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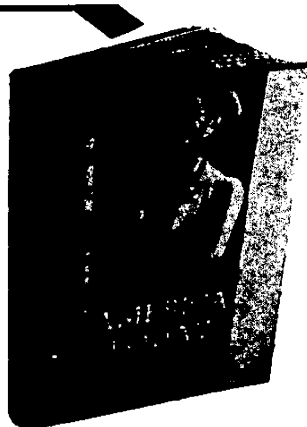
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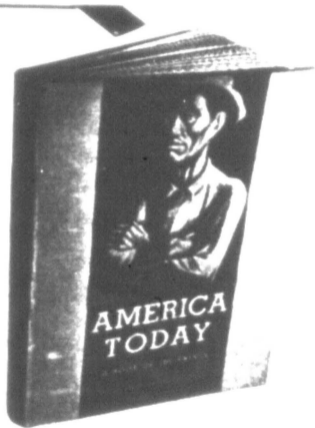
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*Illustration by [unreadable]*

*[unreadable]*

# ART FRONT

## FOR A PERMANENT PROJECT

**F**OR the past two months, those immediately following the re-election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President of the United States, the country has witnessed one of the greatest struggles to maintain the Government's work relief program which it has ever seen. We consider it a grave necessity at the present moment to review this event and to draw the necessary implications. This matter is of the utmost importance, not only for the workers on the various projects, cultural and otherwise, but likewise for all those who are interested in the cultural future of our country.

President Roosevelt was re-elected by the most overwhelming majority of votes ever given to a candidate for such office. His re-election constituted an unequivocal rejection by the American people of the program of the social and political reactionaries mobbed up in support of the Republican, Landon. It was the direct endorsement by popular vote of the Government's program of work relief, among other policies, and in effect an order to continue with these policies. Yet no sooner had the last ballot been counted than it became apparent that the Administration had decided to carry through mass lay-offs of the workers employed by the Works Progress Administration and was determined to carry through this policy under the slogan of the reactionaries, "re-employment has made continuation of the W.P.A. unnecessary." No open announcements were made, but news of reduction of personal quotas seeped through the denials of the Administration and in the first week of December, 1936 the first batches of pink dismissal slips appeared. It is now clear from the handling of the entire matter that there was no unanimity as to the course to be pursued within the Administration itself and the policy of cuts was motivated by the desire to capitulate to the demands of the reactionaries, who were howling in a com-

paratively quiet post election way, for the balancing of the budget. The December cuts, made as they were on the basis of arbitrarily reducing the number of workers allowed on each Project, were obviously a feeler to test the sentiment and reaction of the public. As such they were the first of a series of moves which could only have ended in the complete liquidation of W.P.A. That is they could only have ended in this way if they had been successful.

The December cuts were not successful. They were not successful primarily by reason of the response of the workers on the Projects to them. The workers wrote their answer to this betrayal of the Roosevelt administration in the clear language of *mass action*. Not only this. They have under their leadership a public movement in support of the work relief program which has political implications which cannot be safely ignored even by a newly elected national administration.

It is to the honor of the artists that they were the first to take action in defense of their right to work. It is to the shame of the administration that the answer was bloodshed. On Tuesday, December 1, the request of a mass delegation of the Art-

ists Union of New York that no lay offs take place was met with one of the most brutal police attacks in the history of the country. At the instigation of Administration officials 219 people were beaten, ejected forcibly from the administration headquarters, arrested, put on trial and convicted on charges of disorderly conduct (asking for the continuation of their jobs). Revulsion at these tactics swept the labor movement and, as additional groups of workers went into action, using the new weapon of the sit-in demonstration, the non-participation of the police was forced and the officials of the Arts Projects in New York City, through the person of one, Elmer Englehorn, resorted to a campaign of terror and firing as a means of stopping action on the part of the workers. This first series of sit-in demonstrations, started in New York by the artists and *carried through by a variety of groups throughout the country*, had the effect of dramatizing and bringing to the attention of a wide public, the real facts and were the opening salvo in the campaign which is now in full swing.

These initial actions were followed by mass picket lines, stoppages, delegations which in the first instance checked the announced lay-offs and mobilized public sentiment in a preliminary sense. They had the further effect of immediately strengthening the organizations involved, such as the Artists Union which gained forty new members the day following the arrest of 219 and enrolled nearly one hundred in addition within one week. The campaign of administration terror and intimidation obviously wasn't working as intended. Meanwhile the organized labor movement, for the first time, swung its full strength and resources behind the demands of the Project workers. It quite properly understood the attempt to cut the Projects as a weapon of the reactionary employers. "Cut W.P.A., throw these workers into the labor market, thus glutting this market and driving down wage standards and working conditions



"Business will absorb W.P.A."





*"Business will absorb W.P.A."*

in private industry," this was the talk going on behind the scenes.

With consolidation and unity among the Project organizations effected and the support of the organized labor movement granted, the next steps in the fight were outlined.

Wide public support was absolutely essential for the effort to force through Congress a deficiency appropriation sufficient to maintain and even expand W.P.A. to meet the real needs of the people for work. It was decided to stage, on January 9, 1937, gigantic parades in every city in America. These parades, organized under the broadest leadership of the Workers Alliance of America and the various City Project Councils (organizations of white-collar and professional project workers) were planned and carried through as graphic illustrations of the essential worth of the Projects. We can, at this time, only speak on the basis of our immediate experience, the parade in New York City. In the weeks immediately preceding this event, it was extremely difficult to find a single artist, or for that matter other Project worker, in his usual leisure time spots. They were in the work-shops preparing the floats and the placards for the parade. On Saturday, January 9, the citizens of New York for the first time were made aware of the need to continue W.P.A. creative labor of the workers on the Project. For many hours the procession moved through the streets of New York. Tens of thousands of workers marched in regular contingents of 100, carrying placards symbolizing their crafts and stating "Expand W.P.A.." Between the groups of marchers moved the floats which dramatically presented to the crowded streets and the workers in the factories and offices the achievements accomplished by those who marched. This request for public support, couched in cogent terms of productive and creative labor has not been and will not be refused. It is because it is providing the opportunity for useful and necessary work, for the elimination of slums and disease, for the propagation of education and culture for the masses of Americans, that the work relief program can and must be continued and expanded. And to the artists at the present moment must go the credit of not only having valiantly enlisted their numbers in the struggle to establish a basis for a real American culture but for having used their talent as well.

On Friday, January 8, the budget message of President Roosevelt was read to the Congress of the United States. It asked the woefully inadequate sum of 650 million dollars for the continuation of W.P.A. from February until July 1. Here

is the test of our efforts. The reactionaries said it was too much, but they said it in a whisper, while those Congressmen and Senators who had been suitably impressed by their constituents, spoke out in defiance and hurled the epithet "stingy." The struggle is on with the forces of progress on the offensive due to the splendid and unprecedented leadership of the unemployed and the project workers in establishing a real popular movement in support of the Projects. We have fought hard and well BUT WE HAVE NOT WON—NOT YET.

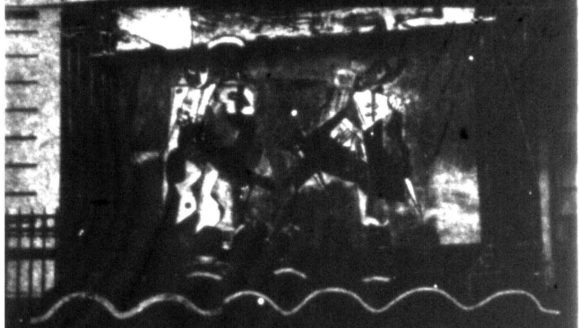
Reactionary big business has not ceased its activity since the election. Rather it has intensified it and changed its tactics in order to now accomplish by quiet and insidious means what it could not effect before. Fundamentally big business needs at the present moment a glutted labor market. Such a condition is useful, as previously pointed out, in order to further drive down wage levels and raise the costs of living as far as possible. Such a cheap labor market is also the best assurance for the employers that the efforts of the Committee for Industrial Organization to organize the workers in the basic industries will not be successful. The absolute prerequisite for the establishment of a cheap labor market is a prevailing condition of unemployment unmitigated by either relief or work relief for those unemployed. It is only on the basis of this policy of mass starvation that big business can maintain its present phenomenal profits. In their campaign against the idea of work relief the reactionaries have tried to fight any and all ideas that the Projects performed useful work and have on the contrary tried to perpetrate the patent falsehood that re-employment has made work relief by the Federal Government unnecessary. They are however, not hiring from the relief or W.P.A. rolls but are rather hiring young workers who can stand, for a time, the terrific pace asked of them and who have no choice but to accept the low wages paid. It is in relation to this program of reaction that we must understand the tremendous significance of the actions taken by the Project workers and their supporters during the last few weeks. It is this campaign which is the assurance that the relief and work relief problem shall not be glossed over and dismissed as a problem of the past.

The continuation and expansion of the work relief program depends upon the intensification and carrying forward of this program for *public support*.

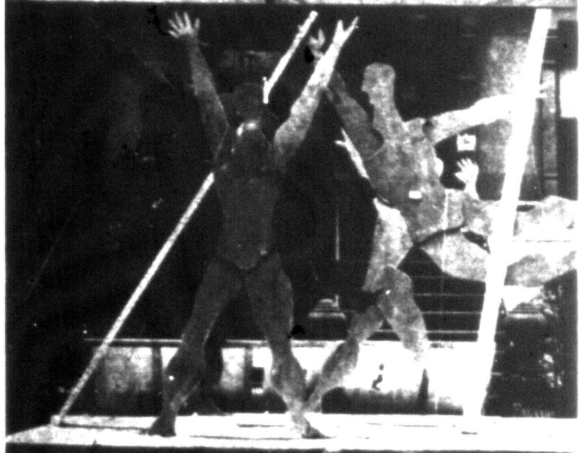
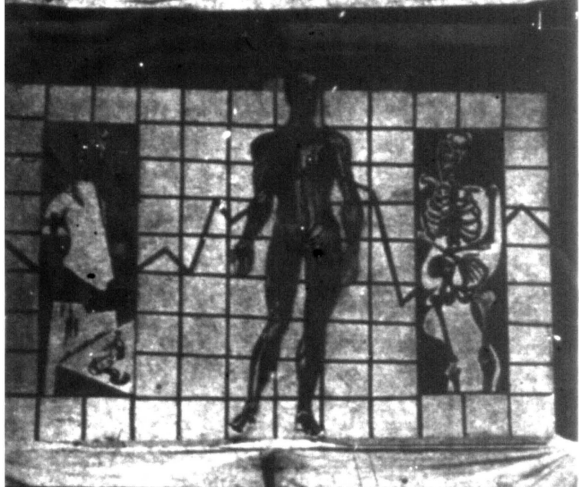
In this light the present battle to win a decent appropriation to finance the W.P.A. from February until June is merely a preliminary skirmish. At the



**CRIME BEGINS!**



*The* **CURTAIN** *and* **FALL** *of* **FEDERAL** *the* **THEATRE**



**DISEASE** **HOSPITAL**  
**OVERCROWDED N.Y. HOSPITALS DEMANDS MORE SERVICE //**  
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moment of writing preparations are completed for a national demonstration in Washington January 15 including many of the floats and placards used in the New York parade which had much more than a local significance. We have every right to expect not only maintenance of the W.P.A. until July but must fight to gain an expansion so that those still on the relief rolls will be provided for on, at least, a "security level." We must use the present struggle for the mobilization and strengthening of our forces and support to win a permanent project.

At the present moment the administration of President Roosevelt is begging the entire question of permanency by asking for only a six months deficiency appropriation. Before Congress adjourns next summer the necessary appropriations for the fiscal year 1937-38 will have to be made and these appropriations will have to include money for the operation of the work relief program. Let us remember that there has been a certain amount of talk from administration sources about the *permanency of some phases of the emergency work relief program*. Judging by our past experiences we may expect that, *if we allow it*, many phases of the program will not be provided for in the request for new money and only those parts will be included in the regular function of the Government that are insistently demanded.

The next six months is a very crucial period for the cultural projects. It has been made very clear that without Government support there is no economic basis upon which a broad and truly democratic culture for America can be built. Continuation of the Arts Projects is absolutely necessary if even the present cultural level of the country is to be maintained and Government support must be extended as well as made permanent. It is up to everyone who is conscious of this necessity, whether artist or not, project worker or not, to do his part in the historical job of writing, in the unforgettable language of Public Support, the future of culture for the American people.

#### ARE MODELS HUMAN?

**S**EVERAL months ago the Models' Union went on strike at the Art Students' League. After seven weeks of day and night picketing, during which the League Board of Control refused to meet accredited delegations, the Models' Union decided to gain a hearing by forcing the issue. On January 8 the Models' Union members, with locked arms, blocked the entrances of the Art Students' League and appealed to the students to support

Photo on right by Naylor;  
all other photos of floats by  
Yavno, staff photographer.

them in their strike by refusing to use scab models. Instead of seeing the delegation, the Board of Control called the police and thirty-six models, almost all of them girls, were forcibly arrested. Under pressure from the Artists' Coordination Committee, the Artists Union and the American Artists Congress, the League was forced to withdraw charges.

What were the demands of the Model's Union which elicited such drastic action from the League?

1. A dollar an hour for all types of posing.
2. A 100 per cent Union school with at least 50 per cent of the bookings to come through the Models' Union Placement Bureau.
3. A specific booking time to be established jointly by the school and the Union.
4. Contracts shall not be subject to change except with the consent of the Models' Union.
5. A 15 minute rest period in addition to the usual 5 minutes each half-hour, for every posing period of 3 hours or more.
6. There shall be no bookings for less than 30 consecutive hours.

When we remember that models get work only occasionally, and that schools are privileged to call off appointments at any time, we become aware of the pitifully inadequate pay models receive. So inadequate is it that models find it necessary to know some other type of work if they are to maintain a subsistence level.

Large schools can afford to pay a meagre living wage to their models. They can no longer expect underpaid models to finance the schools by sacrificing their livelihood.

Models have served artists faithfully, giving inspiration and asking little in return. It is high time for artists to acknowledge the immemorial aid provided by their models by supporting them in their strike.

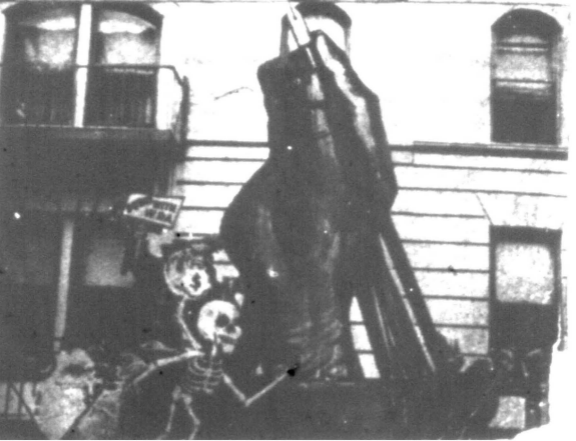
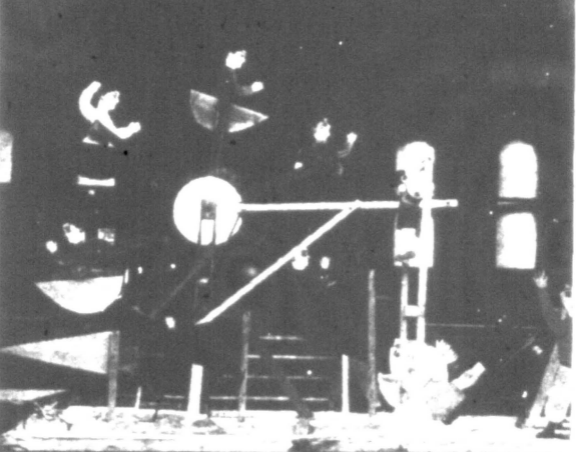
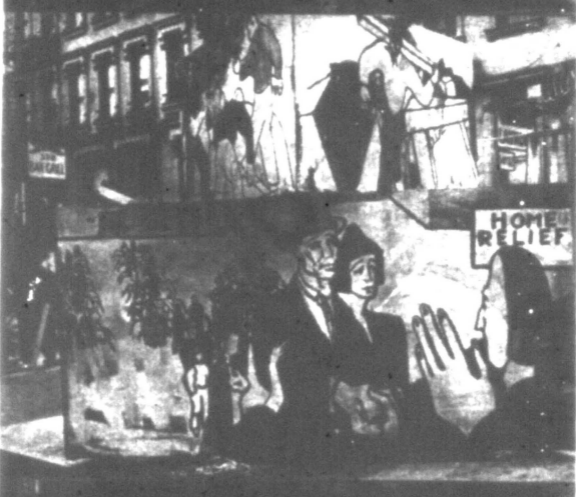
#### CIVIL RIGHTS POSTER CONTEST

**W**E have received the following important announcement from the Civil Liberties Union. All artists are urged to submit work for this contest:

We invite you to participate in THE BILL OF RIGHTS POSTER CONTEST explained below, sponsored by a group of distinguished men and women interested in the preservation of civil liberty.

The year 1937 is the 150th Anniversary of the drafting of the Constitution and its





submission to the people of the thirteen original states. Whatever political differences exist about the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, as finally written into it, assumes daily greater importance. The preservation of civil rights in a world threatened by growing dictatorships is inseparable from the survival of democracy itself.

To illustrate dramatically the significance of the Bill of Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union is sponsoring a prize contest for the best poster symbolizing it. The Statement of Principles of Civil Liberty attached states the specific applications of the Bill of Rights and should be helpful to an understanding of the issues to be portrayed. Additional copies of this Statement may be secured from the Poster Contest headquarters.

The size of the poster should be 20x30, in color or black and white. Three prizes, \$50 for the best design, and \$25 each for the two judged next best will be awarded by the Committee of Judges (John Sloan, Peggy Bacon, Arthur Frank, Rollin Kirby and Walter Pach). A public exhibit of entries approved by the judges for exhibition will be held in February. Honorable mention will be made of other than the prize designs. All designs not receiving prizes will be returned. The winning posters will be reproduced and used widely throughout the country in schools, exhibits, meetings, forums, etc.

All designs must be submitted on or before FEBRUARY 15, 1937 to Mrs. Parkhurst Whitney, 23 East 16th Street, New York City, who will be glad to answer any inquiries about the contest.

MRS. SETH MILLIKEN, *Chairman*  
JOHN SLOAN, *Vice-Chairman*

## SPAIN: WORTH REPEATING

(Reprinted from the *New York Times*)

MADRID, Jan. 10.—It is now possible to assure art lovers throughout the world that literally all the masterpieces in Madrid and many other treasures in surrounding villages have been collected and saved by government authorities. It has been a work involving patience, skill and frequently extreme dangers, but at last it is done, and whatever happens before the civil war ends, posterity will not be deprived of the precious heritage of an art that has made Madrid a mecca of students and artists for many years.

No one who has talked to the men who are sacrificing themselves in this work can doubt the love of art, pride in Spanish possession and determination to preserve these treasures for the people of Spain, which have animated them. Neither can any one doubt that but for their work not much would be remaining today of these

great treasures, for there is hardly a cultural center of Madrid that has not been shelled or bombed by General Francisco Franco's artillery and airplanes.

The attempt to bombard the Prado Museum, which houses one of the greatest collections of art in the world, was typical of what happened. On the night of Nov. 16 bombers came over and dropped flares to delineate the building clearly, then unloaded three or four explosive and many incendiary bombs upon it. Fortunately the explosive bombs landed just outside the museum and the incendiaries caused no fires which could not immediately be extinguished.

The next night the bombers had better luck with the palace belonging to the Duke of Alba, which was one of the show places of Spain, and is now a shambles. Disdaining danger Communist militiamen in charge of the palace managed to save the greater part of its priceless treasures. Paintings from it are now on exhibition at Valencia. Other things were moved to places of safety in Madrid, but the valuable library is still buried and excavations are now going on to dig it out.

All this vast complicated work is being done under the auspices of a government body called the Junta of Requisition and Protection of Artistic Patrimony, set up by decree on Aug. 1. In carrying on their task they have had the support of the Fifth Regiment—the popular Communist army—which has done most of the actual labor and whose militiamen braved the dangers that frequently arose. Most of the members of the junta went to Valencia but they left behind a small group known as the "Delegated Junta," whose president is a painter well known in the United States for the works he has exhibited at the Carnegie art shows in Pittsburgh. He does not want his name printed for fear it would place too much credit upon him.

At first the junta concentrated on museums, churches and public libraries. The Prado art works were rushed first into the basement, then into the vaults of the Bank of Spain, and now they have been removed to a place of safety in another part of the country. Ten days ago the writer saw one of Velasquez's greatest pictures, "The Surrender of Breda," packed in an elaborate wooden, water-proofed case that cost 7,000 pesetas to construct, being loaded on a truck for transportation to the coast.

All the paintings, sculptures, books and documents in San Lorenzo Monastery, Escorial, were first rushed to Madrid and now they are deposited far from the capital.

Five great El Grecos from the Church of Illescas, south of Madrid, also were

saved. Another of El Greco's greatest pictures, however, has been lost to proletarian Spain. It is "The Entombment of Count Orgaz," in the Church of Santo Tome, Toledo, which is now in General Franco's hands.

As partial compensation the junta has discovered a hitherto unknown El Greco, which students can now add to the list of his paintings. This is "St. Francis and St. Bartholomew," which was found in the Church of the Encarnacion, Madrid. It is worth mentioning as typical of what this requisitioning means that Encarnacion has been under fire for two months off and on and is now virtually destroyed.

The junta, incidentally, also got El Greco's only female nude, "The Assumption of Magdalen," which is now being restored by Prado experts. It came from Titulacia Church in Madrid Province.

All the Velasquez paintings in Madrid were saved without difficulty or adventure, but the Goyas had a more interesting time. Those in museums were easily protected, but having finished with museums the junta went after churches and private collections (from private owners they collected no less than thirty Goyas). One of the best, "Portrait of the Countess of Chinchon," was in a private collection in a house on Calle Barquilla. It was requisitioned in August. Two weeks ago a high explosive shell hit that very house, destroying the room in which the picture hung.

There is one great work of Goya which is already damaged and which only a miracle will preserve for posterity. It is his famous frescoes on the vaults of the Church of St. Anthony of Florida which is on the outskirts of Madrid and constantly under fire. At considerable risk the militiamen saved the movable art works in the church, including a seventeenth century ivory crucifixion. But there is nothing to be done with the frescoes. Shells have often penetrated the church, but fortunately their trajectory is such that the vault has not yet been hit. However, the militiamen living there—it is a strategically important spot—have fires constantly going and the smoke has already damaged the paintings.

Among the unexpected things that happened was the finding of the codex of Goñzalo Berceo, a fourteenth century Spanish poet, which had been stolen from the National Library a few years ago. Art collectors will be keenly interested to learn that it was in the famous collection of the dilettante Larazo Galdeano in his palace on the Calle Serrano.

Of course everything valuable is not movable, and in those cases the junta pastes up a sign asking that the place be respected—which it always is.



# The New Realism Goes On

By FERNAND LÉGER

**E**ACH art era has its own realism; it invents it, more or less, in relation to preceding epochs. Sometimes this is a reaction, at other times a continuation of the same line.

The realism of the Primitives is not that of the Renaissance, and that of Delacroix is diametrically opposed to that of Ingres.

To undertake to explain the why and the wherefore is out of the question. The thing is obvious; the reasons for it would likely muddle rather than clarify matters. What is certain is, that there is no one era possessed of a beauty that is typical, a higher kind of beauty, which might serve as criterion, basis, point of comparison. When the creative artist is filled with doubt, there is nothing to justify his seeking to attach himself to some standard of judgment set up in the past. He must run his own risks. His loneliness is great.

Such is the drama lived through by all men upon whom has been laid the destiny of inventing, creating, constructing.

The mistake of the schools lies in having sought to set up a hierarchy of quality (the Italian Renaissance, for example); this is indefensible.

Realisms vary by reason of the fact that the artist finds himself always living in a different era, in a new environment, and amid a general trend of thought, dominating and influencing his mind.

For a half-century now, we have been living in an extremely rapid age, one rich in scientific, philosophical and social evolutions. This speed has, I think, rendered possible the precipitation and the realization of the new realism, which is quite different from the plastic conceptions that have gone before.

It was the Impressionists who "broke the line." Cezanne in particular. The moderns have followed by accentuating this liberation. We have freed color and geometric form. They have conquered the world. This new realism wholly rules the last fifty years, in the easel picture as well as in the decorative art of street and interior.

As for those pictures which made possible this evolution, the common reproach is that they have been snatched up by the dealers and the big collectors and that the people have no access to them. Whose fault is it? That of the present

social order. If our works have not made their way among the people, the fault, I repeat, is that of the social order; it is not due to any lack of human quality on the part of the works in question. Under such a pretext as the latter, they would have us burn our bridges, coolly pass sentence of death upon that painting which brought us our freedom—a freedom so hard won, and turn our steps backward, God knows where. The names of Rembrandt and Rubens are evoked.

Under pretext that we are to attempt to win at once the wholly admirable masses, whose instinct is so sure, and who are merely waiting to grasp the new verity—under such a pretext, they would have us start those same masses backward from century to century, traveling at first by rail and, later on, by horse and buggy and by cart, until they end up "going in for the antique" on foot. This is an insult to these men of a new world, who ask nothing better than to understand and to go forward. It is officially to pronounce them incapable of rising to the level of that new realism which is their age—the age in which they live, in which they work, and which they have fashioned with their own hands. They are told that *le moderne* is not for us; it is for the rich, a specialized art, a bourgeois art, an art that is false from the bottom up.

It is possible for us to create and to realize a new collective social art; we are merely waiting for social evolution to permit it.

Our tastes, our traditions incline to the primitive and popular artists of before the Renaissance. It is from this same Renaissance that individualism in painting dates; and I do not believe there is any use in looking in this direction, if we desire to bring into being a fresh mural art, one that shall be at once popular, collective and contemporary. Our age is sufficiently rich in plastic materials to furnish us with the elements. But unfortunately, until new social conditions shall have been brought about, the people will fail to benefit from those elements.

I SHOULD like to say a word as to leisure—the creation and organization of leisure for workers. That, I take it, is the cardinal point of this discussion. *Everything depends on it.*

At no period in the history of the world have workers had access to plastic

beauty, for the reason that they have never had the necessary time and freedom of mind. Free the masses of the people, give them the possibility of thinking, of seeing, of self-cultivation—that is all we ask; they will then be in a position to enjoy to the utmost those plastic novelties which modern art has to offer. The people themselves every day create manufactured objects that are pure in tonal quality, finished in form, exact in their proportions; they have already visualized the real and the potential plastic elements. Hanging on the wall in the popular balsmusettes, you will find *aeroplane propellers*. They strike everyone as being objects of beauty, and they are very close to certain modern sculptures.

It would require no great effort for the masses to be brought to feel and to understand the new realism, which has its origins in modern life itself, the continuing phenomena of life, under the influence of manufactured and geometrical objects, transposed to a realm where the imagination and the real meet and interlace, a realm from which all literary and descriptive sentimentality has been banished, all dramatization such as comes from other poetic or bookish tendencies.

Modern architecture, which came into the world with modern painting, offers them the possibilities of an existence that is infinitely superior and rational, compared to that afforded by previous forms. Lurcat's communal school at Villejuif is, as I see it, a hopeful precedent. And it is an altogether different life for workers that is made possible by Le Corbusier's two great gifts to us: the white wall and light. Let us learn to make use of all this, to cherish it, and let us see to it that, *here too*, we take no backward steps by putting up the hangings, the wall-papers and the gewgaws of the year 1900.

The working class has a right to all this. It has a right, on its walls, to mural paintings signed by the best modern artists. Give it time and leisure, and it will make itself at home with such paintings, will learn to live with and to love them.

What kind of representational art, may I ask, would you impose upon the masses, to compete with the daily allurements of the movies, the radio, large-scale photography and advertising? How enter into competition with the tremendous resources of modern mechanics, which pro-

vide an art popularized to a very high degree?

An art popular in character but inferior in quality—based upon the excuse that they will never understand anything about art, anyway—would be unworthy of them. On the contrary, quality is the thing to be sought, in an art that is interior and easy to live with. We must look for a field of plastic beauty that is quite different from the one just described.

**T**HIS does not mean that painters may not place themselves at the disposition of those who get up popular affairs—by way of arranging the color scheme, for instance, unleashing color where this is desirable—pure color, dynamically laid on, may visually destroy a wall. Color brings joy; it may also bring madness. In a polychrome hospital, it may be a curative agent. It is an elemental force, as indispensable to life as water and fire. It may exalt the impulse to action to an

infinite degree; it may well stand up to the loud-speaker, being of the same stature as the latter. There are no limits to its use, from the slightest shading to a dazzling burst.

In this domain, where it is a question of manifesting life's intensity under all its aspects, there are some wholly new possibilities—scenic, musical, in the way of color, movement, light, and chant—that have not as yet been grouped and orchestrated to their fullest extent. The man of the people comes into the world with a feeling for beauty. The ditch-digger who prefers a blue belt to a red one for holding up his trousers is making an act of choice. His instinctive judgment passed upon manufactured objects is esthetic in character. He will say "the pretty bicycle," "the nice car," before he knows whether or not it will function. This in itself indicates an acceptance of a fact: the new realism. Seductive shop windows where the isolated object causes

the prospective purchaser to halt: the new realism.

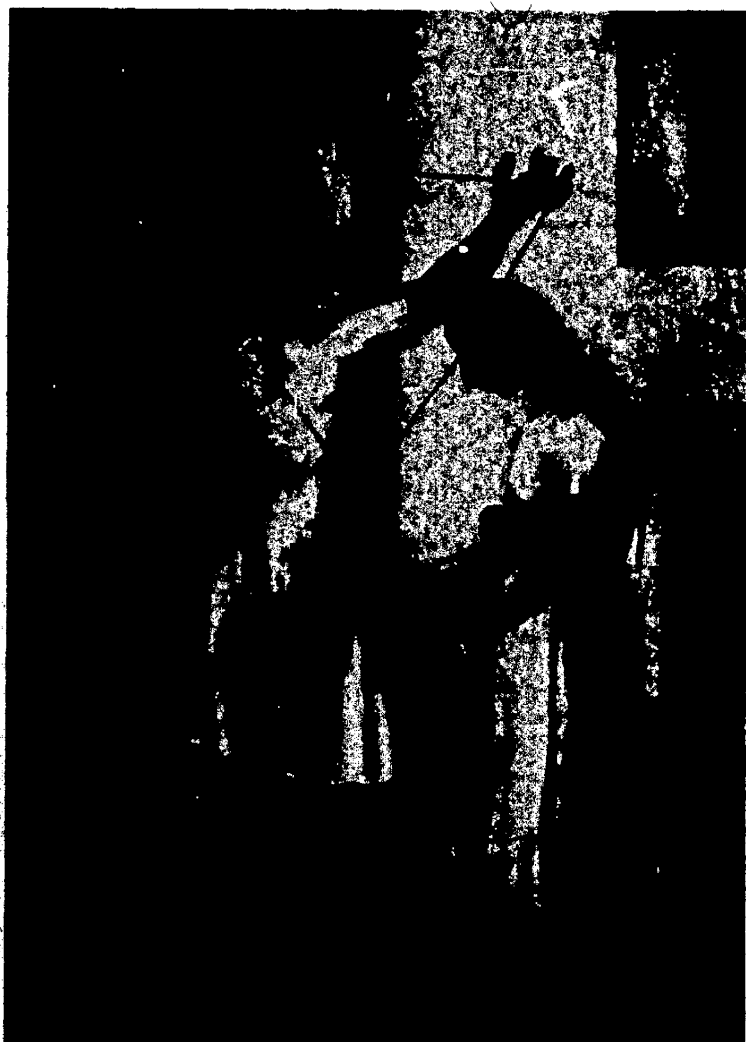
All men, even the most stunted, have in them a potentiality of meeting the beautiful half way. But in the presence of the art work, the picture or the poem, if their leisure—I must insist upon it—does not permit them to cultivate this potentiality, they will go on, all their lives, forming their judgments by comparison. They will prefer Bouguereau to Ingres, for the reason that Bouguereau is the better imitator. Judgment by comparison is not valid; every art work calls for an individual appraisal, it is an independent whole; and if men are given assistance, they will succeed in making such an appraisal. The human masses, demanding their place in the sun, the man of the people—let us not forget that they are poetry's last great refuge.

The man of the people it is who invents that mobile and ever new form: popular speech. He lives in an atmosphere of incessant verbal invention. While his hand is tightening a bolt, his imagination runs ahead, inventing new words, new poetic forms. All down the ages, the people have gone on inventing their language, which is their own form of realism. This language is unbelievably rich in substance. *Slang* is the finest and most vital poetry that there is. Popular actors, popular singers make use of it in the neighborhood theatres. They are the masterly inventors of it. This verbal form represents an alliance of realism and imaginative transposition; it is a new realism, perpetually in movement.

And is this class of mankind to be excluded, then, from those joys and satisfactions which the modern art work can give? Are the people to be refused "their chance" of rising to a higher plastic level, when they themselves everyday are inventing a language that is wholly new? That is inexcusable. They have the right to demand that time's revolution be carried out, and that they in their turn be permitted to enter the domain of the beautiful, which has always been closed to them up to now.

*Translated by Samuel Putnam*

*Editor's Note: Leger's speech was read at the Maison de la Culture discussion in Paris where Aragon's lecture, printed last month, took place. In the March issue Salvador Dali attacks Aragon and is counter-attacked. An article by Samuel Putnam, "Marxism and Surrealism," will also appear, as well as a kibitzing of the surrealists by Basil Rauch.*



**WOMEN TWISTING YARN**

*Mural in Women's Technical School, Mexico City*

**ALFREDO ZALCE**

*Courtesy A.C.A. Gallery*



WOMEN TWISTING YARN

ALFREDO ZALCE

*Mural in Women's Technical School, Mexico City. Courtesy: A. J. Salazar.*

# QUESTION and ANSWER

The following questionnaire was sent to artists of the mural section of the Federal Art Projects. It is an adaptation of questions submitted by Herbert Read, to a group of English artists, the answers being published in book form with the title, Unit 1.

All replies printed here were submitted by project artists. Others will follow next month, after which graphic artists, easel painters and sculptors will present their points of view. All artists are invited to send in answers to these questions.

## THEORY

1. On what basis do you work, that is to say, do you aim at:
  - a) creating a design which retains the natural appearance of the object?
  - b) creating a design which has nonessential or apparent relation to natural objects?
  - c) creating a design which is the interpretation of an imaginary world?
2. State your reasons for preferring your particular mode of expression.
3. Do you consciously use any special form of symbolism in your painting?
4. Place the following artists in the order of your preference: Duccio, Giotto, Raphael, Rembrandt, Rubens, El Greco, Cezanne, Henri Rousseau, Picasso.

## EDUCATION

5. What importance do you attach to art school training?
6. Do you study the natural object or do you embody observation of the natural object in your painting?
7. Do you ever seek inspiration in museums and art galleries?
8. What is your attitude toward the art of the past and its preservation?
9. Are you interested in machinery (a) technically, (b) esthetically?
10. How many arts other than the one you practice are you actively interested in; i.e., is your sensibility purely visual or do you also appreciate or practice other arts such as music or poetry?

## TECHNIQUE

11. Are you content to confine yourself to one mode of expression (e.g., easel painting) or are you interested in applying your sense of design in other ways? Give examples of the ways in which you would like to extend your activities.
12. Do you consciously use numerical proportions in your designs (i.e., any mechanical or geometrical system)?
13. Have you a consistent palette of colors, i.e., do not work within a limited range of colors or does your sensibility range freely over the whole scale of colors?

## POLICY

14. Do you believe that art in the United States must develop along national lines or do you think that the art of the future will be completely international?
15. Do you believe that the artist has a social function (i.e., do you regard him as an individual who must work directly from the basis of his own instincts and sensibility or do you think he should consciously aim at interpreting the social, political, or religious ideas of the society to which he belongs)?
16. How are you prepared to adapt yourself to the probable disappearance of the rich private collector?
17. To what extent do you think the government should support contemporary work of art?
18. How has contact with a wider public through the W.P.A. affected the direction of your work? How do you propose to reach a larger audience?

## PHILIP EVERGOOD

I work to create a design which tells its story in the simplest and most understandable way I can, employing the forms in nature such as men, trees, buildings. I do not wish to be bound by nature as the naturalist is. I use the imagination entirely in composing a design, try to integrate the forms as an abstractionist would, but employ (1) the forms in nature and (2) the human side of life in general, which I observe and study continually accentuating the former (1) where necessary to bring more force to bear on the latter (2).

2. A close study for years of the great masters of painting, heroic, classic, such as: Botticelli, Michael Angelo, Poussin, Ingres, Delacroix, etc., human such as: Titian, Mantegna, Rembrandt, Breughel, Goya, Hogarth, etc., abstract, such as: Braque, Picasso, etc.

A contrast with life around him, a desire to say things about this life, and a gradual forming of his own style by hard work seem to me to be the way a sincere artist develops a mode of expression.

3. Yes, symbolism that can be understood easily, such as a tumbled wall meaning something which is collapsed or discarded and which must be built up, or a cloud which shuts off or obscures someone's vision meaning that he is hindered from seeing the truth perhaps. That type of symbolism I employ, but not an abstruse, mystic or inverted type of symbolism, which only the artist can understand.

4. I could not place these men in order of preference because most of them interest me equally. It seems to me that the titans of this list are: Giotto, Raphael, Rembrandt, Rubens, El Greco.

5. A sound knowledge of drawing is what a school should give a student. A teacher's duty is also to develop the student's mind in the correct and healthy attitude towards life.

6. Answered in question 1.

7. No. Life around me is so full of things I wish to paint and life itself is so short, that I will not have time enough to paint half the things I want to paint as it is. I sometimes go to the museums to refresh my memory about technical problems, to visit old friends (paintings) and make new ones.

8. Of course it should be preserved, but the art of our times should be acquired by our museums as a record of the

labors and inspiration of the present generation. This work has been sadly neglected.

9. A good artist should be interested in everything that moves technically and esthetically.

10. Music is a great relaxation to me physically and emotionally—poetry also.

I have practised both unprofessionally in the past.

11. I have done sculpture, as well as painting, engraving, etching. I wish to continue with all these forms concentrating on mural painting and easel painting.

12. Most good artists have experimented for a time with such things as Geometric Symmetry. I believe that design is intuitive and that such systems are excellent for the pedagogue to use to prove that a work is great after it is painted.

A good painter should be able to get any result he wants, using only the primary colors. I use a wide range on the palette for the sake of speed.

14. Art has never been national—except for customs and costumes recorded in the works. Rubens (Flemish) is nearer to Michael Angelo (Italian) than he is to Jerome Bosch (Flemish), etc. The advocates of regionalism and nationalism are doing untold harm to art in America. Of course the art of the future will be completely international.

15. The good artist is always interested in things around him—he is bound to register the human and social pulse beat of his time—not necessarily the political or religious.

16. I have never been one of those fortunates subsidized in the past by a rich collector. I had in the past to do (wasting much valuable time when I should have been painting) many things outside the field of art to enable me to continue painting. I shall have to return to that state unless the U. S. Government continues its fine work as a sponsor of art.

17. The Government should be the greatest sponsor of art, for in being so it automatically raises the morale of the country—lessens crime, and generally raises the standard of civic pride, living conditions and all those worthy things that accompany increased culture. Government patronage of art and employment of all qualified professional artists should become permanent and have no direct bearing on destitution of the individual.

18. The opportunity afforded me of having a large wall in the library at Richmond Hill to design and execute in paint has been very fine. Hundreds of people

watched me during the work of several months interestedly and I learned a great deal by that close contact with the public. I hope to paint other large works in the future—particularly am I desirous of

#### BALCOMB GREENE

1. I paint abstractions. The term 'abstract' is misleading in a sense. The work is totally non-representative, and the designs I create have to the unreflective person no apparent relation to natural objects. Yet people who have never seen natural objects—an absurd assumption of course—these hypothetical people would find no content, no emotional or mental satisfaction in my work.

2. This mode of expression I prefer because I have worked gradually into it. I have lost interest in the story, lost interest on what I consider the extraneous and unnecessary moves and devices by which an artist builds a special experience for himself and for an audience. I have taken to a new art form, a completely new art in a sense. It is an art in which I find for myself a greater, a more absolute control.

3. No adequate abstract painting employs symbols. Symbolism is the art of substitution. Stuart Davis and probably Leger approach an art of symbols. I am more interested in the real thing, in presenting an experience which does not depend upon the mental manouever of "Let's see now, this stands for a house, that for a man. It must be a man in a house."

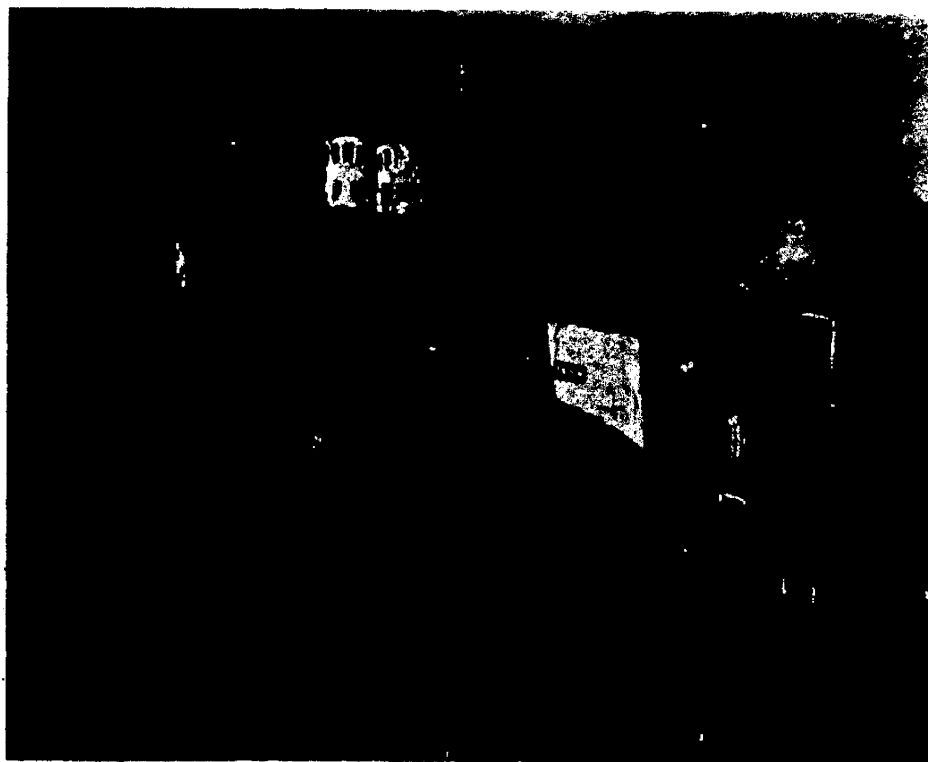
doing a large mural in a subway station or some similar closely populated place based on the activities, struggles, failures and conquests of the people of New York. Are there any bids?

4. Raphael and Rembrandt are easily the dullest of the painters you mention.

5. Art school training is important to those unable to train themselves. Ability is mainly a matter of energy and determination. Any school is supposed only to be an aid. The trouble is that those who most need help are least able to withstand the personal persuasiveness of a teacher. If a school could be impersonal and give only information, much might be said for it. But teachers who want to be an inspiration are a menace. Let painting and sculpture and the life around us do the inspirational job.

6. As a human being with eyes, ears, a stomach, etc. I continually see, touch, and use natural objects. Roughly sixteen hours a day. When and if I study an object or hire a model, I come close to playing a trick. I am trying a short-cut to experience by rushing my observation of superficial details. Working from the object involves all the dangers of mechanical procedure. The fine observations, the genuine strokes of brilliance, come from memory and from the very ample storehouse of the unconscious. No mysticism here. The sub-conscious isn't empty.

7. I doubt if I seek inspiration in museums and art galleries. I am seeking



BEACH, SAG HARBOR

MIRON SOKOLE  
Courtesy Midtown Gallery



BEACH, SAG HARBOR

MIRON SOKOLE

*Courtesy, Madison Square*



something there or I wouldn't go. The places are depressing usually, especially our Metropolitan. I think I seek to keep up on what's going on around town, seek unconsciously at times to revive some of my painter-heroes of yesterday, seek to compare what I suspect is ineffectual work with my own which I am engaged in thinking is pretty good. As for inspiration herself, you're walking backwards when you seek her.

No traffic with her except when I'm engaged at hard creative work. At other moments it is ambition which propels. I think most everybody is that way. Assuming that we mean by 'inspiration' that sort of 'lift' which takes us out of our selves. Possibly Picasso has done this to me.

8. There's no point in destroying the art of the past, because destroyers are usually after the wrong thing. Physically we ought to preserve it all. No need to preserve it all at the cost of such rentals as our most elaborate museums would bring. But again we run into the question of which work we would stack away and which put on view. The art of the past should be viewed by the public as definitely past. We aren't normally a nation which goes into rhapsodies over the past. Normally we look ahead. Curators and historians and teachers of art have us hypnotized. The art speculators have a hand in it too, they have their hand in our pockets.

9. I am decidedly interested in machinery, both technically and esthetically. The two go together, very much together. The word 'esthetic' used here bothers me a little. I don't admire the machine as much as the significance of the machine. Try not to substitute the means for the end. The machine is O.K. when and because it does what it's supposed to do. It isn't admirable because it's made of metal and moves without perspiring. Naturally the machine dominates all modern technical performance. To be familiar with it, learn all we can from it—that is necessary. In the construction of any design, moreover, a good machine is often as adequate a model as a nude female. Perhaps machines ought to be hired to pose in art schools. They would keep a lot of people away.

10. Probably I could muster an interest in most any art. To conserve my energy I confine myself to painting, and sculpture a bit, and writing. I enjoy music, the dance, the theatre moderately, but not poetry. There's much to be said against poetry.

11. I am interested in easel painting, mural painting, and the various other forms of design or decoration, not ex-

cluding the applied. I would like to make good posters and good magazine covers, probably a building too. If I could make a living doing the kind of magazine covers I think are good, I would work pretty hard at it and keep up my mural and easel painting for the public, *gratis* so to speak.

It is definitely a waste of energy, short-sighted, and anti-social in the bargain, to tumble into the commercial field and do any sort of hack work, pandering to the least developed taste. A creative artist has no business going into the applied arts unless he can bring something of definite value to the commercial field.

12. I do not rely on numerical proportions in my designs. At my age I believe that's a wooden way of working. The eye should be trained by now beyond the artifices of mathematical systems. I use a ruler constantly to get straight lines, parallel lines, lines of equal length. I use a compass, other drawing tools.

13. Generalizations about color I find risky. There are definitely 'color dangers' which I keep an eye out for. Too many colors at once is like too many of anything else. Delicate shades, nuances, lead to inferior decorative qualities usually. An off shade is valuable as a foil to a primary color, to a black or a white. In any particular painting, I tend towards a very limited color range. Voluntary color limitations constitute most of the so-called art of color.

14. The art of the present is completely international. When I say this, I mean *art*. A cartoon can be pro-Nazi, or pro-Soviet or pro-Roosevelt, etc. But a creative expression at this day and age is developing along superficial lines if it 'goes' national. In regard to the documentary application of the painter's craft, say to the subject matter of our Middle West—I consider the subject matter to be national, sectional and even colloquial, but the artist has no need of approaching his subject matter in a colloquial or Middle West way. To paint a farmer pitching hay you don't have to paint like a hay pitching farmer would paint.

There is a separate problem involved in documentary painting, the problem of which technique and type of painting will possess the documentary value. This is not however a national, but is a universal problem.

Nothing is more absurd than a *modem* towards a national art. Especially in this age. If the idea is to get some of the local acreage preserved on canvas, then it's simply a job to be done, and nothing else. The nationalistic movement, which has stirred this and most other

countries recently, was a frantic scurrying backward from progressive painting.

15. Now you ask about the social function of the artist. Your question opposes "working directly from his own instincts and sensibilities," to, "consciously aim at interpreting the social, political, or religious ideas of society." You see, you malign the latter sort of painters if you suggest they go counter to or miss some of the energy which comes from the free operation of instincts and sensibilities. You don't admit the probability that most who interpret or seek to interpret social ideas, proceed actually directly from sensibilities and instincts. Perhaps you will admit that much attempting to put over a social point of view is a failure because the artist is insufficiently sensitive and actually mixes up or goes against his own instincts.

Now take an artist decorating a post office with a couple of pony express riders, locomotives and airliners, and sundry other glories, when he wants to decorate it with postal carriers wearing their socks out with bunions at 19.44, or whatever it is, a week. You ought agree there that you've forced an artificial separation. Nor have you simply separated the artist as a human being from his work, because one half of the artist-human-being wants his job the worst way.

I believe also that your part of the question not in parentheses needs analysis. Same fault of being academic. I say an artist can perform a social function and be conscious of it, without aiming at the literal interpretation of social, political and religious ideas. In fact, I say you can't begin to draw the line at where and what social interpretation is. Leger has a social function in his art because he is a ruthless destroyer of weak sentiments in the people who view him. Picasso must transmit some of his tremendous vitality, release some of the latent energy in people caught in the conventional grooves of life. Get to like Picasso well, get to be able to take the hurdles of his rapid changes with him, and pretty soon you'll be hurdling over a lot of impediments in the everyday life you have always with you.

You force a worthless and an academic distinction when you say that Picasso and Leger do not consciously aim at interpreting social ideas. You suggest that these artists are unconscious.

16. I am prepared to see the rich private collector go any time. The rumor, however, is that the rich are still getting richer and that all potential collectors aren't in the bread-line. By and large however I believe that the disappearance which you predict should and will be accompanied by a greater nationalization

of industry and of the arts. This leads us directly to No. 17.

17. The government should support contemporary art work as much as it can. Miss Perkins, speaking for our present administration, says our national industry can supply the needs of our national society by working eight months of the year. The potential rate of supply would astound Miss Perkins. It is plain then that stupendous support of art workers is possible. So stupendous that the issue shifts entirely to the question of how much support of the arts is good for the arts. The current, realistic answer is that they deserve all they can get. For that's the alignment—the organized workers trying to hold what they have and if possible gain ground; and the administration pulling the other way because everyone higher up thinks that's what everyone higher up wants. The question of how much support is good for the arts should be reserved for the time when the ad-

#### HELEN WEST HELLER

**P**AINTING is to me always a problem in imaginative interpretation of thought and emotion. A design possessing no necessary relationship to natural objects is merely a design, by whatsoever ambiguity its makers may seek to magnify its importance. Subservience to the natural appearance of objects necessarily results in works approximating to the importance of photographs. Work in which composition is paramount may by the subtlety of its manipulation convey powerful impressions, definite messages.

Symbolism, yes, but no conscious repetition from work to work, of any mode of symbolism. If in approaching a new creation the artists strives for a dramatic experience of the psychology of its theme, certain modes of plastic expression are bound to recur because these modes are properly common to groups of subjects, are the most effective means for conveying their messages.

Profound dexterity is a prerequisite to production of the grade of work here considered. The major factors of this competence are as concerns the painter, understanding of the physical and psychological principles governing color, material-draughtsmanship, thorough knowledge of materials, their possibilities and their weaknesses. How best may the artist acquire maturity? Art School, shop, solitude of the private studio.

An ideal school training should be entirely helpful. The body of technical lore is enormous. There is no more reason in the artist's attempting to dispense with accumulated experience of others and trying to re-discover it all independently than

administration becomes interested in this point.

18. My working on the W.P.A. in the mural division has greatly affected my way of painting. The new problem of the mural has corrected in me a tendency towards work too active, not sufficiently disciplined. The personal impulse has been tied down and regulated by a job to be done. Even my easel painting is now more satisfactory to me. You look at the photographs, the work looks larger. That's a good sign. Bigness or the potential bigness in a painting cannot so far as I know, detract from it. . . . I propose to reach a larger audience through the most respectable and dignified means traditional to painters. This eliminates watching the public taste too closely. It also eliminates special galivanting when I should be painting. It does not eliminate applying my design abilities to practical work, or my Wednesday nights at the Artists' Union meeting.

in an electrician's doing likewise. The incalculable advantage to the painters of the Works Progress art projects of the scholarly counsel of Dr. Alexander Abels is testimony pertinent.

The dire ruin of American art chargeable to the art schools is not inherent in schools but resulted from mercenary and untutored management, and staffing with

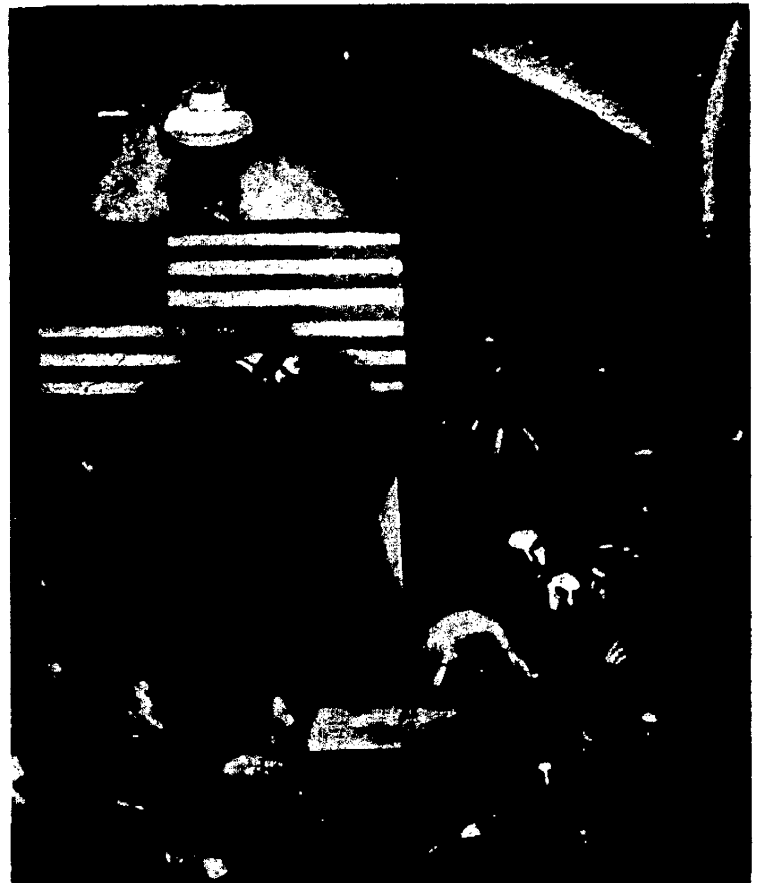
painters and sculptors unworthy the name of artist, men ignorant of the great past styles, devoid of technical lore, and in most cases lacking any considerable talent for the profession upon which they foisted themselves.

The great prehistoric styles were almost unknown to the generation which founded the American art school: prehistoric Mesopotamian, Hindu, Burmese, prehistoric Chinese, the Cretan, the Mayan, the central African, the south Pacific; this colossal gift has been laid at the feet of the contemporary artist by the archaeologist. Every year he comes bearing another offering and may continue to do till he has turned bottom up the major part of the earth's surface.

Laid at our feet! more accurately heaped upon our heads; we have been put to necessity of excavating our own mentality and perching our own genius atop the pile before we could perceive our own horizons. Such a labor no preceding generation has faced. Its nearest counterpart was in the early renaissance and those artists succumbed to the near-science of their time. We have profited by their failure and are probably by way of producing the greatest art of history.

The visual artist's medium is form. In a world full of fascinating natural forms we cannot do otherwise than look at them, memorize them, compare and select and use them, sublimated to our needs.

219 ARRESTED  
A. HARRITON



Courtesy  
A.C.A. Gallery





**MILITARY ESCORT**

Woodcut

**FRITZ EICHENBERG**

*Courtesy W.P.A. Prints for the People Show*

Certain grand divisions of forms are inimical to certain temperaments; it may be that they are inimical to art. Modern mechanisms are to me emotional abomination. Logically, of course, I have part in a machine age but I do not produce painting by use of logic. It is my instinct and my practice to avoid representations of man-made objects. Save occasionally a primitive object, which because of its age-old associations is impregnated with emotion as iron absorbs magnetism. Representation of the airplane, the tractor, the harvesting machine, the locomotive, the steamship; these have no concern with art because they are not yet rooted in racial emotion; they have not lain for ages buried in the earth under a man's ribs.

Eye-minded? Ear-minded? Can some psychologist answer why a painter possessing subtle command of form and of color and no executive musical gift should in her writing be more alert to aural than to visual figure, whose sensitivity to great music is perhaps keener than to masterpieces of the visual arts, whose earliest childhood memories swarm with sounds; sounds delectable, sounds offensive, at least holding their own numerically with the visual memories?

An artist may, through the years, acquire such mastery of technique that the demarcations between mediums fall away and he may practice any art he wills, given only the distinctive materials and tools appertaining to it and a few experimental try-outs. My personal experience has been thus: competence in oil came first though practice in watercolor was

earlier; freedom with the brush on paper came hard. My first woodblock was cut thirteen years ago. I had been a wood-carver in my childhood and in my teens an illuminator on vellum and hand book-binder. I starved most thoroughly at these vocations in the period when the Grolier Club was considered art authority.

All my later easel paintings have been implicitly studies for murals, while prospect of this fulfillment was dim. There has been a little experimentation in the impractical portable fresco, in design for mosaic and for stained glass. Then fell from the sky opportunity to paint in tempera for a definite and reasonably permanent locale.

Three years ago I spent ten days and nights intensively exploring dynamic symmetry and came out of the exciting, exhausting experience with a versatile knowledge of the system. When I presently analyzed by it some of the paintings done previously they were found to be in entire accord with it. This curious fact I set down as testimony to the system rather than to the paintings. I have done some research into the diagrammatic bases of mediaeval paintings; the findings are thrilling. Dynamic symmetry should be helpful to the artist with sufficient mathematical bent to learn it without too great travail. It can be made highly useful in mural work where designs by a master-painter are to be executed by associates. I know that great designs can be achieved on static plans.

How many colors do I want? All there are in the spectrum plus ultra violet and

infra red, infra orange or what have you. Then, I turn to the panel and ascetically suppress the design into four or five colors.

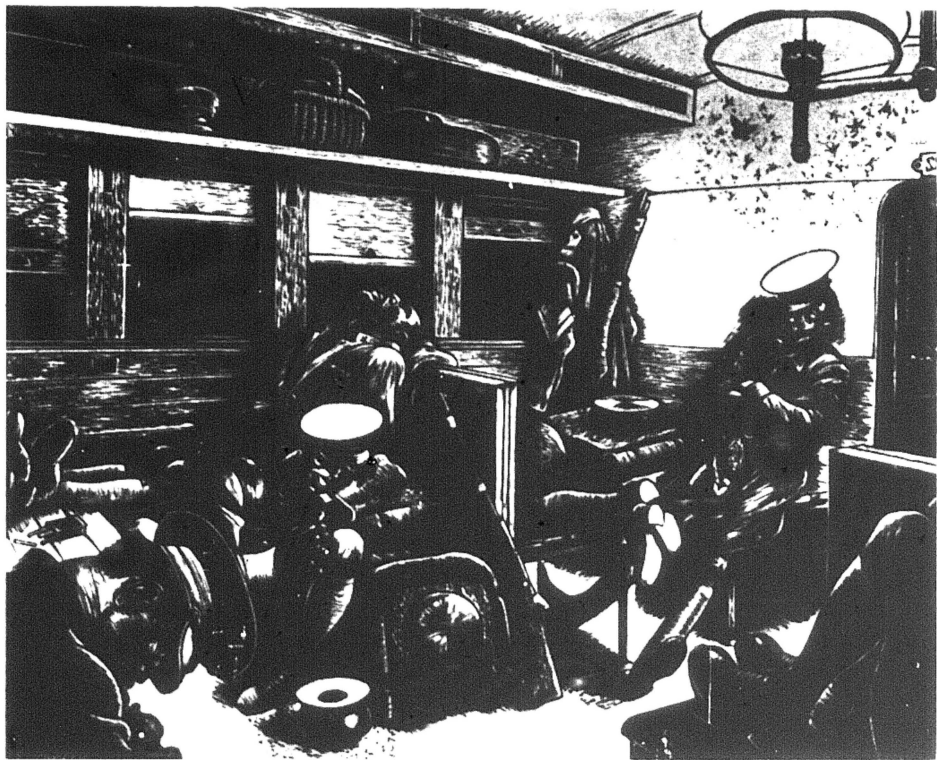
National art versus international: I have a clipping file which has been a lifetime accumulating; there are nationality envelopes for Europe in which were formerly assembled all reproductions of works of successive periods in the given country. I found myself wasting time pulling out from all these bags material bearing on one period. Then it dawned upon me that there is not and never has been in Europe a sharply demarcated national style. The vital divisions are into period styles. If a national style was a near-impossibility when it required three days to travel from Paris to Chartres how will one ever occur in this age when man has come to be listed under *avis*!

The artist **MUST** work directly from the basis of his own instinct and sensibility, otherwise he is not artist, but as inevitably his function in his society is cultural. He will of necessity reflect the social, political, religious concepts of his time. He may consciously enhance certain aspects of the zeitgeist. Every historic style has been the outcome of prolonged conscious emphasis upon a selected viewpoint. Propaganda art must be about seven parts art to one part propaganda, else it drops into the category of cartooning.

Eh! How am I prepared to adapt myself to the "probable disappearance of the rich private collector?" In the years of this character's glory he was quite too illiterate and pig-headed to be aware of my existence and all years were panic years for me. By what sign should I discern his passing? The civilizing initiatives of the New Deal administration constitute an impetus to popular culture which might be checked but can hardly be destroyed. I have become a factor in this movement; I shall continue to consciously strive to influence its direction.

The seeking of a market by the individual artist has become almost as hopeless an undertaking as the same endeavor on part of a trade worker. The young Artists' Union will grow older, and lustier, and develop greater competence but it will find the same permanent need of governmental co-operation as the old and powerful unions are progressively finding. Unionism will eventually become a function of government. Government will eventually become a function of unionism.

The greater governmental concern with the arts the more probable the survival of American intelligence, the restoration of American happiness, the fruition of an American culture in works to mark on the road of history our coming and our passing.



MILITARY ESCORT

FRITZ EICHENBERG

# OUR EXPRESSIONISTS

By Jacob Kainen

It does not require a prophetic eye to discern subterranean stirring beneath the dead level of American art. These stirrings have been going on for a long time, evidencing the secrecy and defiance of some artistic underworld. Several recent exhibitions in New York, however, have brought these plastic attitudes to the surface, this time in a broader manner and with more specifically American implications.

It's that old, stubborn and elusive Expressionism again, but it seems to be here to stay. Which means that its practitioners are no longer confined to those with a Continental background—those who have seen Munch, Hodler, the German Expressionists and the Fauves, but that many of our younger painters are embracing the Expressionist creed.

Let us not split hairs over the term "Expressionism." For the immediate purpose it is unnecessary to go into codified esthetics. Nor is it necessary to trace the movement's background. This has already been done by Charmion von Wiegand in her excellent article, "Expressionism and Social Change," in ART FRONT of November. It is sufficient to state that the Expressionist outlook is characterized by the following qualities, more or less:

1. The attempt to reduce the interpretation of nature or life in general to the rawest emotional elements.
2. A complete and utter dependence on pigment as an expressive agency rather than an imitative or descriptive one.
3. An intensity of vision which tries to catch the throb of life, necessarily doing violence to external facts to lay bare internal facts.

From these vague and inadequate descriptions of Expressionist tenets, it is nevertheless clear that many of the older generation of American painters have worked in that tradition: John Marin, Max Weber, Marsden Hartley, Walt Kuhn, Arthur G. Dove, Abram Walkowitz and others. Somehow they failed at the time to create much of an impact among our large quantities of descriptive painters, to say nothing of the general public. Perhaps they were too small, diverse and uncertain a group to represent any definite artistic tendency.

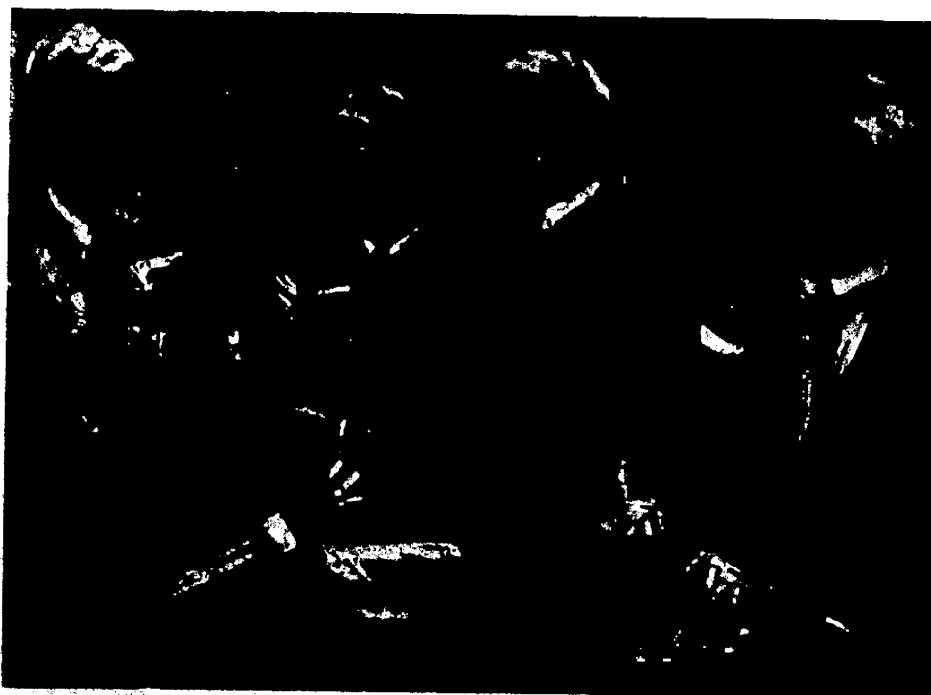
The fact remains that Expressionism was not an indigenous attitude. The very nature of American life and traditions, with the pushing business man the arch-typical American—with no complex and sophisticated culture such as the Old World possessed, precluded anything but a vigorous realism, at best. Now, after six shattering years of economic crisis which have destroyed the myth of American immunity to the general decay of bourgeois society, the stage is set for Expressionism, the direction par excellence for social disillusion and individual nihilism. Expressionism is also the vehicle for a socially revolutionary consciousness; at its least it can be a bridge from individual rejection of the status quo to social rejection.

The best organized group of young Expressionists functioning in New York is "The Ten," which recently held its second showing at the Montross Gallery. Several of the painters were represented by work which did not indicate their usual standard. Yankel Kufeld, from whom a great deal was to be expected, was far off form; Louis Schanker failed to include any of his more masculine and broadly painted

harmonies, confining himself to the thinner music of his delicate color tonalities and linear arrangements; Ilya Bolotowsky seemed to be definitely but aimlessly abstract, which is regrettable in the light of some of his very fine earlier Expressionist canvases of needle workers; Ben-Zion did not include anything as rich as his earlier "The Well" and "Lynching."

Adolph Gottlieb and Marcus Rothkowitz maintained their usual sober plasticity, keeping everything simply emotional. Gottlieb's "Family" and Rothkowitz's "Composition" were highly charged pictures. Louis Harris had that customary honesty, charm and humanity which disarms criticism, and more positive use of color than heretofore. Lee Gatch seemed hard and cardboardy, but structurally sound.

Joseph Solman was the most consistent painter in the show. His former hot-house sophistication has given way to a deeper grip on reality. As a result, his designs have become more provocative and his harmonies more meaningful. His later one-man show at Another Place displays his talents at fuller length. The city, with all its accidental structural

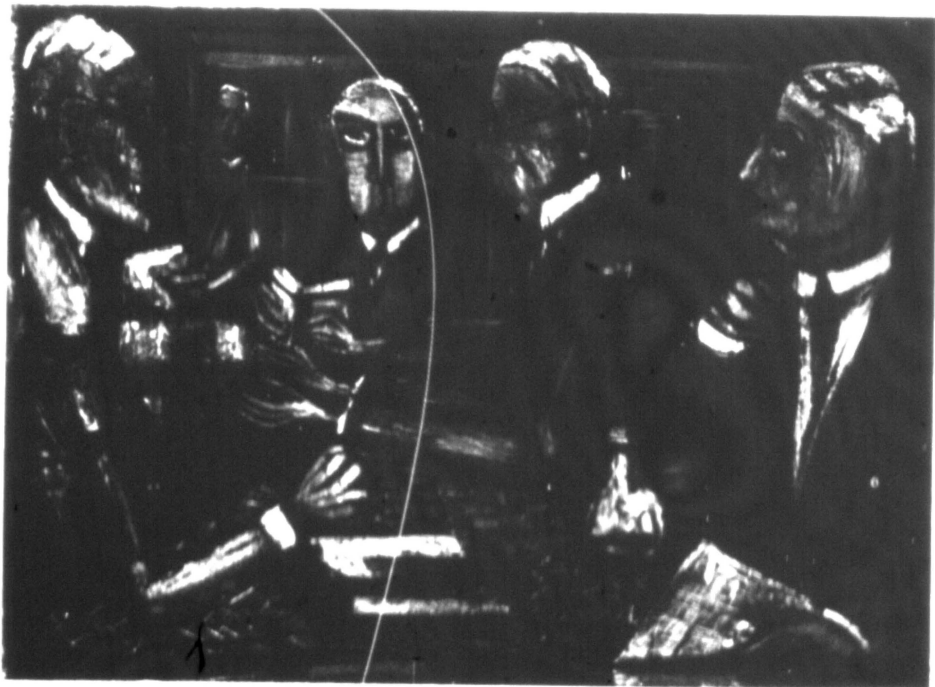


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Courtesy A.C.A. Gallery





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NAHUM TSCHACBASOV

*Courtesy of U.S. Embassy*

effects and social chaos has become his theme. Flat, vigorous color areas, emotional linear emphasis and unity of mood raise Solman's position considerably among contemporary painters.

David Burliuk has just concluded an exhibition at the Boyer Gallery. It's about time Burliuk was considered an American painter and accorded the attention he merits. The Jersey countryside formed the basis for many of his pictures at the Boyer, with little lessening of the extravagant pigmentation, magic harmonies and childlike charm. Burliuk is an authentic painter as anyone can be, an Expressionist of the deepest dye.

At the A.C.A. Gallery a former member of "The Ten," Tschachbasov, has made Expressionism the vehicle for a militant proletarianism. In spite of the indecent remarks of certain critics who should know better, Tschachbasov has lived in Brooklyn since he was a small boy, wears no beard, and speaks English without an accent. Aside from that he is a powerful painter who cuts deeply, socially and plastically. Immediately evident is a Byzantine richness of color, a shuttling of textural variations and color glazings, and a social punch. He satirizes the infallibility of the Supreme Court by reducing those learned gentlemen to their featural absurdities; business men and what they stand for are assailed; the Nazis are attacked in the gripping and tragic "Kultur." Rockefeller seems to be the special object of Tschachbasov's contempt. "Thanksgiving" is one of the really complete pictures of the past few seasons. In a quieter and perhaps better controlled manner are "Hunger" and "Deportation."

Some of the first-rate painters of Expressionist persuasion who are producing currently are Miron Sokole, Karl Knaths, Milton Avery, Philip Evergood, Otto Botto, Paul Mommer, Ben Kopman, Maurice Becker, Vincent Spagna, Paul Burlin, Nathaniel Dirck, Louis Nisonoff, Ben Shahn, Jean Liberté and many others who escape me at the moment.

With Marin, Weber and Hartley forming the van, the Expressionists are ready to go places. It is true that Expressionism is a product of social convulsion in the extreme. Where else could the Blauen Reiter have arisen but in war-torn Germany, bursting with revolution, the center of European insurgence? If their Expressionism verged into hysteria, the painters mustn't be attacked too virulently. Hermann Bahr in his "Expressionism," published in 1920, explained as follows: "If Expressionism at the moment behaves in an ungainly, violent manner, its excuse lies in the prevailing conditions it finds. These really are almost the con-

ditions of crude and primitive humanity. People little know how near the truth they are when they jeer at these pictures and say they might be painted by savages. The bourgeois rule has turned us into savages."

Expressionism indeed. What connections are there, one might ask, between Germany of 1920 and the United States today, which warrant such an outlook? In the first place, no one is advocating such an outlook. No one advocates hysteria in art. Secondly, advocacy means nothing if social conditions do not give validity to an esthetic attitude. Obviously, Expressionism today is not the old type which blurred into Dada. With our greater knowledge of the social and political causes of war and its horror, we can dispense with much of the inner torment which afflicted artists of conscience twenty years ago. What we cannot dispense with are the emotional and plastic contributions of those courageous men. These can be expressive of the violence of our time, of the swift tempo of disaster which threatens to engulf us.

And is America with its makeshift and infinitesimal reforms so removed from the European scenes of fascist violence? As soon as Hitler, Mussolini, or the Japanese militarists take the fatal step toward world war, those who would make of America a fascist charnel-house will beat the drums of war and accelerate their drive against labor, culture and the liberal elements. We are closer to chaos than we think.

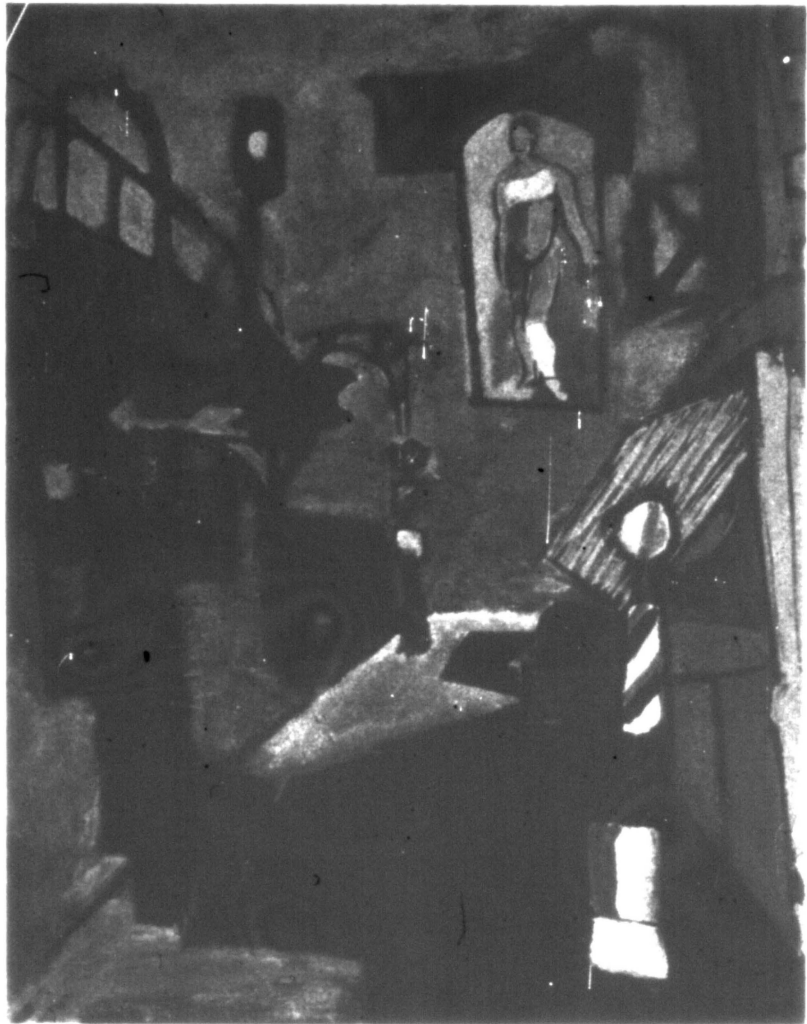
Doesn't this justify a shake-up in American art? The old, literal naturalism is failing to register esthetically in the face of vast social passions and portents of doom and regeneration. In proportion to the awakening of artists to the fate which awaits the world, will painting take on a more Expressionist form. Hermann Bahr again has put it well: "The history of painting is nothing but the history of vision, or seeing. Technique changes only when the mode of seeing has changed . . . And the eye changes its method of seeing according to the relation man assumes toward the world."



VENUS OF 23rd STREET

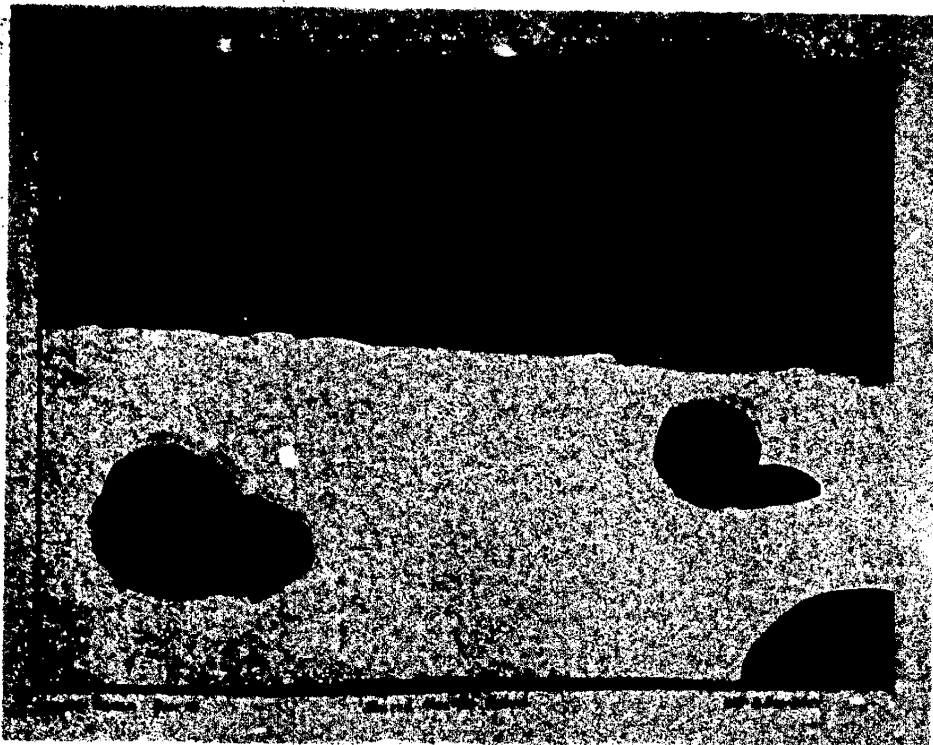
JOSEPH SOLMAN

*Courtesy of Another Place*



VENTS OF 23rd STREET

JOSEPH SOLMAN



CHILD PAINTING

LOUISE RAUSO, Age 10

Courtesy W.P.A. Federal Art Project

## A CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW

By Ryah Ludins

**I**N search for the "eternal form" with its simplification and intensity of expression, groups and individuals of the Post-Impressionist school, went back to the work of children and primitives whose art embodies these universal qualities. As a result of this research some of our modern artists found expression through new forms, becoming leaders of an art possessing a vitality and directness it had lacked for centuries.

The public was spontaneous in its disapproval of their efforts as being "barbarous" and "childlike." At the W.P.A. Federal Art Gallery current exhibition of the paintings and graphic art of children of the New York's five boroughs, produced under the supervision of the W.P.A. art teaching project, one constantly hears the surprised remark, "Wonderful painting; looks like a Matisse, a Picasso, Rouault, Rousseau or Modigliani." It is quite obvious that the 30,000 children receiving their art instruction in settlement

houses, orphanages, playgrounds, delinquent homes, hospitals and churches, do not come in contact with the work of these men.

The work of a primitive artist, a child artist, and a modern artist, although possessing obvious similarities, is fundamentally different. Each expresses himself in the terms of his own, very different world. Perhaps the child has the advantage over the artist. He has nothing to live down and nothing to live up to. He is the possessor of creative energy, untried, uninfluenced, sees the world through his own eyes, too young yet to know how the world expects him to see it. He is born with an inherent sense of proportion and rhythm. Having these fundamental qualities, he uses them for his own enjoyment to express his personal experiences of the visual world, when these experiences are strong enough to crave expression. He has not yet had his senses and mind dulled by what generally

passes for education and by the struggle for existence in modern society, which drains objects of every quality but their value to buyer and seller.

The famous psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, said, "Children intensify the visual world. Many effects that art deems impossible are not only boldly attempted but accomplished. Nothing is too hard, deviations and variations are endless. The drawings reveal the child's psychic life in an extraordinary way and show its motor development, the directness of its interests, etc."

The environment of a child influences his experience of the visual world. In this exhibition the children express their contact with reality, docks of New York, street scenes, subway, market, strikes and pickets, circus, parks, very few landscapes, one seascape in a surprising surrealist manner, a few abstract designs, all painted from the child's point of view.

**T**HE child passes through various stages of physical and mental development. During these changes his reactions to his environment and subsequently his art expression undergo logical changes. Psychologists through endless experiments have delineated the following steps in the artistic development of a child.

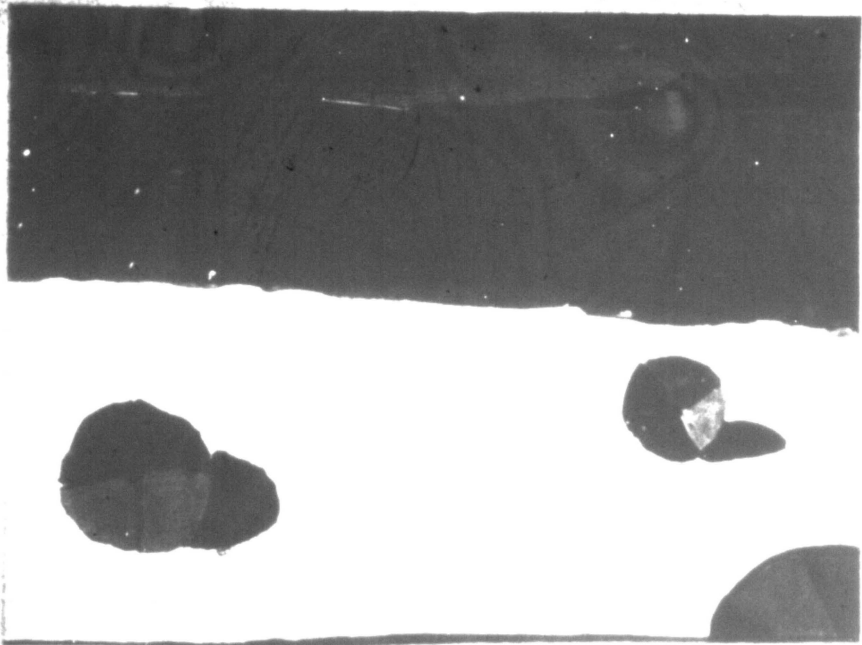
1. From the age of one to three, the child makes formless scribbles for the mere physical joy of manipulation of new materials.

2. From 6 to 8, he uses definite symbols, drawing subjectively, never objectively, not what he sees, but what he knows of things about him, accentuating and exaggerating what to him appears most important. His art is ideo-plastic. At this time the formless line scribbles are composed in terms of line and form, still two dimensional.

3. From 8 to 11, the symbols begin to take on greater resemblance to things, due to the development of the power of observation and memory of things observed. At 10, observation and memory are very keen.

4. With puberty, the urge for plastic expression declines. The creative energy goes into the process of physical growth and contact with the world into which he realizes he must fit. At 16, visual memory reaches its height, and only in the cases of the talented does it develop further. There is now an insistence upon objective rather than subjective representation.

Miss Audrey McMahon, assistant to the national director of the Federal Art Project says, "This W.P.A. teaching project was not created to develop a rising generation of artists in America . . . it



1950s

can prepare the young inhabitants of a machine age civilization for better satisfactions in maturity and can develop an intelligent audience for American artists."

There is a still more important point. Children working freely in groups express those basic human and social values, without which the transformation of society cannot be accomplished. They greedily accept criticism and praise from their companions in their own child world, being stimulated by one another in directing their energies to new creative efforts.

The art teaching project through its modern free methods has given children

an opportunity to use their natural creative power to express their world of emotion. This project has begun an unprecedented work, the results of which prove that more than 30,000 children, not only in New York, but throughout our country should be given this opportunity permanently. It should not be considered as a "relief-measure" to give employment to unemployed art teachers, but to provide means of natural, free expression to the child population of this country. This seems a logical step in the creation and development of a living growing American culture of creators as well as appreciators.

there in 1932. He is at present engaged on mural work in New York City. His exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, through January, is one of the rarer shows of this season.

A series of 31 gouaches reveal the disarming mind of a child rather than that of an adult—but a child already troubled by dark dreams, monster airships floating over telegraph wires, peasants staring at white, silent ruins, or else an immensely simple cloud carrying four lovely Mexican faces to the tropics. Then there is respite for the child, a "Geography Lesson" at school, a most fanciful Mardi-Gras and two precious rows of gray flecks against yellow approximating children at play.

Gradually those haunting images of death and destruction recur and weave themselves through the more innocent pictures. The tentacles of barbed wire stretch across the sombre landscape and a horse quietly poised (Tamayo paints this animal with as much love as any Persian master) seems unaware of the menacing airplane above him.

The painter has recaptured all the bright and bitter experiences of a Mexican child, himself of course, by the most eloquent manipulation of the gouache medium since Klee and Chagall. Out of burnt black, acid yellow, grey, red-brown and egg-shell white there emanates a true fresco luminosity. His early work, archaic, static, delicately proportioned, seems now to have expanded into multiple rhythms and broader forms. A profuse imagery floods his designs—faces, animals, architectural fragments, machines, landscape motifs, floating through chaotic spaces. Yet every form is appropriately controlled.

His compositions are often built on several wide arcs (cloudforms or arches), across which are propelled subsidiary rhythms and forms. He combines various plastic means in creating these gouaches (N.B. This review was written before Tamayo's oils had arrived)—a mural concept of space, broad and flat, a tonal glow like earthenware that has been baked and glazed and a persistent straggle of a line than can express anything from naive tenderness to dramatic horror.

"The Poet's House," "Dramatic Flight," "Spectrum," "Tropics," these are perfect little masterpieces. The entire group of gouaches unfurl a host of delicate fragments that gradually illuminate through their nurtured rhythms the humid soil, the desolate homes, the fear, love and hope of the Mexican peasants. Tamayo's is the most lyrical voice to come out of that country.

J. S.

## TAMAYO

ONE of these days Mexican painting is due for a reevaluation at which time the word Renaissance will not, we suspect, be so recklessly flung about. Orozco remains an imposing figure, one who can project human drama on walls with startling power. Rivera's art now looks as inflated as those balloon figures he paints. The last few canvases Sequeiros has let out of his shop (notably one in the Modern Museum's Surrealist show)

are sheer bombast, spray-gun and duco only adding volume to the general fanfare.

A much more unobtrusive Mexican, Rufino Tamayo, has patiently furrowed an art, fragile and tenebrous, which soars above the work of most of his compatriots. A young man, only 36, Tamayo has taught art extensively in Mexico and was even appointed chief of Department of Plastic Arts for the Federal Government



WORKERS' RHYTHM

RUFINO TAMAYO

Courtesy Julien Levy Gallery





# CORRESPONDENCE

## ON ARAGON

**A** DISCUSSION of Louis Aragon's essay deserves more time than I have at my command at the moment. With what this fine and sensitive artist is saying to his fellow artists (so strongly summed up in the section "Aragon Answers and Exhorts His Critics") I am in complete agreement. I want him to keep on saying it until they really listen, not only in France, but everywhere.

It is only that part of his essay dealing with photography, which is in my opinion so wrong, that as a photographer I feel correction is necessary. For the truth about photography is also important.

To say that "Man Ray embodies to perfection the classical in photography" is like saying that Coué represents the classical in mental hygiene. The unfortunate but simple fact is that the best of photography has not really been seen in Europe and that is why Aragon has gone so far wrong. Neither Nadar nor Man Ray is a standard of measurement of what photography can be as the projection of human concept, feeling and perception of reality; a reality that is, which has been so particularized and heightened, that we know decisively a work of art, classical or romantic as the case may be, has been created. The best of D. O. Hill, Atget, of Stieglitz or of my own work is the classical standard. Within the considerable body of each man's work can be found, not an escape from reality, but an enrichment of human experience which the materials of photography have been inevitably compelled by the artist to record.

There is no room in this brief discussion to go into a critical analysis of the work of these photographers. I feel confident, however, that if Aragon had been familiar with it he would have spoken differently. He would not, I believe, have found it necessary to attempt to tie up the decadence of painting with the influence of photography. He would have seen that the social forces which have shaped the destiny and development of painting and have also equally conditioned photography were sufficient to prove his point. There has been some interaction of course between the two mediums but this has led most frequently to misconception and sterility on both sides. An Utrillo painted from an Atget print which he bought from the old man for twenty centimes is not one-hundredth as good a

work of art as the photograph. Moreover it is a kind of spiritual theft.

Broadly speaking all artists may learn from each other and do. But I believe that all vital arts result from the artist's direct and actual involvement with the real world. If painters want to use the heroic life and death struggle of the Spanish people as material for their art they should go to Spain as Bresson has done, not borrow from his photographs. Bresson sees and feels essentially through the camera. He is the most talented young photographer I know, not so much in the completeness of the work he has already done, but in direction. He drives the best reportage beyond momentary interest. But this is rather a guide to photographers than to painters. For I believe that the choice of medium in itself bespeaks a particular inner need and a particular form of perceiving reality. Whether the artist chooses words or music, stone or paint, or the photographic image will condition absolutely not the content but the form of his work. What is important is that every medium can be a definite road toward "the triumphant

reality, toward the real flesh and substance of the art which is about to be born." It is this common direction which Aragon so bravely and brilliantly calls for. The urgency of this common direction, is in my opinion beyond discussion.

*Paul Strand*

**L**OUIS ARAGON has stated magnificently the case for photography. He fails, however, to place the camera quite side by side with the palette and leaves it in a slightly subordinate position, making photography an accessory to painting rather than a medium which can stand on its own.

The brush and the camera are both mechanical tools, and oxide of cobalt and silver bromide are both pigments. Only in relative complexity and method of application do they differ. The modern precision camera is a complicated mechanism, but it must not be forgotten that the brush, though much simpler in construction, is nevertheless also a mechanism. And what difference does it make whether a pigment is applied manually with a brush, or physically and chemically by the action of light?

In short, painting and photography are as alike—or as unlike if you wish—as any two mediums generally accepted by the artist today. If lithography, essentially a chemical process, is accepted, why not photography?

The camera should have a place in the equipment of the artist alongside his palette and his pencil, and should be subject to its own particular limitations, which is true of all mediums. Some photographs can stand alone as works of art. It is this writer's belief that the struggles of the workers can usually be depicted far better through the lens than by any other medium. The photograph on the cover of the very issue of ART FRONT in which the Aragon article appeared is a good example. It speaks for itself. Other photographs, however, are useful to the artist only as material to be further developed, to be translated possibly into a medium more in harmony with the particular end to be achieved. But artists may neglect or ignore the camera only for the same psychological and aesthetic reasons that some men neglect gouache for, say, pastel.

The camera will really have won its rightful place when the exhibition catalogue of the future reads something like this: "Paintings, Drawings and Photographs by John Q. Artist."

*Joseph Gower.*



NEW YORK LANDSCAPE FRED BECKER

Woodcut

Courtesy W.P.A.

Prints for the People Show



NEW YORK LANDSCAPE FRED BECKER

# EXHIBITIONS

## SOKOLE

There is an unutterable ease about the way Sokole paints. His paintings distill a love for his medium, an unpretentiousness and a scrupulous honesty which have the effect of concentrating everything into an emotional unit. There is no striving for extraneous effects, no vulgarity of color or brushwork. His canvases of the little village of Verplanck, recently shown at the Midtown Galleries, are authentic evocations of mood and place.

"Quarry on the Hudson" dramatizes the strong rectangles of central buildings without becoming dramatic about it; "White Church" is typically small town in feeling and fresh in pigmentation; "Late Afternoon" features a red house which has a genuine emotional punch.

Everything is quiet and sober in Sokole's work, but somehow the result is one of intensity.

## ABRAHAM HARRITON

Clarity of statement seems to be Abraham Harriton's particular aim, aside from the more fundamental one of championing the cause of labor. In his current exhibition at the A.C.A. Gallery Harriton reveals a thoroughness of conception and execution and a strength of design which gives his work the rounded-out qualities of artistic maturity. Harriton does not add any unnecessary esthetic screenings to the essential realism of his paintings; at the same time he emotionalizes his subject-matter by subtle and judicious distortion.

These subjects are the familiar scenes which abound in American cities. Men at work with shovel and pneumatic drill, old housewives marketing, the blind beggar in the subway, derelicts and unemployed on park benches, etc. With a more affirmative note is the electrifying "Spanish Workers Fighting Fascism" and the richly painted "United Front." Of particular interest to members of the Artists' Union is the courtroom scene where the 219 arrested W.P.A. artists were tried. J. K.

A. C. A., 52 W. 8 St.—Harriton—Jan. 24-Feb. 6. Aaron Goodelman, Sculptor—Feb. 7-20. Samuel Brecher—Feb. 21-March 6.

An American Place, 509 Madison Ave.—Marin to Feb. 3. O'Keefe, Feb. 5-March 9.

Another Place, 43 W. 8 St.—Recent oils by J. Solman through Feb. 9. Paintings by Stella Buchwald, Feb. 14-March 6.

Artists' Gallery, 33 W. 8 St.—Large show of De Hirsh Margules until Feb. 15.

Bignou, 32 E. 57 St.—French paintings through February.

Boyer Gallery, 69 E. 57 St.—Paintings by George Constant, Jan. 18-Feb. 6. Sculpture and drawings by Chaim Gross, Feb. 8-28.

Brummer, 53 E. 57 St.—Zadkine, one of Europe's foremost sculptors through March 15. Review in next issue.

Downtown Gallery, 11 W. 13 St.—Zorach, Fiene, Prestopino, Gugliemi and others.

Guild Art Gallery, 37 W. 57 St.—Sculpture. Jean de Marco and Aaron Ben-Shmuel, Jan. 25-Feb. 6. Foy, Martin, Dirk, Roszak, Liberté, Feb. 8-27.

Marie Harriman, 61 E. 57 St.—Anderson and Dolbrowsky, Viennese painters, Feb. 1-14. Walt Kuhn, Feb. 15-27.

Julien Levy, 602 Madison Ave.—Ferdinand Springer and Leonide, Feb. 1-16. Kristians Tonny, another Gertrude Stein find, Feb. 17-Mar. 9.

Midtown, 605 Madison Ave.—Drawings by William Palmer, through Feb. 14.

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—Return engagement of the Van Goghs for ten days, Jan. 20-Feb. 1. Modern English Architecture and Posters by E. McKnight Kauffer, who ranks with Cassandre, Feb. 9-March 7.

Municipal Gallery, 62 W. 53 St.—Retrospective of last year's group shows, Jan. 12-Feb. 4.

Pierre Matisse, 51 E. 57 St.—Water colors by John Dos Passos through February.

New Art Circle, Neumann, 509 Madison Ave.—Kopman during February.

Valentine, 16 E. 57 St.—Eilshemius during February.

## EXHIBITION

SCULPTURE  
DRAWINGS

### Chaim Gross

February 8-28

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