungrateful issued to devour the public of the United States. "The Village" had subsided into a refrain.

One need hardly say that the articles are as false as they are vulgar. But it is useful to know what the word "public" means when it appears in a Hearst paper. It means William Randolph Hearst. This "public" has a record that he is welcome to. If the common people try ever so little to remove their heavy burdens of poverty, unemployment and misery, Hearst is there to defend the taxpayer, that is himself, from a dollar's loss. Enemy of decent wages, enemy of relief to the needy, enemy of culture, this press gangster has earned the contempt of every honest and courageous worker and intellectual. ART FRONT issues a call to you to spread the permanent boycott of all newspapers, magazines and news-reels owned by this fat fascist.

Artists Increase Their Understanding of Public Buildings

THE arrest of the 83 W.P.A. artists and art-teachers who were picketing before the College Art Association on Thursday, August 15, must be visualized as a detail within a composition of meetings, demonstrations, delegations and protests, which has been extending over a period of more than three weeks and which is by no means completed today. The picket line was preceded by a general meeting of the Artists' Union, Wednesday evening, and on Tuesday by a joint meeting of Projects 259 and 262, attended by almost all of the workers on the art projects. These meetings were devoted to the single issue of what action was to be taken in the face of the wage-cuts dictated by the W.P.A. administration. Still earlier, on Saturday, August 10, some 200 members of the Artists' Union massed with other white-collar workers in a protest demonstration against wage-cuts, for vacations with pay, for sick leave with pay, jobs for all unemployed. The picket line and the arrest of the artists, served as a spur to other white-collar organizations and contributed to the success of the general stoppage the following Wednesday. It became, temporarily, a sadly needed rallying point about which resistance to the wage-cutting decrees of the administration could concentrate itself.

Today the events of Six-Patrol-Wagons-Thursday have, with the artists involved, already reformulated themselves conversationally in terms of their most farcical elements. Artists recall gleefully the labors of the police in connection with the names they gave: Cezanne, Daumier, Chagall, Soutine, El Greco. They remember the mess of sandwich-wrappings and cigarette butts they left for the police to clean, after the refreshments provided by the Artists' Union Defense Committee had been consumed. They are fond of dramatizing the amiable scene between Mrs. MacMahon and the police lieutenant, when she protested against the arrest of "her boys." There remain also caricatures and the memory of the wall of the 54th Street jail decorated with rear-views of jackasses, labelled with the names of prominent personages. While the incident was still fresh, a certain type of exhilaration went with these reminiscences, the buoyant relief one feels after something that was necessary and yet unpleasant is over and a similar quality of personal accomplishment.

Before we attempt to determine why the arrest should have assumed this slap-stick decor in the imaginations of the artists, it must be asserted that in no artist's mind is the seriousness of the incident in any way brought into question by his laughter. That there was a circus-element in the arrest is one thing—a matter of style; the purposefulness of the demonstrating artists is something else—an understanding of their situation. The behavior of the artist-pickets was throughout as determined as it was, appropriately, gay. When the police huddled the pickets into the hallway of the College Art Association building, the number availing themselves of the opportunity to desert through the back doors was amazingly small. And for every artist who disappeared, a volunteer prisoner joined the chorus, which, facing the police, had raised the angry chant: "We demand the right to picket! Stop police inter-

(Continued on page 6)



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SOME CHANCE!

FORBES WATSON is the publicity director and editor of the Bulletin of the Section of Painting and Sculpture, of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department of the U. S. Government. We assume that he is responsible to that Section for his public statements regarding artists and their relation to the government art projects. This being so, his article in the August, 1935, issue of the *American Magazine of Art*, "The Chance in a Thousand," has significance in that it reflects the "official" attitude toward the artists in general.

On the basis of Watson's expositions this "official attitude" must be regarded as unrealistic and, because of that, irresponsible. The article clearly indicates that the functionaries of the Section of Painting and Sculpture are ideologically unequipped to deal with the problem before them. Their idealistic orientation betrays them into alinements which they, to give them the benefit of the doubt, certainly would not consciously accept. There are many statements in Watson's article which are identical in content with the expressions of those two Hearst reporters, Fred McCormick and Thomas Craven. (It is perhaps superfluous to add that it is the constant purpose of Hearst's employees to discredit the present administration and its relief and "social security" program.) For example, in a previous article in the *New York Times*, July 28, 1935, Watson says that the administration must not be to uncritical in extending relief to "that heterogeneous mob, the members of which all insist that they are artists." In the same article he says, "What we need in this country . . . is fewer and better artists," . . . and that out of 3,000 works examined by him on the W.P.A., only 500 could be said to have been done by artists, without using quotation marks on the word artist. In the article in the *American Magazine of Art*, referred to above, he speaks of "the romantic appeal which the professions of art have for countless young ladies and gentlemen who are not fore-ordained to be artists." In another place in the same article he refers to "the mildly intelligent dreamers and predestined amateurs who constitute the immense army of art's hangers-on." Compare these estimates with the statement of Thomas Craven in the *New York American*, June 11, 1935, that "New York is pestilent with artists . . . who can neither make art nor leave it." The too numerous to quote statements of Fred McCormick in Hearst's *Sunday Mirror* of September 1, 8 and 15 support Watson's estimates in much more direct and vulgar terminology. "Hobohemian Chiselers and Squawkers who bite the hand (of Uncle Sam) that feeds them," is a fair sample of the *Mirror's* estimate of the artists on government projects. The above quotations are basically all of a piece. Translated in terms of living conditions, they mean reclassification and sub-subsistence wage levels for artists.

Such an estimate is to be expected from the anti-labor and fascist Hearst and his employees, but it seems a trifle out of key coming from a spokesman of the Section of Painting and Sculpture, especially when the same spokesman has said in the *New York Times* of July 28, 1935, "The present administration has proved its faith in art." Watson's confusion is indicated in the same article when he refers to the government's "first good deed toward the artist" and "that first federal good deed toward our art." According to this concept the art projects are benevolences to be extended and withdrawn at will by a kindly father, the government. The grateful artist may some day be able to make a pilgrimage to kiss the hand of the father who has granted him the right to work at a smashed trade-union wage scale.

Mr. Watson speaks with some pride of the success of the P.W.A.P. which came into being on December 11, 1933, and ceased to exist on June 30, 1934, with nearly \$100,000 of its allotment unexpended. It is pointed out that 3,749 artists were employed at craftsmen's wages. Without going into a discussion of what kind of craftsmen's wages were paid, the statement in itself is misleading. \$1,184,748.32 was paid as wages to 3,749 artists who produced a total of 15,663 works of art over a period of approximately six and one-half months. A little arithmetic shows that the average sum received by these 3,749 artists for six and one-half months' work was about \$316.00, or about \$48.00 per month. This is surely not a sum that could be honestly referred to as "craftsmen's wages." If you pay one man \$38.00 a week for six and one-half months and

another man \$38.00 for one week, this does not mean that two men received "craftsmen's wages" for six and one-half months. Mr. Watson was not speaking of the success of the artists in receiving craftsmen's wages. He referred, rather, to the good quality of the work received. This successful quality he attributes to "the fact that many more artists were in need than the number which the Treasury set out to employ." But even this selective employment undertaking could produce only 500 works out of the 15,663 total, which could be said to be the work of artists, according to Watson. It seems to be clear that Mr. Watson holds a rather low opinion of the artists in general, and, since we must assume that he speaks for the Section of Painting and Sculpture, the artists who are awake will surely think twice before they accept on its face value the statement that the Section is giving to artists "the best chance that they have ever had."

How is this "best chance" to be established? First by reclassification; by setting up regional committees of non-artists who will eliminate from the competitions those "countless young ladies and gentlemen who are not foreordained to be artists." These regional committees composed of museum directors, art collectors, business men, etc., will read your fortune, fellow artists, and tell you what you are foreordained to be, at least as far as the Section of Painting and Sculpture is concerned. If they find that you are not foreordained to be an artist, you can at least feel that you are helping your more successful fellows along the path toward getting the best chance he ever had. A second step in the establishment of this "best chance" is the impartial selection of the victor in any given competition. Watson says, "All competitors submit unsigned numbered sketches, and the envelopes containing their names are not opened until the victor has been chosen."

Further on he says, "What gives the work of the Section its health is the fact that it is holding fair competitions in which the works submitted are considered solely on their merits and no name is known until after the winner is decided." This sounds good, but Superintendent Rowan naively lets the cat out of the bag when he says, among other enlightening remarks, in Bulletin No. 4, put out by the Section, "Looking over the work . . . on internal evidence (the envelopes attached to the sketches were still unopened), I could see that the leading painters of Chicago had submitted their wares." Are we to assume that the other functionaries of the Section are less adroit than Superintendent Rowan in detecting the superficial characteristics of an artist's style?

After being filtered through Chairmen, Regional Committees, Section functionaries, etc., the "unknown artist" has one more hurdle to take in this "best chance" he has ever had. This hurdle takes the form of an Advisory Jury of Painters and Sculptors. In a way this is a break for the artist because his course so far, as I understand it, has been directed by persons who write about art, talk about art, buy and sell art—but do not make art. Therefore, there is no reason to quarrel with the fact that a jury of artists is sitting in judgment in this case. However, it must be pointed out that this jury is not representative of the breadth of esthetic practice in America. Without mentioning the names—they are published in Bulletin No. 2—it is possible to say without fear of contradiction that this jury represents exclusively the academic approach to esthetic opinion or, in one or two cases, opinion closely allied to the academic. Would this best competitive chance that the artist has ever had not be made a better chance if a "modern" artist, an "abstract" artist and a proletarian artist were included on this committee of judgment?

(Continued on page 7)



GIDDAP NAPOLSON!

By William Grepper

Artists — Patronize Art Front Advertisers



William Gropper

By William Gropper

GIDDAP NAPOLEON!

Artists — Patronize Art Front Advertisers

RIVERA'S MONOPOLY

RIVERA didn't start the Mexican Renaissance. Rivera didn't start the Mexican Revolution. He isn't a friend of revolutionary painting and he doesn't paint for the workers. He is a self-made revolutionary. He is the Morgan of the Mexican Art market.

The younger Mexican artists predict that Rivera will paint the 658-mile federal highway (which will open the country to American auto tourists this April), from Laredo to the Capitol. "Fyusa" is the street pavers' union of Mexico. "The Fyusa of Painting" is the way the artists now refer to Rivera, for he leaves the younger painters hardly a wall to work on. Others call him "The Wizard," because he can satisfy all tourists. They come to his studio, ask for a portrait, a landscape, a passive Indian or a cactus, and he paints it for them as quickly and as easily as a chameleon changes color. Such a master of his medium, he fills all orders.

If, as John Strachey says, the oldest and greatest monopolist of the world was the Holy Church herself, Diego Rivera is the strongest and greatest monopolist of the Mexican art world. He must be assailed if the new art movement is to grow and produce. Let no one suppose that "monopolist in art" is a far-fetched fancy. There are two possible ways in which Mexican painters can make a living: paint for the government or paint for the tourists. Rivera paints for both. What is more, his prolixity and versatility make it possible for him to satisfy almost completely the demands of both. And, owing to excellent self-publicity, he has directed these demands to himself. In a word, he has cornered the art market of Mexico.

The history of Rivera's rise to power has an opportunistic stink. Undoubtedly a gifted man, he gained recognition as a painter while in his twenties. His first government commission to paint the amphitheatre of the National Preparatory School was completed in 1922. He portrayed a rather awkward history of philosophy on the walls; Pythagorean philosophy and Humanism are represented in classical drapery. The Materialism of Marx and Engels was to be included, but other work cut it out.

His great ability as an artist obtained for him a government-given trip to Europe. From there he returned with much technical information and a broad art knowledge, which proved valuable to the development of the Mexican art movement. He taught and guided the young painters, whom he found upon his return already participating in the class struggle and sincerely attempting to relate their art to the social battle. Rivera was not responsible for the revolutionary Mexican Art, as is everywhere believed, but he did do genuinely good work toward developing it in the early stages.

What is generally conceded his best painting was done also at this time. In 1927 he finished the frescoes of the National Agricultural School at Chapingo. These murals reveal the sincere strength and technical mastery of a great artist. The subject is the stages of social transformation, agitation, armed struggle, and reorganization, contrasted with the earth's transformation—germination, maturing and fruition. Even in these Chapingo murals, Rivera has been too consciously conscious of the cosmos and too reminiscent of Lawrence's pelvic mysteries to have done a completely revolutionary work; nevertheless, the murals are simple, forceful and majestic.

For the leadership and confidence he gave to the young revolutionary painters and for his unsurpassed murals he was respected and dignified by artists and revolutionaries alike. Unfortunately, at this point his history ceased to be admirable. From this time on, he used his popularity for personal aggrandizement and remuneration rather than for the common cause he pretends to herald. In the final analysis, Rivera has used Communism rather than furthered it. To understand Rivera's rise to monopolistic power, the social attitude of Mexico and the recent political trends must be considered. The Mexicans have no anemic horror of the word "force". No right, privilege or government position has been obtained in all of Mexican history, except through the use of or the threat of armed force. Law and election have no meaning unless backed by the largest, strongest army existing in the country at any one time. Especially, since 1910, the casting off of the iron hand of the supreme Diaz, the people have been in constant rebellion. Undirected, chaotic, destructive hatred and fury erupted after those awful, peaceful thirty-five years of government-encouraged feudal suppression and imperialistic ex-

ploitation. In the heat of their desperate struggle the people of the land and of the city forged a genuine revolutionary program. This was the 1917 Constitution in which the rights of the peasants and of the proletariat were unequivocally written into law. But, as everyone recognizes, this document has remained a piece of socialistic fiction, for the simple reason that there is no army of the people strong enough to make it a fact. Nevertheless, the revolutionary and socialistic spirit which created it still motivates the political attitude of the masses.

Thus, when an artist volunteered to voice the crying needs of peasants and workers, to clarify and dignify their aims, to advocate the accomplishment of social justice by revolution—the only means of change understandable to the Mexicans—he quickly gained the admiration and confidence of the whole people.

The Mexican government, recognizing Rivera's popularity practically gave him carte blanche in painting up the city. This extensive federal patronage of a nationally and internationally famous Communist is an astute move on the part of a fascistic demagogue. Rivera is used as a mask to delude and confuse a socialistically and revolutionarily minded Mexican people.

Thus in the National Theatre of Mexico City is hung a copy by Rivera of the havoc-spreading Rockefeller Center mural; thus one's historical memory is challenged by recent Rivera frescoes from the staircases and patio walls of almost every important public building; thus a monotonous Riveraesque quality dominates the Mexican capital, and thus a certain stogy, unreal depiction of the class struggle pervades markets and palaces alike with fiendish allegory and photographic personifications.

In his recent murals, and most obvious in his last work (the stairway of the National Palace—finished February, 1935), the moral degeneracy which made his social and political compromise possible has affected his painting. His colors have become weaker; when he uses the high-key pallet, the brightness seems false. The dignity of his theme gets lost in a maze of historical facts and his former majestic force dissipates itself in an encyclopedic style of organization.

As a revolutionary art, his work is becoming quackery. If he were absolutely sincere in painting for the lower classes, he would use symbols within the realm of their Mexican experience. When he depicts exploiters, they have the "no-tooth look" of

Rockefeller. Why doesn't he characterize them with Calles' well-known squint-eyed scowl? Why doesn't he depict the rich men behind the Mexican throne? The people would then know whom to fight against, what policies to beware of. Why doesn't he make it clear to them that a "socialist" government, such as they now have, can mean nothing but fascistic business, until it wrenches land and machinery away from foreign investors and turns them over to peasants and workers? Why does he portray American-looking people drinking champagne and eating gold, when the payment the peon receives for cultivating his corn is usually *pulque*? How can the Indian who is still enslaved by his hacienda feudal lord learn to fight his social problem by seeing caricatures of post-war New York corruption? More and more Rivera is slipping away from the revolutionary situation at hand. His message becomes less and less convincing to his audience. No one would criticize him for abstracting, generalizing, or universalizing the class struggle, but he is condemned for his wilful ineffectiveness.

The answers to these questions and the explanation of Rivera's recent impotency lie in the policies of the demagogical government to whom he sold out.

Mary Randolph.

(Concluded in December issue)

NEW classes, several new instructors, and new quarters are announced by the John Reed School of Art.

A class in etching, under Sol Wilson, a course in silk screen process of poster reproduction, by Maurice Sieven, and a Wednesday evening sketch class, have been added to the established full-time course of study. In addition to the more usual art subjects, the course in Chemistry of Artists' Media, which was given last year for the first time, will be repeated, as will also the series of lectures on current art and social topics. These will be given on Sunday evenings this year, and are open to the public. Many well-known speakers have agreed to participate in the series.

The new instructors are Boris Gorelick, political cartoon; Eugene Morley, wood cut; Philip Reisman, painting; Concetta Scarvaglionne, sculpture; Chuzo Tamatzu, painting.

The school occupies three entire floors of a clean, modern building. A library and an exhibition gallery, long looked forward to, are now a fact.



Drawing for the Commonwealth College Murals, Mans, Arkansas.

By Joe Jones



Drawing for the Commonwealth College Murals, Mena, Arkansas.

By Joe Jones

CALL FOR AN AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

THIS is a Call to all artists, of recognized standing in their profession, who are aware of the critical conditions existing in world culture in general, and in the field of the Arts in particular. This Call is to those artists, who, conscious of the need of action, realize the necessity of collective discussion and planning, with the objective of the preservation and development of our cultural heritage. It is for those artists who realize that the cultural crisis is but a reflection of a world economic crisis and not an isolated phenomenon.

The artists are among those most affected by the world economic crisis. Their income has dwindled dangerously close to zero.

Dealers, museums and private patrons have long ceased to supply the meager support they once gave.

Government, State and Municipally sponsored Art Projects are giving only temporary employment and to a small fraction of the artists.

The wage scale on these projects has been consistently below the standard set by the House Painters' Union. Present Government policy on the Works Program will drive it below subsistence level.

All these attempts have failed conspicuously

to provide that economic base on which creative work can be accomplished.

In addition to his economic plight, the artist must face a constant attack against his freedom of expression.

Rockefeller Center, the Museum of Modern Art, the Old Court House in St. Louis, the Coit Memorial Tower in San Francisco, the Abraham Lincoln High School, Rikers Island Penitentiary—in these and other important public and semi-public institutions suppression, censorship or actual destruction of art works has occurred.

Oaths of allegiance for teachers, investigations of colleges for radicalism, sedition bills aimed at the suppression of civil liberties, discrimination against the foreign-born, against Negroes, the reactionary Liberty League and similar organizations, Hearst journalism, etc., are daily reminders of fascist growth in the United States.

A picture of what fascism has done to living standards, to civil liberties, to workers' organizations, to science and art, the threat against the peace and security of the world, as shown in Italy and Germany, should arouse every sincere artist to action.

We artists must act. Individually we are powerless. Through collective action we can defend our

interests. We must ally ourselves with all groups engaged in the common struggle against war and fascism.

There is need for an artists' organization on a nation-wide scale, which will deal with our cultural problems. The creation of such a permanent organization, which will be affiliated with kindred organizations throughout the world, is our task.

The Artists' Congress, to be held in New York City in early December, will have as its objective the formation of such an organization. Discussion at the Congress will include the following:

Fascism and War; Racial Discrimination; Preservation of Civil Liberties; Imprisonment, of Revolutionary Artists and Writers; Federal, State and Municipal Art Projects; Municipal Art Gallery and Center; Federal Art Bill; Rental of Pictures; the Art Schools during the Crisis; Museum Policy in the Depression; Subject Matter in Art; Aesthetic Directions; Relations of Media and Material to Art Content; Art Criticism.

We the undersigned artists, representing all sections of the United States, ask you to show your solidarity with us by signing this Call and by participating in the Congress.

Ivan le Loraine Albright
George Ault
Peggy Pacon
Herman Baron
A. S. Baylison
Maurice Becker
Ahron Ben-Shmuel
Theresa Bernstein
Joseph Biel
Henry Billings
Jolan Gross Bittilheim
Lucile Blanch
Arnold Blanch
Lou Block
Peter Blume
Aaron Bohrod
Cameron Booth
Margaret Bourke-White

Ernest Brace
Edith Bronson
Alexander Brook
Sonia Gordon Brown
Jacob Burck
Paul Burlin
Paul Cadmus
Nicolai Cikovsky
John Cunningham
Lew E. Davis
Stuart Davis
Adolf Dehn
Julio de Diego
Thomas Donelly
Aaron Douglas
Ed Dreis
Mabel Dwight
Dorothy Eisner

Charles Ellis
Ernest Fiene
Todros Geller
Hugo Gellert
Lydia Gibson
C. Adolph Glassgold
H. Glinkenkamp
Aaron Goodelman
Harry Gottlieb
Wayland Gregory
Wm. Gropper
John Groth
Minna Harkavy
Bertram Hartman
Emil Holzauer
Eitaro Ishigaki
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Arnold Wiltz
Caleb Winholtz
Jan Wittenber
Ann Wolfe
Art Young
Santos Zingale
Nick Zirolli

The Artists Increase Their Understanding of Public Buildings

(Continued from page 3)

ference!" In their own manner the artists indicated their readiness to pursue their action to the end.

It was not then, as outsiders may gather from the jokes and the horseplay with which the story is told a matter of accepting the picket line and the arrest as a picnic, as one of those cute Bohemian escapades which the fatigued middle-class welcome on occasion to help make their lives interesting. Beneath the levity of the artists there was visible a pronounced undercurrent of determination; just as the undercurrent of violence was at all times visible beneath the apparent friendliness and the absurdities of the police.

What made the arrest a circus was not the light-heartedness of the artists, reinforced by their solidarity and general professional temperament, but the grotesqueness of the complainants, the police, the magistrate, the jail-management, the whole farcical academy of the official "order". Taken in turn, there were, first of all, the three "respectable citizens", who, as the picket line continued to stretch like a rubber band toward Park Avenue, were noticed from time to time conversing with the police; and from whose number, one finally selected himself as chief liar to lodge the complaint against the artists. From the start, the comic interest of the artists was aroused by these people; they had about them something traditional; they came from a long line of well-known clowns—the stout, breezily dressed aristocrat with the cane, resembling the typical image of the Old Lecherous Uncle; the woman with the militant nose and no chin, a perfect magazine caricature of

the upper-class shrew; and, finally, the complainant himself, a slim, bitter-looking snob who needed only a red coat and a pack of dogs to rate a spot on the wall of any first-class bar—three gilt-framed 57th Street commodities, too familiar to seem real, and capable of creating laughter by the mere incongruity of their pretense at being alive.

At the police-station the farcical emphasis became more pronounced. Suddenly finding on their hands a crowd of eager, good-natured, government-employed artists, the police were placed in an awkward situation to which the customary solution of beating people up and booting them into cells scarcely seemed to apply. Instead, they found themselves filling pages of record-books with painfully pronounced false names and addresses, driving through the streets patrol-wagons bursting with songs and slogans, and engaging in discussions on subjects ranging from the efficiency of the jail system to the masculinity of General Johnson. The artists could not have met with a more perfect combination of confusion and routine if they had decided to pay an unexpected visit to the Municipal Art Commission.

The similarity between the police and the Art Commission is perhaps more than metaphorical; a definite cultural relation exists between the Academy and the Police Station, a relation which every artist can sense. Compare, for example, the behavior of Magistrate Earl Smith, who held the artists in five-dollar bail a piece, with that of Jonas Lie condemning a mural sketch—both backed up by the same high walls, seals, and who knows what political manipulations, both pouting sourly down upon the artists' contentions, and refusing to listen to their spokesmen. With the most minor surrealist adjustment, one could be replaced with the other at a moment's notice.

In the hands of these same pretentious and inept robots lies the power to cut wages, pronounce bail, or recommend the rejection or whitewashing of a mural.

"Congestion and confusion marked the intake machinery of the Works Progress Administration here yesterday. . . . As a result thousands had waited in lines extending for many blocks around the two receiving stations, many of them all night, without food or drink, fearing that if they left their places they would forfeit their chances of obtaining jobs."
The New York Times, August 28, 1935.

This is the reverse side of the senseless formalism and chaos which convert most events in our public life into a 4-Marx-Brothers knockout. This time, the artists, being in a sense merely visitors in the jail, were able to retain their professional detachment sufficiently to enjoy as spectators the ludicrous antics of their enemies. The degree of reality of their imprisonment was just about right to permit each one to take home his "experience" like a souvenir package. All this would have been crushed, however, by a few ounces of pressure.

As a matter of fact, by the time 2 a. m. arrived, and the artists had been committed to the regular jail to await their release on bail, a general sobering began to take effect among the prisoners. This was, of course, due largely to hunger and fatigue. The group began to show a tendency to fall apart into individuals.

Perhaps they thought of how the arrested picket from Local 306, Motion-Picture Operators' Union, with whom they had been discussing union problems, was taken out of the bull-pen crowded with pickets and thrown back later all battered up and sick. The consciousness of each artist was becoming informed inescapably that it is not with murals alone that the interiors of some public buildings are decorated.

Harold Rosenberg.

TEMPERA PAINTING

THE basis of tempera painting is the emulsion. An emulsion is a liquid mixture in which one or more fatty, resinous or gummy substances are more or less permanently suspended in minute globules under the presence of an emulsifying agent. The mechanics of this are not, as yet, fully understood. There are hundreds of formulas for such painting emulsions, but most of them are of doubtful value and only relatively few have stood the test of time.

In this article I shall deal with the yolk of egg tempera, one of the oldest techniques in the history of art. The yolk of egg is in itself—as is milk—a natural emulsion. It consists approximately of 85% water, 1/2% egg oil (a drying oil), 12% albumen (white of egg), and some small quantities of other substances among which Lecithin seems to be the emulsifying agent. The yellow color comes from a pigment which fades within a few weeks after drying.

The requirements for a good tempera emulsion are: When painted out on paper it must dry without leaving greasy stains around the edges; it must be miscible with any amount of water without forming lumps; when mixed with pigment and used as paint it must dry fairly fast and without gloss and must set waterproof, turpentine-proof and alcohol-proof within a few weeks; it must dry without a very appreciable difference in key between the wet and the dry color. As a dried film of paint it must remain flexible enough not to crack from the slight but inevitable movements to which paper or canvas are exposed. Here again the rolling of canvases has to be urgently discouraged as rather too much of a test. It must permit of fairly heavy impasto (thick application of paint) without cracking. One thing, however, cannot be expected of any painting medium, glue, tempera or oil and that is an illimited durability of the medium in the wet state. This lazy-man's-desire is responsible for a great many hair-brained painting formulas, for innumerable worthless commercial tempera and oil paints and for the premature decay and ultimate destruction of a vast number of relatively modern masterpieces.

There are two principal ways of making a yolk of egg tempera. The first is the one described by Cennino Cennini and used throughout the earlier part of the Italian Renaissance. One volume of yolk (of fresh chicken egg) is mixed and shaken in a bottle with one volume of cold water. This will make a rather liquid paint which dries fast and with a luminosity only exceeded by true fresco. The second method is a modification of the former in as much as it corrects the low oil content of the natural yolk. Two volumes of yolk are mixed and shaken in a bottle first with one volume of raw linseed oil or sun-thickened raw linseed oil and then the whole mixed and shaken with three volumes of water. Some artists use standoil but the research on modern standoil has not yet been concluded and the myth that the "secret" of the Van Eyck technique is based on the use of standoil is not supported by scientific fact. Other artists add various varnishes to this emulsion but the optical advantage of this is nil and all possible varnishes remain permanently soluble in either turpentine or alcohol and therefore the particles of pigment that are bound to the painting surface by the globules of varnish are not as securely set as those bound by albumen or oil and can consequently be moved in an eventual varnishing or cleaning process. The second emulsion is more flexible than the first, dries a trifle more slowly and thus makes brushing and blending somewhat easier, but, on account of the high percentage of oil which even in small globules will yellow slightly in time, it does not result in as luminous and refined a painting. The addition of much more oil than advised above must be strenuously avoided, because paintings done in this way will appear dry but will smear for a long time and darken considerably later on. Both emulsions will not remain fresh for any length of time due to the rotting of the egg. Rotten egg loses much of its binding power and a rotten emulsion has to be thrown away. A bottle in which an emulsion has decayed will not serve again. New emulsions will putrefy more rapidly in it. The use of antiseptics is not recommended. They are apt to harm certain pigments and do not retard the rotting much. Oil of Clove is mentioned by one

without actually stopping it. It is so simple to make a fresh emulsion that it does not seem worth while to risk anything by the use of chemicals.

To make the paint, one volume (e.g., one level teaspoonful) of powdered pigment is mixed with one volume of the emulsion in a small jar or dish and stirred vigorously with a stiff bristle brush. This paint is adequate for the average run of work. For more refined painting and for greater luminosity and transparency the paint has to be ground. A quantity of pigment is put in the center of a slab of plate glass, water is added and the whole mixed to a buttery consistency with the palette knife. A muller (source: Eimer and Amend, 18th Street at 3rd Avenue, New York City) which is a glass tool somewhat the shape of a bowling pin with a flat ground-glass surface at the bottom, is used for grinding, or else a brick-sized piece of smooth marble with the edges of the grinding surface rounded off. Grind the paste for a while with circular motion; if it gets dry, add water. The grinding is complete when a bit of the paste put on a thumb-nail and touched with a finger tip feels perfectly smooth and free of grit. The larger and heavier the muller the more pigment can be ground at one time and the less force has to be exerted. The ground wet pigment may be kept for weeks in tightly closed jars and a little water may be added occasionally to keep it in condition. Some pigments, however, may mold after a while. This ground pigment is mixed with the emulsion at the ratio of approximately one volume pigment to one volume emulsion. It is difficult to state this proportion exactly because the presence of water in the ground pigment will dilute the emulsion to a small degree; but a sample of mixed paint brushed on some paper will show, after drying, whether the pigment chalks off when rubbed, in which case a little emulsion has to be added.

Tempera may be painted on both types of gesso described in my last article in ART FRONT and also on strong rag paper. The first application of paint should be done in thin washes under exclusion of white. Thin the paint with a mixture of one part emulsion and eight parts water. The first coat looks spotty and imperfect but should serve a constructive purpose by determining the arrangement of local colors or of dark and light or cold and warm masses. Each succeeding coat should be less watery and more opaque and white can be introduced in the second coat but impasto is generally done later. The

procedure though is largely a matter of capable of many variations. Oil, watercolor, and airbrushes can be used, even the palette may serve. The habit of some painters of painting with pure water a painted soft stroke into this, is risky. Innocent as it looks and may cause paint is preferable.

I cannot, here, go into the qu Most of the pigments used for safe for tempera and black whi slow dryer in oil is particularly nique. Cassel Earth or Vandy Chrome colors (not to be confused of Chromium) are inferior. The avoided by all means are all th Veronese Green or Emerald Gr their extremely poisonous nature. breathe during the grinding is su harm. A good white, better than, is Titanium Oxide, which is highly

Egg tempera painting sets water six weeks when exposed to ordinary day nish is quite unnecessary and robs it quality. It will lower the key of the and make all colors more transparent, particu the thinly painted ones and produce more or less effect of a thin oil painting. If a tempera is varnished it has to be painted quite solidly and plenty of medium to prevent the varnish from etrating too deeply into the paint. Too much e sion though will crack the paint and make surface look lardy. A varnished tempera, howev an excellent foundation for an oil painting an best insurance against excessive darkening o picture because only the last touches have to be in oil.

The advantage of tempera painting lies in the rectness of the process and the possibility of r execution, in its great permanence and in the with which everything from the panel to the l coat of paint can be made by the artist himse with exception of the brushes and the pigments. T difficulty, as compared to oil painting, is in d smooth blending of tones.

Bibliography: Max Doerner, *Painter's Material*; A. P. Laurie, *Materials of the Painters Craft*; P. Laurie, *The Painter's Methods and Materials*.

Stefan Hirsch

SOME CHANCE!

(Continued from page 103)

Watson is resourceful in finding various angles from which to show his scorn of the artists as a class. In his article, "The Chance in a Thousand", he berates the artist for being a poor sap, with no head for business. He praises the honesty and efficiency of the advertising campaigns of the man of business. He points to the far-seeing character of many advertising campaigns and says that their seeming extravagance is disproved by the results in dollars and cents that they bring in. If the poor dope of an artist only had sense enough to follow this example, Watson concludes, he wouldn't be in the economic jam he finds himself in. The artist tastes the dregs of senseless competition because of the "irritation which these romantic souls, who will never know the joys of first-rate craftsmanship, naturally feel toward the mere thought of associating so romantic a quality as efficiency with the creations of their incorruptible egos." One feels prompted to ask why the efficiency of business did not forestall the depression, or maybe Mr. Watson didn't know there was a depression in business. He further castigates the artist class by pointing to the professions and saying, "Youths who decide to be doctors, lawyers, teachers . . . are likely to make an investigation to find out if the profession is overcrowded." It logically follows, therefore, according to Watson, that there is no depression among doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, chemists, etc. I heard differently. When all trains are overcrowded, Mr. Watson, we get on board anyhow, because we have no private cars.

The functionaries of the Section of Painting and Sculpture are very idealistic in mood. The economic aspect of the project finds little place in their statements. It should be noted in passing that none of the selected competitors in these competitions are paid for their work. Only the victor takes the prize. Edward Bruce, consulting expert to the Section, in his statement in Bulletin No. 3, idealistically con-

preventing revolution. "Conditions like those existing today breed the kind of spirit that revolutions are made of," says Mr. Bruce. His statement is too long to quote, but the central idea is that the growth of our national wealth is over, our physical frontiers are gone, that with the decrease of working hours, idleness will breed boredom and discontent; but that, if the Section brings art to the people, a sufficient distraction from the irritation of material deficiencies will be effected to offset possible protests of an annoying character—something like hypnotizing a cobra with a simple tune on a flute. Superintendent Rowan leaves all worldly cares behind when he says of the work of the Section that, "One superb masterpiece in this whole program would justify it." Not to be outdone by his fellows in flights of fantasy, Mr. Watson, very materialistic in his admiration for the advertising methods of big business, takes time off to remark, "The market for works of art has its foundation in the intense demands of the imagination and the vision of the passionate few."

The bulletins are full of these inspired musings. I have quoted only a few. I advise all artists to read their bulletins carefully, and, if after doing so they do not feel impelled to join the Artists' Union then maybe what Mr. Watson says about them is true.

I want to quote one more passage from Mr. Watson's article in the August issue of *Art*. Speaking of the advertising methods of the artist, he comments on the character of the foreword, usually found in the catalogue of a one-man show, "Its purpose is to puff the artist, not to estimate him." The aim is "to boost his sales." " . . . rather than frank, bought-and-paid-for inter would a more if it were given Could it be possible tion, Mr. Watson h for his own numer tion

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