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Down from the ivory tower: American artists during the Depression

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DOWN FROM THE IVORY TOWER:
AMERICAN ARTISTS DURING THE DEPRESSION

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Susan M. Eltscher
1982
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Approved, December 1982

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated, with love and appreciation, to Louis R. Eltscher III, Carolyn S. Eltscher, and Judith R. Eltscher.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. AMERICAN PAINTING IN THE 1930s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. THE ARTISTS' UNION</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. THE AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V. THE END OF THE DECADE</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION. THE LEGACY</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACRONYMS

AAC. .................... American Artists' Congress
AEA.  .................... Artists' Equity Association
AFL ........................ American Federation of Labor
AU .......................... Artists' Union
CIO. ...................... Congress of Industrial Organizations
CWA. ...................... Civil Works Administration
EWB. ........................ Emergency Work Bureau
FAP. ........................ Federal Art Project
FTP. ........................ Federal Theatre Project
PWAP ........................ Public Works of Art Project
TRAP ........................ Treasury Relief Art Project
UAA. ........................ United American Artists
WPA. .................... Works Progress Administration
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

American artists faced two great changes in the 1930s. The economic collapse of the Depression left them largely without income, as sources of private patronage dissipated in the crisis. For the first time, a large group of artists was thrust, along with millions of other unemployed people, into a struggle for some kind of economic security.

The New Deal was the second change, for its emphasis on work-relief for all levels of society led to the creation of art projects. For the first time, government sponsored art on a large scale and viewed artists as a category of workers.

Artists responded to these changes in their paintings, particularly in a style termed "social realism," through which artists expressed their opinions on the crises of the decade. Poverty, oppression, and civil strife were common themes of social realism.

In their new role as a clearly defined group of workers, artists looked to the growing union movement and its principle of collective action as they formed their own Artists' Union. The main objectives of the Union were to make permanent the government art projects and to unionize artists across the country.

Once the New Deal provided some measure of employment, and the Union illustrated the validity of organization, artists turned to more explicit intellectual and social concerns with the American Artists' Congress. The ACC was the expression of its members' affinity for the decade's liberal intellectualism, emphasizing anti-fascism, anti-war attitudes, and friendliness towards Soviet Russia.

Internal dissension, increased economic stability, and the onset of World War II led to the disintegration of both the Artists' Union and the American Artists' Congress, but their legacy and that of the New Deal projects is reflected in the purposes and programs of organizations like Artists' Equity Association, the National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
DOWN FROM THE IVORY TOWER:

AMERICAN ARTISTS DURING THE DEPRESSION
CHAPTER I
THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

The artist as a rule has been an observer, somewhat removed from the world around him, "a recluse, hidden away in an ivory tower dreaming aesthetic dreams."¹ He has depended upon a system of private patronage for his financial support and as a foundation upon which to build his reputation. Michaelangelo owed much of his success to the interest of the wealthy and influential Medici family, and his is only the most prominent example of an arrangement that, despite its inadequacies, was accepted as the norm by society and by most artists. The artist was free to create, unencumbered by the financial details for which his patron assumed responsibility.

By the early twentieth century that image of the artist had become a caricature. One writer described the stereotypical painter as "an obscure person with long, unkempt hair . . . living in an attic, wearing a beret and black string tie, and having an utter disregard for convention. His was a labor of love. He produced pictures merely because he liked to paint, then sent them to the dealer who made the profit."²
Artists themselves reinforced that stereotype, reveling in unconventional lifestyles, and, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, shocking their audiences with paintings that opened up new areas of aesthetic theory. While some artists pandered to paying customers, others devoted themselves instead to the development of their painting, enriching the world's art, but nevertheless removing themselves even further from most of the world's society. Yet, by the end of the 1930s, hundreds of American artists had become union activists, outspoken anti-fascists, and participants in strikes, marches, and demonstrations.

The changes among American artists reflected changes within American society as a whole, triggered by the financial collapse that signalled the beginning of the Great Depression. Millions of blue-collar workers faced unemployment, and white-collar workers saw their businesses collapse. The federal government faced a country with 15 million out of work, banks that had failed, and the apparent inability of business to cope with the catastrophe. The confidence and prosperity of the 1920s gave way to the despair and uncertainty of the 1930s.

This radical change in society's outlook and prospects led to a similarly radical change in the role of the federal government with the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in November 1932. "Where once there had been apathy and
despondency, there was now an immense sense of movement . . . the spell of lassitude had been snapped."

The spell was broken by the intense activity of the so-called "Hundred Days" of the infant New Deal.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Federal Emergency Relief Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority—all were designed to alleviate the nation's economic burden, to put its people to work, and to form a base upon which reconstruction could begin. The federal government involved itself in aspects of American society in a way that was unheard of before the New Deal. It took upon itself the responsibility for providing the basic needs for its citizens.

This feeling of responsibility was never more evident than in the creation of the Works Progress Administration on 6 May 1935. The WPA was intended not so much as a relief measure as it was to be a program of employment; work was to replace the dole, and, more importantly, people would be hired in positions that made use of their own skills and work experience. The WPA followed on the heels of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and both were headed by Harry Hopkins.

An innovative aspect of both programs was the employment of white-collar workers. The value that the WPA placed on this segment of the population extended to persons in the fine arts as well as in business. The WPA established
programs of work relief for writers, musicians, professionals in the theater, and artists. For the first time, government recognized such professionals as a specific group in need of employment. Artists themselves soon realized that a collective public identity could force a general awareness of their plight, and the art projects helped bring them to this realization.

The Federal Art Project was not without precedent. Roosevelt experimented briefly with hiring artists during his governorship in New York, under the Emergency Work Bureau. The EWB program was phased out in September 1933, but the concept had already been introduced in Washington by that time, and, in December 1933, the federal government began its patronage of the arts with the Public Works of Art Project.

George Biddle, a painter, intellectual, and former classmate of Roosevelt's at Groton and Harvard, was the guiding force behind the Project's creation. (His brother, Francis Biddle, became Solicitor General under FDR.) Biddle believe that art should play an important part in the daily lives of the American people and that the New Deal could play an important part in achieving that goal. He had travelled through Mexico in the 1920s, witnessing firsthand the art of the Mexican revolution as painted by Diego Rivera and other muralists. He felt that American painters could
interpret the New Deal's social revolution in a similar manner.

On 9 May 1933, Biddle addressed a letter to his old school-mate, outlining his hopes for government-sponsored art. He emphasized the value of mural painting because of his experience in Mexico and because he was a muralist himself, but he was an enthusiastic supporter of all the arts. He reported that Diego Rivera had told him that the mural movement could not have succeeded had not President Obregon "allowed Mexican artists to work at plumbers' wages in order to express on the walls of the government the social ideals of the Mexican revolution."\(^6\)

He went on to explain that

The younger artists of America are conscious as they never have been of the social revolution that our country and civilization is going through and they would be very eager to express these ideals in a permanent mural art if they were given the government's cooperation. They would be contributing to and expressing in living monuments the social ideals that you are struggling to achieve.

The President advised Biddle to consult with Lawrence Robert, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and custodian of Federal buildings. Part of his job was procuring art work for those buildings. Robert expressed enthusiasm for the idea and brought Edward Bruce, another Treasury Department employee, in on the plan. Bruce, Biddle, and Robert set up an Advisory Committee, and the Public Works of Art Project emerged from their meetings.\(^8\)
Funding came from the newly created Civil Works Administration. The PWAP was allocated $1,039,000, and the money was divided among workers in three ways: 1,500 artists would receive $35 to $45 weekly, 1,000 would earn $20 to $30, and 500 laborers would receive $15. Pay scale was tied to ability. Sixteen regional committees selected artists for projects on the basis of submitted sketches, and their work became the property of the United States government.

The establishment of a jury process indicated that the thrust of the program had changed. The Project was under Treasury Department jurisdiction because that office was already in charge of the procurement of art for federal buildings. Edward Bruce was the PWAP's chief; Biddle, more an artist than an administrator, returned to his painting shortly after the Project's creation. Bruce had studied painting for several years and shared Biddle's enthusiasm for bringing art more directly into daily life. However, whereas Biddle viewed the PWAP as a way for artists committed to the ideals of the New Deal to publicize its programs, Bruce wanted to hire artists of a high caliber, whose works would create a national interest in and support of art.

The life of the PWAP depended upon the monies it received from the Civil Works Administration, and when the CWA was dismantled in early 1934, the PWAP expired also.
During its four-month history, 3,749 artists created 15,663 pieces of art, including paintings, (mostly oils and watercolors), murals, sculptures, and prints. The art works were housed across the country in buildings supported by taxes.

Bruce discussed the impact of the PWAP in the *American Magazine of Art* March 1934. The Project was exposing the American public to art as never before. It constituted "a definite democratic patronage of art," documenting "the American scene in all its phases." The country thus received the benefits of an increased emphasis on American art. Similarly, the PWAP had discovered talent "where we did not know talent existed" and had given the "average artist . . . a vastly increased demand for his work and the opportunity to dispose of a large proportion of it at a reasonable price."

Bruce reported that artists employed under the PWAP told him that the Project had "broken down the wall of their isolation and brought them in touch and in line with the life of the nation."

As Bruce's report indicates, the PWAP established the precedent for federal sponsorship of the arts. It also affirmed the goals of such programs: employing destitute artists at their profession, increasing the exposure of the average American to the arts, and enhancing the caliber of American art. However, it illustrated in its brief history the problems of trying to provide work for needy artists.
while also sponsoring the production of the highest quality of art. Artists, particularly through the Artists' Union, accused the PWAP juries of making arbitrary decisions in their hiring procedures, choosing an artist they liked rather than one who needed the work.13

Additionally, Bruce was very conscious of the audiences for the works produced and what he termed "the American scene in all its phases" often meant that juries selected paintings of a fairly bland type of realism over abstract art or paintings that made political statements. One jury chairman assured potential audiences that they would not have to suffer from exposure to "the distorted forms of modernistic art."14

Some abstract painting was produced under the PWAP, most notably by Phil Bard; more problems occurred with painters who expressed radical social convictions in their work. A highly publicized instance occurred in San Francisco, where some twenty-five artists were hired to decorate the lobbies and stairwells of the Coit Tower building. After the paintings were completed, officials discovered that several artists had taken the opportunity to express their views with scenes of people reading Communist weeklies and in the frequent inclusion of the hammer and sickle. Outraged San Francisco Art Commission members demanded that the offensive areas be deleted, and Bruce, concerned about the incident's possible effect on future patronage, agreed.
After San Francisco's Artists' and Writers' Union set up picket lines, a compromise was reached; several disturbing elements were painted out, while others, less noticeable, remained.

Such incidents exacerbated the issue of relief employment versus the desire to procure the highest quality of art. Who decided what was "good" art? Should need or aptitude be the first condition for hiring on an art project? Just after the demise of the PWAP, Bruce expressed his concerns to James L. Montague, who had written Bruce requesting employment on a project.

[It was], I think, entirely proper and suitable to make the first qualification the necessity of the applicant to produce works of art. In addition, however, there was the recognized fact that our money came from the Civil Works Administration, and that the fundamental basis of the whole C.W.A. was to put people who needed employment to work . . . I am very much in hopes that ways and means can be found to carry this Project forward on a basis of art rather than relief.

Bruce's desire was realized in September 1934 with the Section of Painting and Sculpture. Like the PWAP, the Section was under the aegis of the Treasury Department, and Bruce headed the program. The Section's purpose, however, was solely to decorate newly constructed federal buildings with art "of the best quality available." Funding came from the Treasury Department rather than from a relief organization, and the Section became part of the Supervising Architect's office of the Procurement Division's Public Buildings Branch.
The Section was unique in that it became, briefly, a department in the governmental hierarchy. In 1938, Treasury Secretary Morgenthau changed its name to the Section of Fine Arts and made it a permanent part of the Treasury Department. However, the reorganization of the executive branch in July 1939 transferred the building program to the Federal Works Agency, invalidating Morgenthau's order. The Section did live on into the 1940s, channeling most of its employees into defense work. 18

The Section, like the PWAP, relied upon a series of competitions to select its artists. Painters, graphic artists, and sculptors submitted unsigned designs to regional juries which sent their recommendations to Washington. The Section eventually held 190 competitions and awarded 1,371 commissions. 19 Its employment level was far below that of the PWAP, despite its longer life, and that brought it under fire from artists' groups. Beyond that, however, its emphasis on artistic quality over financial need made it fundamentally unsound in the eyes of artists worried about their economic welfare. They also did not believe that Bruce's desire for a program supporting the growth and expansion of American art could be fulfilled by the Section.

At a time when all artists are faced with poverty, to give out a few highly paid jobs on the undefinable basis of merit is in itself objectionable . . . The only way to achieve a program of the national importance which Mr. Bruce promises for the contract plan is to open the way for all the artists of the nation to work and produce. 20
The Section's use of the jury system led to charges of censorship and discrimination similar to those levelled at the PWAP. One celebrated incident involved Rockwell Kent, a painter, writer, and keenly observant wit who was an active participant in the leftist movement during the 1930s. He worked for the Section in the Post Office Department in Washington, D.C., depicting the expansion of postal service in two murals, one of mail leaving an Alaskan village and the other of Puerto Rican women receiving a letter. In his preliminary sketches, the letter was blank, but in the final version it contained a message in an Eskimo dialect: "To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends! Go ahead. Let us change chiefs. That alone can make us equal and free."

Former Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson discovered the message, and told officials. Kent thoroughly enjoyed the furor it created, although his colleagues did not share his sense of humor and considered the objections of Section officials a denial of free speech. The Section demanded that the letter be changed to a statement about the expansion of the Postal Service. When Kent refused, a compromise was reached, and the letter was left blank, as in the original sketches.

Such incidents should not obscure the reality that artists were decorating hundreds of new federal buildings, particularly Post Offices. Existing buildings were not included in the Section's mandate, however, and after Congress
appropriated $5 billion under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act in April 1935, Bruce applied to the newly organized Works Progress Administration. He requested funds to hire 500 unemployed artists to embellish nearly 2,000 buildings. The WPA answered with a grant of just over $530,000 that was used to begin the Treasury Relief Art Project.23

Since the money came from the WPA, stipulations required that most artists be hired from the relief rolls, while Bruce and Olin Dows, chief of TRAP, wanted quality to be the first determinant in selection procedures, as it was for the Section. The problems that had plagued the PWAP haunted TRAP as well, and were intensified by the fact that TRAP was under the Treasury's jurisdiction (in the Supervising Architect's office, like the Section), with one set of standards, but was funded by the WPA, with another set of rules.24

TRAP led a shaky existence because of this conflict. When the WPA grant ran out at the end of 1936, the Treasury Department did not apply for another and slowly phased out the program. By 1938, TRAP no longer existed. During its lifetime, its artists produced 89 murals, 65 sculptures, and over 10,000 easel paintings. Peak employment numbered some 350 artists.25

Despite their problems, the PWAP, the Section, and TRAP, by their very existence, indicated the government's
interest in sponsoring American art. William Zorach, a sculptor, spoke for many when he wrote the President in 1936:

"Your administration has for the first time in our history . . . begun something which if continued will develop a great art expression and art consciousness in America. I want to express my appreciation as an artist for the vision which has made possible the development of an American art, and the backing spiritually and financially which the administration is giving artists."^26

Roosevelt supported the idea of sponsoring art because of its inherent value to American society. He indicated as much to Bruce in a letter on the occasion of a public exhibition of Section art:

"the art which a people produces is perhaps the most permanent record of its civilization . . . [I] t seems to me that the decoration of our Federal buildings with painting and sculpture, under a democratic system of competition which gives to all American artists an equal opportunity and which awards commissions on the sole basis of quality, is work in keeping with our highest democratic ideals."^27

However, Roosevelt was also aware of the basic need of thousands of artists for employment. He issued a statement at the time of the dissolution of the CWA affirming that "every effort will be made to continue opportunities for work for the professional groups in need--teachers, engineers, architects, artists, nurses, and others."^28 A little over a year later, the apparatus was in place for a massive program of employment that was designed to provide those opportunities.
Harry Hopkins was placed in charge of the $5 billion WPA organization, and he aimed to hire as many people as possible that were presently on relief. The WPA had as its guiding principle the idea that a relief program should hire the needy for specific jobs rather than merely putting them on the dole, which stripped them of their dignity and will to work. It re-inforced the New Deal's attitude that government had a responsibility toward its workers.

As Hopkins noted, government was the logical choice as the nation's employer, for "in the individual insecurity of the depression, people of all classes began to look to collective action as a way out. This took many forms, but instinctively it involved a looking to the government." 29

The WPA sought to give the needy a normal place in community life on a self-supporting basis. Through work the employable person can maintain and perhaps enhance his skill. He remains a valuable asset to the national economy and stands ready to resume his role in private industry . . . Even more important is the maintenance of morale, forestalling the degeneration that may develop during enforced idleness. 30

People in the employable category included white-collar workers, among them artists. The dignity of the individual could best be maintained by finding ways for him to use his skills, trade, or profession. That concept was as valid for the artist as for the plumber, and, by implication, the artist had skills as worthy of conservation as those of any other laborer. 31

In September 1935, Hopkins and his assistants set up
Federal Project I, incorporating projects in music, writing, art, and the theater; later, an historical records survey was added. The WPA was the sole sponsor of Federal I, and the Projects were administratively related to the Professional and Services Projects Division, along with other white-collar programs. 32

Hopkins named Holger Cahill the head of the Federal Art Project. Hopkins had been assisted in the design for Federal I by Mrs. Audrey McMahon, president of the College Art Association and resident of New York City, where she had been involved in localized relief efforts for artists since 1932. Hopkins asked her to lead the FAP, but she declined. She later served as FAP administrator in New York City.

Mrs. McMahon submitted Cahill's name to Hopkins, who readily hired him. Cahill was a museum curator and writer and an expert on American folk art. His guiding principle as director of the FAP was a desire to make art a part of daily life for the average American. Quality would come from quantity, and good art would emerge naturally from artists who were economically secure.

Cahill's attitude was similar to Hopkins', who said,

Never forget that the objective of this whole project is . . . taking 3,500,000 off relief and putting them to work, and the second objective is to put them to work on the best possible projects we can, but we don't want to forget that first objective, and don't let me hear any of you apologizing for it because it is nothing to be ashamed of.
As an artist, Cahill emphasized the desire to improve the quality of American life through art; as an administrator, he realized the need for mass employment. Biddle's and Bruce's stresses upon quality art were subordinated for the time being, because the FAP was solely under the jurisdiction of a relief organization. The Treasury Department was not related to the FAP, and that alone made it distinct from the other projects.

More important, the size of the appropriation made possible a project of a much broader scope than earlier efforts. By the end of the first year, the FAP employed some 5,300 artists, who were involved in a wide variety of projects. Easel paintings, graphic works, murals, sculptures, and photographs were produced, over 600,000 pieces in all. The Index of American Design sent researchers into the country's backwoods to record hundreds of indigenous elements of American folk art. Community art centers, over 100, were set up around the country. They housed traveling exhibitions and held art classes, lectures, and demonstrations. Schools, prisons, libraries, public parks, and housing developments received the majority of work produced; paintings, especially, were sent to rural districts on permanent loan.

All the programs attempted to employ artists in their fields and to make art a necessary and accepted part of the average American's daily life. Jerome Klein, art critic for the New York Evening Post, judged most the work produced to
be of high quality, and

the consistently high level of quality is maintained in many instances by names that would have remained utterly unknown except for this Government enterprise. Equally important, through its allocation to schools, hospitals and other public institutions, the work is reaching into many communities that have never so much as looked an art work in the face before.

Of the artists hired by the FAP, the WPA required that 90 per cent be from the reliefs, a distinct change from the jury system of the other projects. The budget came from the WPA's appropriations, and FAP administrators had to depend upon annual and supplementary funds, with no assurance of automatically receiving either. In addition, the attitude of conservative Congressmen that art projects were luxuries made their future hazardous each time the budget came up for review.

The variety of art created by the FAP illustrated that censorship was not the problem that it was on the other projects. One reason was that the jury system was not used; another was that need took precedence over "quality art," and a third was that Holger Cahill had more catholic tastes in art than did Edward Bruce. In addition, the sheer quantity of people that the WPA hired was bound to lead to diverse styles in the work they produced.

The FAP lived through the decade, although near the end it faced even more uncertainty as growing conservative strength in Congress led to budget cuts, and the threat of war loomed on the horizon. With World War II, most of the
FAP workers were channeled into defense activities.

Each of the projects--the Public Works of Art Project, the Section of Painting and Sculpture, the Treasury Relief Art Project, and the Federal Art Project--despite varying emphases, grew out of the fact that artists, like other segments of the population, were devastated by the Depression, and, like the others, needed some sort of government support to survive the economic collapse. They each reflected the New Deal's principle that government has a responsibility to its citizens--not only to assure that their basic needs are met, but also to provide them with more intangible benefits--painting, music, theater. Finally, with government support, artists would be free to develop the quality of American art. The aspirations of the projects implied that perhaps the destruction of the Depression could lead to a revitalized American culture, a true democratic patronage of the arts.
CHAPTER II

AMERICAN PAINTING IN THE 1930s

The Depression affected American artists as it did the rest of American society. The New Deal viewed artists as a segment of the population needing employment, and it established programs that both promoted American art and gave artists some measure of economic security.

Both the Depression and the New Deal thrust American artists into a more public role than they had ever assumed before and into an increased involvement with the rest of society. Artists best expressed their feelings about these changes in the themes, subjects, and styles of their work.

Three styles of painting dominated the 1930s: abstraction, Regionalism, and Social Realism. Of the three, abstraction was most influenced by European trends, and it assumed prominence in American painting after World War II through artists like Joseph Stella, Man Ray, Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, and Willem de Kooning.

The growth of abstraction owes something to the Federal Art Project, for a number of its painters, like Jackson Pollock, were able to continue work because of the employment they received from the government. The very nature of non-representational art's concentration on
form over content precluded most comments on specific issues or events. However, some of the work produced during the decade is indicative of the painters' involvement with causes or their realization of the changes they faced. Typical of abstract titles in the 1930s were "Civilization at the Crossroads" (Jolan Gross Bettelheim), "It Can't Happen Here" (Werner Drewes), and "America and Its People" (Ralph Rosenborg).

The other two movements, Regionalism and Social Realism, were both part of an emphasis on American themes that characterized the 1930s in art and music. The Depression made America look inward in an attempt to heal its wounds and understand its condition. Artists saw their mission in trying to help the public understand its own experience.

In the 1920s Malcolm Cowley said: "Art is separate from life; the artist is independent of the world and superior to the lifelings." In the 1930s Edward Hopper remarked that "a nation's art is greatest when it most reflects the character of its people." The Depression brought about that change, and, reinforced by the art projects' emphasis on preserving and enhancing American culture (e.g., with The Index of American Design) and making art a part of daily life, the 1930s became the last decade when artists tried to communicate with "a broad, unsophisticated public." Ideologically, the decade's anti-fascists emphasized that they were preserving American-democratic ideals.
Both Regionalists and Social Realists felt that they were returning American painting to its origins, and they hoped that their efforts would lead to the development of a reliance upon American themes and techniques. The colonial era had been one of portraiture and genre painting, and the landscapes of the Hudson River School had developed in the nineteenth century. More recently, John Sloan, George Luks, and other members of the Ash Can School had drawn their inspiration from American life. As one art critic explained in the American Magazine of Art,

We have found in our painting typical qualities of ingenuity, curiosity, sentiment, drama, and factualism that reflect the substance of America itself. Therefore, though we may admit that we have not yet built up an art tradition that can stand impartial comparison with those of older countries, we need not hesitate to be ourselves and say that our art is what it is—and that it expresses us.4

Regionalists expressed nationalist themes through rural, agrarian, and historic scenes that spoke of the greatness of America. The three leaders of that movement, Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry, headed a coterie of painters based mostly in the Midwest. Trained for the most part in Paris, the Regionalists returned to the United States in the 1930s in a revolt against the growing popularity of abstract art in Europe. Benton, in his memoir, Artist in America, recalled the Regionalists' reasons for returning to the States:

We objected to the new Parisian aesthetics which was more and more turning art away from the living world of active men and women into an academic world of empty pattern. We wanted an American art which was not
empty, and we believed that only by turning the formative process of art back again to meaningful subject matter, in our cases specifically American subject matter, could we expect to get one.5

Regionalists reacted to the Depression by turning away from it, by refusing to reflect "the viciousness of life," as Curry referred to it. He went on to explain that "in this day and age, when millions of people are . . . struggling for a new economic and spiritual order . . . it is the duty of the artists graphically to portray the humanity of the present day in relation to this environment."6

The Social Realists, also dedicated to realism, sought to improve American society by portraying the present day's problems, especially in urban, industrial settings. Their closest artistic relations were the members of the Ash Can School that had flourished at the turn of the century. Those artists had painted scenes of lower-class urban life--boxers, washerwomen, and factory workers. "These artists rediscovered the American scene and brought the gutsy vitality of city streets into the staid salons of the genteel tradition."7

Ash Can paintings reflected the optimism of turn-of-the century America. Social realists, faced with a rapid, drastic change in social conditions, turned their observations on those conditions. In the process, they expressed their opinions, reflecting their awareness of the world around them.

Painter Louis Lozowick, interviewed in the 1960s, recalled that Social Realism, never an organized movement, was nurtured in the conditions of the Depression. "There was simply indi-
vidual artists . . . who painted low life, the Dust Bowl, social struggles."\(^8\) Asked to define the style, he said: "Social realism, it seems to me, is simply an artist's concern with the relation of social forces in his time . . . and his effort to make a positive or negative statement about them"\(^9\)

The themes of social realism were the unemployed, the homeless, the hungry, the dispossessed, war, racial conflict, strikes—painted in a vivid, emphatic manner. Some better-known paintings were Jack Levine's "Feast of Pure Reason," "The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti" by Ben Shahn, Philip Evergood's "American Tragedy," and "The Park Bench" by Reginald Marsh.

Critics fond of Regionalism or abstract painting found Social Realism strident, mannered, and unconvincing. Margaret Breuning of the New York Evening Post concluded after one 1932 exhibition that the paintings concern themselves more with social propaganda than aesthetic ideas . . . Whether the artists have any logical remedies for the evils they deplore does not, naturally, appear in their diatribes against the status quo . . . On the artistic score there is little to be recommended.\(^10\)

For their part, Social Realists had little patience with Regionalism. Most Social Realists were based in New York, and geography as well as conviction separated them from the Mid-western painters of the American scene. They agreed that "Benton and his followers paint mirror representations of American life which they avow so much to love. Revolutionary art aims to tear off the surface veil
of things and expose the thing itself in its naked reality.\textsuperscript{11}

Those who took Social Realism to its extreme as "revolutionary art" believed that dramatic change could come when an artist mobilized viewers into action. To do that, the artist had to believe in what he was painting; he had to be an effective propagandist for his cause. Michael Biro, who designed political posters in Hungary, was asked by the Artists' Union in 1936 to explain his philosophy of art to the Social Realists. He warned them that the artist "who designs agitation posters must have grown up out of the masses and belong to them body and soul."\textsuperscript{12} "The masses" were not only the audience for art, not only the true brothers of the art, but also his inspiration and his subjects.

Such uncompromising views on the role of art led some artists who had been experimenting with abstraction to conclude that only Social Realism could truly express their beliefs. Max Weber, well-known as an abstractionist, altered his style in the 1930s; "I have discarded other pictorial elements, and through strong conviction have chosen to paint the people who toil."\textsuperscript{13} Other abstract painters, most notably Stuart Davis, were active in the artists' organizations of the 1930s while they continued their work in non-representational art. Yet Social Realists felt that their efforts were reflected even in abstract painting.

More and more artists are . . . filling their pictures with reactions to humanity around them . . . Even in the case of some artists who have been working in abstract design, it is interesting to note their concern with social issues and subjects, at least as a source of inspiration.\textsuperscript{14}
New York artists established two schools specifically to train artists in the theory and techniques of this new style of painting. The John Reed Club opened a School of Art in 1930 to help its students develop their talent and put it to use "in the social conflicts of today." The American Artists' School advertised that its students would not be kept in the studio away from real life. "We must have an art that will cope and interlude [sic] with the rapidly changing philosophy of life; an art that will express and convey the new vision . . ." The School's director, Walter Quirt, asserted that the School sought to involve its students in the world around them by "instituting an investigative method of training in the plastic arts." 

Most of the Social Realists believed art could change society, and thus it was an integral part of that society, not a luxury. They also believed that they had a dual responsibility to "the masses": to make art available to them and to speak for them through art by articulating their problems, needs, and dreams. The collapse of private patronage made the development of new markets vitally important to these artists, and, reinforced by the government art programs and their own ideological convictions, they were certain that the common man should be their audience. Their own economic problems made them eminently qualified, they believed, to become the voice of the masses. The artist was a worker with a special calling, and Social Realism was his tool.
CHAPTER III
THE ARTISTS' UNION

Artists have associated among themselves throughout American history. Societies of mutual support, where artists could discuss aesthetic theory and promote their work, have been in existence nearly as long as the Republic. Several of these are the American Watercolor Society (founded in 1866), the Fine Arts Federation of New York (1895), and the National Sculpture Society (1893).

One of the most prominent organizations in the twentieth century was the American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, founded in 1919 in order to stimulate interest in American art "without regard to movements or schools . . . and to bring together artists who are interested in the real development and broad encouragement of American Art."\(^1\) Another was An American Group, established in 1930 in order to "elevate the standards of American art and artists; to foster the general welfare of artists . . . to stimulate popular interest in American painting and sculpture by educating the public concerning its values."\(^2\)

The purposes of both societies--the development of American painting and the "general welfare" of American artists--meant that they became involved in the social and
economic issues of the 1930s. Nevertheless, they were principally concerned with art rather than issues. It was left to the Artists' Union to deal exclusively with problems related to the welfare of the artists.

The trauma of the Depression persuaded many people that unity could achieve more than individuality. The idea of collective action was new to artists, especially since it indicated a sense of group identity. The Depression and the New Deal art projects forced artists to abandon their self-image of separation from the rest of society. The same was true of other white-collar employees who, before the Depression, had considered themselves part of management. With the Depression, they found they had a kinship with the working classes, forged through the shared experiences of wage cuts, job loss, and insecurity.³

As a belief in collective action permeated both blue-collar and white-collar workers, union membership, particularly in the American Federation of Labor, swelled. The AFL, formed in 1886, was the largest union in the country in 1930. Membership had slipped to under three million (5.8 percent of the civilian work force) during the business-oriented 1920s from a peak of five million, but during the 1930s it grew to over eight million (14.6 percent of the civilian work force).⁴

New Deal programs were in some measure responsible for this growth. The Norris-LaGuardia Act, passed in 1932, limited judicial restrictions on strikes and forbade the use
of "yellow dog" contracts, in which workers were only hired when they promised not to join a union. The National Industrial Recovery Act, passed in June 1933, required industry to establish codes of fair competition. Section 7(a) specifically asserted that "employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively." As a result, the AFL was able throughout the decade to enlist thousands of employed and unemployed workers in the union.

The unions of the AFL were largely craft-oriented, and Section 7(a) opened the way for non-traditional groups such as newspaper reporters, motion picture actors, and agricultural workers to organize. Artists were another of these groups, and they felt that their art could only improve through affiliation with other workers. The Romantic ideal of the starving artist was abandoned in the reality of breadlines and Hoovervilles, but perhaps that ideal could be exchanged for a more substantive reality.

[The artist] has abandoned completely his ivory tower complex and has learned that... there is a joy in participating and being part of the general movement of the masses of the people to find expression in a common search for a more abundant life.

Another writer concluded that by "calling itself a union the organization identified itself with the underprivileged. This shattered the old illusion of the lofty position of the artists and publicly put him in the ranks of the unemployed." These artists embraced the idea of being part of the masses, finding it not only inevitable in the face of
economic conditions, but beneficial to their art and to society.

The Artists' Union was formed in New York on the heels of the elimination of the Emergency Work Bureau's art project in September 1933. The artists who came together in protest over the termination of the art project called themselves the EWB Artists' Group. Phil Bard was the leader of the twenty-five or so initial members, many of whom were also members of the leftist John Reed Club. The Group garnered early attention, and several hundred supporters, when it broke up a meeting of the College Art Association of New York in September.

The Association had called a meeting between unemployed artists and the Temporary Emergency Relief Association to discuss the Emergency Work Bureau's closing and to plan a course of action. Bard led a noisy group of supporters demanding that the state develop a new art project.\(^9\)

The Group's increased membership meant a change of name, to the Unemployed Artists' Group, in order to include those artists who had not been affiliated with the Emergency Work Bureau. The new name also indicated an expanded area of concern, from New York to a national effort.

In December 1933, the Group sent a petition to Harry Hopkins (then head of the CWA), urging the creation of a federal art project. The Group, not realizing that discussion on that subject had been going on for several months between
Biddle, Bruce, and Robert, claimed credit for the birth of the Public Works of Art Project. "[We] demanded and won Government support through the PWAP," recalled one writer. The Group considered the PWAP its first major achievement and gained confidence in the power of collective action because of that belief.

With the death of the PWAP early in 1934, the Group became more organized and active. Despite its problems, the Project had been a first step toward providing economic security for American artists. Surely, the Group believed, the federal government could find some way to expand its effort.

The issues raised by the PWAP, particularly those that arose over the need for relief versus the desire for "good" art, and problems of censorship, made an especially convincing case for collective action. The Group adopted the name "Artists' Union" in recognition of its support of the methods and purposes of the trade union movement. The members of the Union thus recognized that they were members of the country's labor force and organized to ensure their equal treatment in that force. Further, the organization of a Union implied that its members intended to make their position a permanent one.

By November 1934, Artists' Unions, based on the New York model (with a membership of 1300 by 1935), had been established in fifteen other cities, including Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Francisco,
and Boston. The number soon grew to over twenty, including state organizations in Rhode Island, Wisconsin, California, New Mexico, and Minnesota.

The New York Union, always the largest, reorganized in 1935 by establishing departments for specific disciplines, including ones for sculpture, murals, commercial artists, and the unemployed. The more formal organizations enabled the Union to devote more time advising other fledgling Unions across the country. In May 1936, the First Eastern District Convention of Artists' Unions was held in New York. Following several more regional conventions and a National Conference of Artists' Unions in Baltimore on 16 January 1937, a National Steering Committee organized United American Artists in April 1937. The UAA incorporated the regional Artists' Unions into a national network, with headquarters in New York.

Early in its history, the Union began to publish a magazine, entitled *Art Front*. It served as the Union's publicist as well as a forum for discussion. According to *Art Front*, the members of the Union were "young, idealistic, anti-capitalistic and looking ahead to a new social order."12

The Preamble to the Union's constitution, reprinted in the magazine's first issue, indicated the Union's aggressive stance:

The purpose of this organization is to unite all artists engaged in the practice of graphic and plastic art in their struggle for economic security and to encourage a wider distribution and understanding
of art. It recognizes that private patronage cannot provide the means to satisfy these needs in their period of grave economic crisis. . . [The Union] demands that the Government fulfill its responsibilities towards unemployed artists, as part of the Government responsibility toward providing for all unemployed workers.13

The same issue discussed the Union's goals. First, and most important, was permanent jobs for unemployed artists, to be achieved through permanent federal sponsorship in all artistic fields. The second object, no discrimination against artistic styles, recalled recent experiences under the PWAP, as did the third, "complete freedom in the conception and execution of work," at a pay rate of $35.25 per thirty-hour week. The Union also intended to work for the election by artists of artists to the boards of museums and galleries. Additionally, the Union demanded "adequate Home Relief until placement on jobs" and passage of the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, H.R. 7598.14 Clearly, the Artists' Union believed that discussions of art and aesthetics would have to wait until artists could be assured of some sort of economic security.

By mid-1935, the Union considered itself well-enough established to apply for membership in the AFL. Not only would membership validate the Artists' Union, but it would also enable the Union to work in closer concert with AFL unions in related fields, such as the American Federation of Musicians and the Society of Modelers and Sculptors. Finally, it would affirm the artists' identification with
laborers in non-related fields.

Phil Bard, President, explained to Union members that joining the AFL would not invalidate the efforts of the Union as an independent union; rather, it was time that all the unions worked together to prevent the federal government from taking advantage of the differences between artists' organizations. Joining the AFL would give the Artists' Union access to AFL locals, "a tremendous base of support, that will achieve things for us." AFL assistance could make the Union's motto, "Every Artist an Organized Artist," a reality. Trade unions had brought the worker most of his benefits over the years, and the Artists' Union wanted to be able to make use of their experience and organizational machinery in its own fight for recognition and fair labor standards.

It was particularly important, the Union argued, for members of the WPA projects to organize, in order to battle the uncertainties of budget cuts and the problems that administrators. The union mounted an all-out drive to get every FAP artist in the Union-sponsored programs in New York. Stuart Davis, social realist, and an organizer of the American Artists'15 Artists' Union, urged FAP employees that the Artists' Union for increase in projects, against lay-offs, the wage cuts, for genuine social and health insurance, for trade union unity, against pauper's oath on the projects, and expression in art as a civil right. Through their struggles in the Artists' Union the members have
discovered their identity with the working class as a whole, and with those organized groups of artist-craftsmen such as wood-carvers and architectural modelers and sculptors in particular.\textsuperscript{16}

The AFL did not comment on the Union's membership in its organization: it simply accepted the artists with other craft and white-collar workers.\textsuperscript{17} In 1937, however, United American Artists, along with other white-collar unions, including the American Federation of Government Workers and the Newspaper Guild, bolted the AFL to join the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations, as the United Office and Professional Workers of America.

The CIO, originally the Committee for Industrial Organization, was formed in 1935 at the AFL Convention, in reaction to the enormous growth of mass industry in the United States during the 1930s. The older, craft-oriented AFL organized its workers according to their skills, a practice that was not easily applied to the modern factory system. At the 1935 convention, the problem came to a head when the AFL refused to extend its jurisdiction to several industrial unions, including those in the rubber, automobile, and radio industries.\textsuperscript{18} The CIO, organized in response to this action, described its purpose as the "encouragement and promotion of organization of the unorganized workers in mass production and other industries upon an industrial basis."\textsuperscript{19}

United American Artists quickly moved to join the activist, politically-minded CIO and supported its use of strikes and sit-ins as effective means of action. The
UAA's social commitments and support of workers' movements made its action inevitable. E.E. Williams, union organizer in New York, reported that in New York City "we are trying to hold our craft unions intact. This has required considerable work as we have taken up against a radical element in our ranks."\textsuperscript{20}

Philip Evergood, New York President, reported to Max Weber that the CIO was to grant the Union's official charter in late January 1938.\textsuperscript{21} In an article in \textit{Art Front Organizer}, Evergood discussed the advantages of CIO membership. The CIO would pick up the cost of publishing \textit{Art Front} (and the result was almost immediately evident in the higher production values of post-1936 issues). More important, \textit{Art Front} would be more widely circulated and would thus "create a great reservoir of sentiment favoring Union activities to build a real people's culture and helping organized labor to better wages, hours, and working conditions."\textsuperscript{22}

The greatest advantage to joining was that it represents four million industrial workers and is the main body of the progressive movement in this country . . . By joining the C.I.O. the Artist for the first time in history becomes an organic part of labor and consequently their work, their problems, and the fight for a permanent native culture have become important vital issues to labor and his personal obligation to these millions of workers.\textsuperscript{23}
To the Union member, joining the CIO was the culmination of his efforts to be recognized as a laborer. The artist's problems were now the CIO's problems, and the CIO could organize support where the UAA could not go. The CIO could send organizers all over the country, something the UAA could not afford to do.

United American Artists in New York became Local 60 of the United Office and Professional Workers of America, with Rockwell Kent as President. The regional members of the UAA followed the New York headquarters' lead. Local 60 in New York brought three organizations together—the Artists' Union of New York (and the headquarters of the UAA), the Commercial Artists' and Designers' Union, and the Cartoonists' Guild. Total membership numbered 2,500 and included chartered local artists' unions in other cities, whose work was coordinated by the National Advisory Committee for Organization of Artists. 24

Along with AFL and then CIO membership, the Artists' Union/UAA affiliated with several other workers' and artists' groups. It joined the Workers' Alliance of America, which consisted of unemployed and WPA workers, and had a reputation for radicalism. 25 A similar organization, the Trade Union Committee of all WPA Unions, was formed by the officers of twenty-seven trade unions to organize labor support for expansion of the WPA. 26

The City Projects Council worked for the unionization of all employees of the four arts projects in New York, and
the Arts Unions Conference consisted of twenty-five "cultural trade unions," including UAA, Actors Equity Association, the New York Musicians Union, and the American Newspaper Guild. The Artists' Coordination Committee acted as a clearinghouse for information and as the united voice of the collective interests of the UAA, the American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, an American Group, and the American Artists' Congress. All of these organizations had as their basic purpose the promotion of solidarity, whether among artists, union members, or WPA employees. There was no more obvious symbol of this solidarity than in marches on May Day, the traditional day of international labor unity.

Art Front announced in May 1936 that "this May Day will unite the ranks of labor in concerted action for their needs." The demonstration, one of many around the world, would be the first since the World War. Not merely a gesture of solidarity, the "tremendous effects of unity of action on May Day will go far toward getting jobs and extending projects, not only for artists, but for all workers in all fields."28

Merchants objected that the rally would disrupt their businesses, but the United Labor May Day Committee received permission to hold a parade. The Committee also issued a manifesto, protesting the proposed lay-off of 700,000 WPA workers and noting that the parade would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the workers' holiday. Forty thousand marched
in the rally, including WPA workers, teachers, lawyers, shipyard workers, Communists, and Socialists. Such a turn-out indicated the broad and varied support for the labor movement and for the Popular Front.  

The following year, the number of marchers swelled to 70,000, with seventy-five trade unions and 100 fraternal organizations taking part. The rally that year, reflecting increasingly tense world conditions, emphasized that union members would march for "PEACE, prosperity, and democracy, against war and fascism" and for solidarity with Soviet workers and "our brothers in Spain." In addition, May Day marchers were rallying "for the maintenance and building of their unions, for higher wages, for industrial unionism, and for the general improvement of their conditions."  

More specifically, in their representation of workers, members of the WPA, and artists, the Artists' Union and other organizations used the classic tools of the labor movement--strikes and sit-ins. Such tactics worked for the CIO, particularly in the rubber industry in 1936 and at General Motors in 1937, and, WPA unions reasoned, they should have some effect in preventing WPA budget cuts.  

The Artists' Union greeted the Federal Art Project as a vital step in the development of government sponsorship, but past experience made them conscious of the need for vigilance. The Union supported WPA programs, especially in
the face of those who considered the art projects frivolous and unnecessary. When budget cuts threatened the projects, as they did with increasing frequency throughout the decade, the Union rallied to "combat the destructive and chauvinistic tendencies which are becoming more distinct daily."31

Cuts in WPA funding were not only detrimental to an artist's economic well-being; they also meant that he had to abandon murals, paintings, and sculpture before their completion. Artists protested that the government was ignoring its responsibility to American culture. "Dismissals from the Arts Projects are made without regard to the cultural significance of those projects. The only point considered is the reduction of costs to meet an arbitrary figure."32 That sentiment was echoed in a petition designed by the Artists' Union to be signed by members of the general public and sent to President Roosevelt. It called upon him and the WPA Administration to stop the dismissal of WPA employees and expand the arts programs. Those who signed agreed with the petition's assertion that the art projects provided cultural benefits that could not exist without them and that the public had mandated the continuance of the WPA.33

One of the most dramatic incidents of protest occurred on 30 November 1936, when police forcibly ejected 219 men and women from FAP headquarters on East 39th Street in New York, following a two-hour sit-in protesting WPA layoffs. The strike was co-sponsored by WPA unions and the City
Projects Council.

Lieut. Col. Brehon B. Somervell, WPA administrator in New York, had authorized the dismissal of 19 percent of FAP workers on 15 December, and the workers had entered the headquarters building, demanding to see Audrey McMahon, assistant administrator. They refused to leave when the offices closed at 5 P.M., and police arrested all 219 in a violent struggle, witness by over 200 cheering supporters of the strikers. 34

Harry Gottlieb, Union official, issued a protest against the police violence and voiced the artists' very real concern that the projects would be discontinued:

The action to cut the Federal art project by one-quarter is only the beginning of the complete dissolution of all relief projects. In its implications it constitutes a flagrant betrayal of the workers of America, who only three weeks ago re-elected President Roosevelt on the strength of his promise to keep workers on the relief rolls until they could be absorbed into private industry. 35

The artists also charged that WPA administrators had planned the police attack on them. 36

Although those arrested were found guilty of disorderly conduct, the incident had enough of an impact that Washington announced the abandonment of its intentions to cut a specific number of people in New York by a specific date. A visit from Mayor LaGuardia to Washington had no doubt had an effect on the decision as well. 37

In return for those concessions and for the reinstatement of 96 people who had been dismissed from WPA projects
for participating in strikes, the City Projects Council, the Workers' Alliance, the Teachers' Union, and the Artists' Union agreed to abandon the use of sit-down strikes. When FAP employees disregarded that agreement the following May, their sit-in was ignored by police. At that sit-in, Chet La More, chairman of the Artists' Union National Steering Committee, demanded that Harold Stein, director of the four arts projects in New York, rescind proposed cuts which strikers feared would lead to the dismissal of one-half their number.

Those cuts, the result of a 25 percent reduction in WPA funding, came in June, and following the dismissal of 550 artists, the Artists' Union sent a letter to its members, reporting that the Union had gotten nearly one hundred workers reinstated and would continue to fight for the rehiring of all of them. The letter went on to report that the Workers' Alliance was planning a National Job March on Washington on 20 August. Dismissed workers from all over the country would march for permanent projects. The letter urged employed Union members to donate money so that the unemployed could afford to participate in the march.

The action followed a similar demonstration by the Workers' Alliance in Washington on 15 January, and a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden on 9 January, sponsored by the Trade Union Committee for the Continuation and Expansion of the WPA. That rally was to emphasize the
Committee's demand for a $1,250,000,000 deficit appropriation from the Congress to extend the WPA until 30 June and to protest that Roosevelt had only asked for $650,000,000. 41

As the decade went on, the increasingly conservative mood in Congress indicated that strikes, marches, and petitions might make some short-term gains but had little effect in the long run. Yet to the Union, the strikers and marchers were performing a vital function, and the battle went on. The spirit of the fight was articulated in a letter to Max Weber from Byron Tudor Harris in February 1938. Weber was considering a trip to Washington to campaign for the continuation of the arts projects, and Harris encouraged him to go:

If you get to Washington, Max, carry the war against the Philistine into his very teeth! It is time all America known [sic] that art is the one sole richly fructifying thing in all life . . . The 'balance of trade,' our tremendous technologies, our wealth, output and monster machines may be the blood and brawn of America--but the movements of America's spirit must be looked for elsewhere! Tell 'em that. Deflate the material show and power complex! The more I go over in my mind the high implications of your address--of which the artist's fight to live in some economic certainty is the groundwork--the more excited I become. 42

Besides using labor's strategies, artists were uniquely qualified to express their opinions through their work. After the January 1937 parade against WPA curtailment, for which Union members had made floats and banners, the concept of permanent Artists' Union workshop had arisen. The workshop would be a place where artists could try
new techniques, use new materials, and quickly produce art work for mass meetings, strikes, and rallies. The workshop would "make the artist a powerful ally of the people in their day-to-day struggles, bringing the art worker closer to workers in other fields, who in their turn would be more disposed to aid him in his own economic struggles."

More traditionally, the Union sponsored exhibitions at its headquarters, at the New School for Social Research, and at the American Contemporary Arts (A.C.A.) Gallery, all in New York. Its opening exhibit, "Artists in Rebellion," prompted one critic to comment: "Considering the brief and turbulent history of the organization there is surprisingly little that is freakish, ultra, or violent in the show."

In response to increasing budget cuts, several Union-sponsored shows were devoted to the works of artists who had been dismissed from the FAP, both to disprove charges that the arts projects were wasteful or "boondoggling" and to give unemployed artists a place to display their works. "Pink Slips Over Culture," a July 1937 exhibition at the A.C.A. Gallery, included the works of over seventy artists dismissed from the WPA after the June budget cut.

These exhibits were indicative of a new attitude among artists, one which asserted that they by right should have a voice in the disposition of their works. They resented the fact that once their work was in a museum, they had very little voice in saying where, when, and for how long
it would be displayed. One of the Union's goals at its founding had been the placement of artists on boards of galleries and museums, in an effort to give artists an equal voice with gallery owners, dealers, collectors, and curators in the establishment of acquisition policies (which often determined the popularity of artistic styles).

An Artists' Committee of Action (co-sponsor of Art Front with the Union for the periodical's first two years) worked for the establishment of a Municipal Art Gallery and Center in New York. The Gallery opened on 6 January 1936 and was used as a basis for setting up galleries all over the city. It was administered by artists.

Just as artists were concerned with exerting some sort of control over their work, they were also interested in ensuring that the work of living American painters would be exhibited in galleries and museums over which they had no control. When the Mellon family bequeathed its art collection to the country, forming the basis of a National Gallery of Art, the Artists' Coordination Committee protested that the conditions of the gift included a self-perpetuating board of trustees that did not contain any artists. If it was to be a true national art museum, it should contain the works of living American artists, and artists should have a voice in its policy decisions.

One particular conflict between artists and museum administrators was the rental issue. The American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, supported by the Artists'
Union, in 1934 began a boycott of museums that refused to pay artists a rental fee of 1 percent of an art work's appraised value when that art work was lent to the museum. The theory behind the rental proposal was that artists frequently had to lend their work to several art museums before one would buy it. In the meantime, artists had to pay for any damages to the frame or the canvas, and, more important, received no income from their work.

The first test of the boycott came in November 1935 when the Society boycotted the Worcester Art Museum's second biennial show. The Museum refused to pay the rental and admitted that the boycott hurt the show, but its Director, Francis H. Taylor, told the Society that he just could not afford to pay rental fees. In the face of similar statements by other museums, the Society finally dropped its boycott in 1937. The Union, however, continued to boycott uncooperative galleries. By the late 1930s, some museums were paying rental fees, including the illustrious Whitney Museum in New York, and, as one editorial explained, "We have talked a lot about integrating the artists with our society and now we must help the artists to work out a plan by which this admittedly desirable end may be achieved." [48]

Members of the Artists' Union did circumvent problems with museums in their own gallery, the A.C.A. Gallery in New York. The A.C.A. was founded by Herman Baron in 1939 as the home of progressive painting, and he was seen as
"the champion of the social-minded artist and the art of the 'social scene.'" Baron later recalled that with the opening of the A.C.A. Gallery, "young artists had a place where to exhibit, and virtually all who struggled for a hearing . . . had their start there. Concerned as I was with art and artists, it was natural that the A.C.A. should become involved in the search for a solution of artists' problems."50

The exhibitions held by the Gallery were generally used to raise money for the causes it supported. Its first show was a benefit exhibition and sale, the profits from which went into a fund for needy artists. As the decade progressed, monies from proceeds went to the Loyalists in Spain, the American Artists' Congress, the John Reed Club, or the Artists' Union.

With the organization of the American Artists' Congress in 1935, the A.C.A. became a place of meeting and intellectual exchange. Most Congress board meetings were held at the Gallery, and artists tended to meet there to discuss problems and plan strategies. By 1938, the Gallery was reorganized with a group of fifteen artists constituting its governing board. In a discussion of this new direction, Max Weber noted that

this is the first time that an art gallery has been formed here with a definite ideological and professional program. The A.C.A. Gallery will be a non-profit, cooperative organization. The policy of the gallery will be, as in the past, to keep its doors open to all artists who have anything to say. Lectures and symposia will be held and every other effort will be made to encourage the people to see the gallery's exhibitions.51
The A.C.A.'s aim was to establish the "first really democratic art center in America" through a system of travelling exhibitions and cooperation with trade unions and other groups. The A.C.A. became the home of the Social Realists, the place where the artists had a voice in policies concerning their works.

The artist also wanted a say in the future of government sponsorship of the arts. Through its four programs for artists, and particularly through the Federal Art Project, government told artists that their work was of value and deserved to be conserved. If that was the case, what provisions would the government make for art once the WPA was finally dismantled? The WPA was a temporary program, designed to hire the employable until they could be re-absorbed into private industry--a concept difficult to apply to artists, especially since they believed that only the government could provide permanent economic security for them. If the government wanted to promote a national culture, it seemed logical that it should include some sort of Department of Fine Arts. The Artists' Union was an avid supporter of the movement to establish such a department throughout its history, including it in its first list of goals in 1935.

Proposals for permanent federal sponsorship of the arts were presented by numerous organizations and individuals through the decade. On 13 May 1934, for example, thirty-eight interested persons submitted a plan for a Ministry of Fine Arts
to Roosevelt. Sponsors of the plan included George Biddle, Walter Damrosch (later head of the Federal Music Project), George Gershwin, Charles Dana Gibson, Eugene Ormandy, Leopold Stokowski, and Thornton Wilder. The Ministry would be "a non-political office through which the artists of the country could speak, and which would offer encouragement to the arts, both at home and abroad." 53

Such a plan, proponents believed, would further encourage the development of art all over the country, would employ countless artists, and would enhance America's standing in the world art community. Most European countries had some sort of ministry for the arts, and, supporters argued, it was time the United States take her rightful place as a contributor to and patroness of the arts.

The American Artists' Professional League submitted the results of a survey of its members to the President in November 1934, reporting overwhelming support for a Secretary of Fine Arts, as an appointed office at the federal level. The position's non-partisanship, added the League, would extend to factions of art as well as of politics. The person appointed to such a position should be

essentially a philosopher, but in the field on the Arts, with also the practical qualities of an executive. Such an [sic] one would envision the arts of the nation as a whole, sympathetically, without being a fanatical adherent of the whims of passing fashions in art." 54

Similar requests were made by the American Guild of Musical Artists, Inc. in 1936, the Fine Arts Foundation in 1934, and individuals, such as Robert G. Tatum of Nashville, Tennessee. 55
In March 1935, the first plan reached Congress when William Sirovich, Representative from New York, put forth H. J. Resolution 220 for the establishment of an executive Department of Science, Art, and Literature, headed by a Secretary and three Under Secretaries. Sirovich's hearing before the House Committee on Patents (of which he was chairman) were the first to discuss the proposal at the Congressional level. The hearings proved inconclusive. Sirovich later submitted the same plan as H. J. Resolution 79 in January 1937.56

Early response in the art community to a Department of Fine Arts was not all favorable. Painter Charles Burchfield believed it inevitable "that a permanent organization would eventually be run by 'official-minded' people," for the creative artist has neither the time nor the ability to "run things, and naturally the dull official or academic mind takes control."57 Another artist added:

The forces of regression and stupidity are always with us trying to make our world aesthetically as well as socially a static thing. They try to impose upon us their sterile forms, and if they fail with logic or will, they seek to do it with law and officialdom and the proposed ministry of art is a move in that direction. 58

After the WPA began, for the first time the machinery existed to establish a large-scale Department relating to the arts. As budget cuts threatened with increasing frequency, the Artists' Union, particularly after its affiliation with the CIO, began to lobby for the passage of a plan before the arts projects were legislated completely out of existence.
We insist that the government no longer treat the cultural projects lightly, merely as a question of unemployment... Their successes must be consolidated as a permanent feature of our national life, a feature of which we can be proud and to which the whole world will look to emulate us. To destroy this program, on the false plea of economy, would be to show contempt for the intellectual pride and the democratic spirit of this country.59

Max Weber agreed, saying in 1937 that since its establishment, "the Art Project has proven itself to be an indispensable cultural asset to the nation... and to dismantle it now, or in the future, would be a great and irretrievable national cultural calamity."60

A Department of Fine Arts would ensure that the progress made by artists in the WPA would not be lost, and the UAA soon endorsed a proposal that it believed could succeed. Termed the Coffee Pepper Bill (S. 3296 and H.R. 9102), or, more simply, the Federal Arts Bill, it was the work of Representative John Coffee (who originally introduced the Bill in August 1937) and Senator Claude Pepper. Jointly introduced by them in the House and Senate on 21 January 1938 it included contributions by the New York Artists' Union, which had been working on a draft of its own.61

The Coffee-Pepper Bill's main distinction from earlier proposals was that it planned to incorporate the art projects into a Bureau of Fine Arts, transferring both responsibilities and employees from the WPA. The Bill provided that the Commissioner of the Bureau and six members (one for each of the arts) would be chosen from names compiled by
"organizations representing the greatest number of artists employed in each of the arts." The position would be Presidential appointments.

Olin Downes, music critic of the New York Times, expressed a general concern over this method when he said that "it would be possible for minority pressure groups to put up members of their choice for office. That is dangerous if not pernicious." Minority pressure groups were commonly understood to be unions, and the number of unions who supported the bill alarmed conservatives. Union support so incensed the Bronx American Legion that it adopted a resolution stating in part: "the above bill in its construction would establish the so-called bureau of fine arts, under the auspices of un-American and communistic groups who would use the machinery for the spreading of un-American and communistic propaganda." The Legion resolved to reject the Coffee-Pepper bill.

Most critics, while not as outspoken as the American Legion, agreed with Dorothy Grafly of the Philadelphia Record, who stated that "rule by unions may result in ... totalitarianism. It also gives no voice to the many artists with no union affiliations." In the opinion of the Fine Arts Federation, the Coffee-Pepper bill was "an effort to organize artists into labor groups [and] affiliate them with Labor as Labor, not as Art." The Artists' Union's efforts to be recognized as a worker's
organization did not serve it well in the debate over the bill.

The problem of hiring for need rather than ability came up in Section 6 of the Coffee-Pepper bill, which provided that most WPA artists would be transferred to the new Bureau, with the caveat that regional committees would have "sole authority to determine all questions of eligibility, competence, and assignment of artists to employment under the Bureau." Regional committees might be subject to the same pressures from unions as the central Bureau, but more important, since the artists would largely be chosen from the WPA programs, the Bureau would not be of Fine Arts, but rather of Permanent Relief. Although it was acceptable to have relief be the controlling factor of the WPA arts projects, critics felt that ability should be the main consideration for a permanent Bureau. George Biddle believed that the Bureau would run into the same problems as the WPA, taking "artists off the relief roll without insuring them the same degree of security as the present works relief program," for in years of economic distress, politically aware Congressmen will vote money for relief and works programs, "but the last thing they would vote for would be a substantial fund for the annual budget of a Bureau of Fine Arts." Proponents emphasized that the unions were devoted to high quality American art and that the Bureau would enable that art to develop most fully. The WPA projects had
accomplished a great deal, they believed, and the bill
"is devoted to continuing upon a permanent basis the work
that the Federal Arts Projects in diverse fields have
undertaken." Most of all, advocates of the bill emphasized
the permanency of the Bureau. "With constant dread and
apprehension of dismissal from the project, an artist's
full natural function of his creative faculties are retarded." And, as Philip Evergood announced to the Second
American Artists' Congress, "The nation is desperately in
need of legislation . . . which will make American culture
a permanent impulse in the nerve center of its government." In remarks before Congress in February 1938,
Representative Coffee asserted that the WPA art projects
were the beginning, but that they needed to be made permanent
so that all Americans could enjoy their rightful heritage
of art, music, and theater.

We spend seemingly limitless sums in this Congress
for the preservation of birds in the sky, beasts in
the forests and insects in the ground. But so far
we are adamant in our resistance to attempts to
subsidize the theater, artists and intellectuals in
these United States . . . Passage of the bill . . .
means the commencement of the struggle to make art the
common possession of every citizen in America.

The Federal Arts Bill finally reached the floor of
the House for debate on 15 June 1938. By that time, Coffee,
Pepper, and Sirovitch had come up with H.J. Resolution 671,
in which they attempted to deal with the issues that most
opponents stress--the exclusion of relief from the program,
the need for more democratic control of the Bureau, and
a method for choosing administrators that would not be prone to political control.

The proposal called for a Federal Art Bureau within the Department of the Interior. The director of the Bureau would be appointed by the President, as would his five assistants. The problem of relief was handled in Section 3c: "At any time in his discretion, the President may transfer to the Bureau any right, title, or interest held by the Works Progress Administration in any of its arts projects and activities." Whatever remained within the WPA arts projects would continue undisturbed.

One observer noted that the "new . . . resolution . . . is an even stronger bill than the Coffee-Pepper bill, since the committee drafting it took advantage of the public testimony and struck out those few weak clauses that had caused objections." Opponents, however, did not think the new proposal was workable either. The Saturday Review refused to endorse the bill, saying that it is in favor of the continuation of relief as long as it remains necessary. But we are not in favor of the proposal to perpetuate a department of relief on the spurious and irrelevant grounds that it will contribute to our cultural development.

The measure was debated on the House floor on the last day of the third session of the 75th Congress. Its most vocal opponent was Representative Dewey Short of Missouri, who opposed both the creation of any new government agency and the idea of permanent federal sponsorship of the arts.
Dr. Sirovich . . . tells us that American has come of age culturally. Well, we have done it without the help of any Federal Bureau of Fine Arts . . . The gentleman also admits that art is an individualistic thing . . . Subsidized art is no art at all. 77

After discussion ranging from Kant to Charlie McCarthy, Representative Adolph Sabath of Illinois suggested that the measure be tabled "until such time as it may receive the merited consideration it deserves." He was reinforced by Representative Case of South Dakota, who felt that the debate was taking up valuable time that should be spent on more pressing issues, such as the world arms race and the situation in China. As a result, the bill was tabled, 195 votes to 35. 78

Other proposals were put forward, including another Coffee-Pepper-Sirovich effort in February 1939 (H.J. Resolution 147), and ones by Walter Damrosch, the Federal Arts Bill Committee of Chicago, and a group of artists and art lovers in Philadelphia. 79 Yet, none of the others reached the House, which, by 1939, was primarily concerned with the impending war in Europe and the military buildup at home.

It is important to realize, however, that the New Deal art projects had made art so pervasive that, with or without a Department of Fine Arts, American artists did have the satisfaction of seeing awareness of their plight, their talents, and their importance to the nation increase through the decade. That, combined with the success of collective action through the Artists' Union, gave them the
confidence to form another organization, The American Artists' Congress.
CHAPTER IV
THE AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

By 1936 the FAP was well-organized, and it afforded some measure of economic stability to its employees. Artists' Unions existed all over the country, and the New York Union had assumed the role of a national headquarters. With a Union organized to deal with basic issues of economics, and the federal government also assuming some of that burden, artists felt free to turn their attention to world affairs and matters of ideology.

The artists discussed in previous pages tended to be members of the liberal intelligentsia, a group stunned by the enormity of the Depression.

The depression had done more than disturb their lives; it had ripped apart the fabric of their values and beliefs, leaving them cold and shivering in the winds of uncertainty... [They] came rushing in quest of a system... they wanted to feel that at the very moment the world was being shattered, they had found the key to its meaning.

In a search for new foundations, something new to believe in, some liberals turned to Soviet Russia as an alternative to the capitalist system. They saw the growth of fascism in Germany and Italy as an enormous threat to world peace and the future of democratic freedoms and hoped that some kind of Soviet-American alliance could stop Germany.
Having lived through the horrors of World War I, they had no desire to participate in another conflict. The Depression's domestic problems demanded the nation's full attention, and the country's isolationism reinforced liberals' anti-war stance. The American League Against War and Fascism was organized in reaction to Hitler's rise to power. Its slogan, "Keep America Out of War by Keeping War Out Of The World," succinctly expressed the movement's emphasis.

Persons in the arts felt a particular attraction to anti-fascism. They opposed war and fascism for their inherent evil; beyond that, however, they saw their mission in protecting culture against these menaces at home and abroad. The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism issued a "Statement to American Writers and Artists," which said in part:

Democracy under industrial capitalism can offer no permanent haven to the intellectual worker and artist. In its instability, it becomes the breeding ground of dictatorship, and such liberties as it grants us today, it will violently revoke tomorrow. In the revolutionary reconstruction of society lies the hope of the world, the promise of a free humanity, a new art, and unrestricted science.

If the artist was a worker, his gifts enabled him both to speak for his fellow-workers and to warn them of dangers. "Artists are of all people the most liberty-loving and individualistic, and that is the reason they have been among the first to organize against a common enemy to preserve their freedom as artists and citizens." Some artists
contended that they were interested only in art and not in other matters, but "it is necessary to point out that we too are interested primarily in art, but we realize that the creation of important art is a social phenomenon and does not begin and end in the studio of the artist."^5

That statement was made to its members by the American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism, and group modeled after similar anti-fascist organizations, but concerned primarily with the artist's role in the anti-fascist movement. The AAC was organized in 1936 out of a commitment to the movement and also because artists' concern over employment was eased somewhat by the New Deal and the efforts of the Artists' Union. Like the Union, the AAC moved beyond the idea of organization solely to discuss art and aesthetics.

The AAC was well aware of its debt to the Union. Stuart Davis, executive secretary of the Congress, reported that in the struggle for adequate government support of art the Artists' Unions all over the country have taken the leading role. Through the courage and foresight of these organizations of workers on the art projects, other artists have learned the need for a new type of artists' organization to meet new conditions in the field of art.6

For its part, the Union welcomed the formation of the Congress, pledging to support the AAC in all its programs.

We of the Union, in our own way, have carried on the same battles against the same reactionary forces which it is the purpose of the Congress to combat. Of course, the Congress must take the initiative in the defense of civil liberties, for freedom of expression in art, and against any manifestations
of fascist tendencies. The Congress must do everything possible to forestall war, and should be in the van [sic] of this movement.7

Similarly, the AAC endorsed the government art projects, trade unionism among artists, and the establishment of a Department of Fine Arts, passing resolutions in support of those measures at its Congresses.8

The founders of the AAC were inspired by an American Writers' Congress held in New York City in April 1935 and a Congress for the Defense of Culture in June. Sponsors included familiar names in the leftist movement, such as Stuart Davis, Herman Baron, Lewis Mumford, and Rockwell Kent, and in the summer of 1935, they sent out a formal Call to the first American Artists' Congress. Comparing their organization to the Armory Show of 1913, the founders asserted that the impact of the Congress would be in its discussion of ideologies in political, economic, cultural, and aesthetic aspects, as opposed to the Armory Show's innovation in aesthetic theory and technique.9

Artists of "recognized standing in their profession" who were concerned about world events were invited to the Congress. The artist faced a constant economic threat because of temporary and inadequate art projects, as well as "a constant attack against his freedom of expression" through censorship of art works. "A picture of what fascism has done to living standards, to civil liberties, to workers' organizations, to science and art, the threat
against the peace and security of the world, as shown in Italy and Germany, should arouse every sincere artist to action." Such conditions could come to the United States unless artists spoke out. "We artists must act. Individually we are powerless. Through collective action we can defend our interests. We must ally ourselves with all groups engaged in the common struggle against war and fascism."¹⁰

The sessions were held in New York from February 14 to 16, 1936. Membership numbered some 400, and over 2,000 people attended the public session on 14 February, with Lewis Mumford as the chair. That session featured Stuart Davis, who called artists to join in "a powerful organization of all artists of recognized standing to work through every medium, . . . which would support every other progressive group on common issues, in defense of cultural freedom and for economic security."¹¹ Additional speakers, including Rockwell Kent, George Biddle, Joe Jones, Lynd Ward, and José Clemente Orozco, spoke on a variety of concerns, including the growth of fascism, art in other countries, and the importance of labor unions to the artist. Reporters noted an emphasis on anti-fascism, and the New York Times reminded artists that fascism was not the only danger to culture; Russia had just banned Dimitri Shostakovitch. Artists should "try to formulate policies that grow directly out of their own needs and ideals rather than to concern themselves au fond with political and philosophical ideas that may or may not prove effective
Four private sessions were held over the next two days at the New School for Social Research, attended by members and guest delegates. The general theme for discussion at the first session was "Artists in Society," and speakers concluded that art cannot exist unaffected by social forces. The second session dealt with "Problems of the American Artists," which were specified as fascism and issues in government support of the arts. The third session concentrated on artists' economic problems, and the fourth on the situation of artists in Mexico, an area of particular interest not only for its geographical proximity, but also because its artists were considered leaders in the movement for social art.

Over twenty members of the Congress spoke in the various sessions, and following the discussions, the AAC passed a number of resolutions on issues of particular concern. These included a pledge to combat war and fascism, an endorsement of Artists' Unions "as the best instruments to work for the continuance and enlargement of government art projects." approval of the rental policy developed by the American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, and several condemnations of allegedly reactionary actions against several murals. Finally, the Congress set itself up on a permanent basis as the League of American Artists, (although the name soon reverted to the American Artists' Congress). A National Executive Committee of forty-seven members was named, and the Committee decided that "a group
of five or more members in any one locality would constitute an autonomous group, planning its local activities in line with the decisions of the national executive body."

By late 1936, AAC membership numbered 550, and regional branches had been organized in New York, Cleveland, St. Louis, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Chicago. The regional groups often worked closely with Artists' Unions in those cities and sponsored travelling exhibitions on themes of concern to the Congress, most notably on "War and Fascism."

Shortly after the Congress sessions, the Executive Committee published the AAC's Constitution and By-Laws, which emphasized its stress on collective action, anti-fascism, and the defense of culture. It intended

1. To unite artists of all aesthetic tendencies to enable them to attain their common cultural objectives.
2. To establish closer relation between the artist and the people and extend the influence of art as a force of enlightenment.
3. To advocate and uphold permanent governmental support for the advancement of American art.
4. To support other organized groups on issues of mutual interest in an effort to develop and maintain conditions favorable to art and human existence.
5. To oppose all reactionary attempts to curtail democratic rights and freedom of expression, and all tendencies that lead to Fascism.
6. To oppose War and prevent the establishment of conditions that are conducive to the destruction of culture and are detrimental to the progress of mankind.

The most obvious enemy of democracy was Hitler's Germany, and the AAC's first campaign was a boycott of an art exhibition to be held in Berlin in conjunction with the Olympic Games in August 1936. The boycott reflected not only the Congress' concern over the militaristic aims of Nazi Germany, but also over its program of official art designed to further the regime's aims. The Nazis boasted of a new
'mass aesthetic," one for all the people. Modern art was banned, as was art criticism, and the Nazis looked to 19th century painting for inspiration, building on existing traditions and continuing trends begun before the advent of modern painting. Strictly controlled art was used in a theatrical sense by the Third Reich, a necessary condition "for the existence and political practice of a system suffering from an overwhelming lack of legitimation." 18

The AAC joined religious and political organizations that favored a general boycott of the Olympics. No Christian Century editorialized, "after two and a half years of systematically breaking down independent organizations and exploiting sport for political ends, [Nazi Germany] cannot qualify by a promise to suspend discrimination for two weeks next year." 19

The Congress issued a protest against the exhibition at its February meetings and endorsed a boycott. Its members refused to participate in a show they feared would lend legitimacy to the Nazi regime. Louis Lozowick, invited to exhibit his "Rockport Quarries" in the Graphic Arts section of the show, was assured that the "exhibition is being managed, as in the past forty years, by the International Olympic Committee and not by the German Government, which is only arranging for the exhibition space." 20

Lozowick remained unresponsive, replying that he had lived and studied in Germany for years and did not believe that art could be free there, or that he could participate
in the exhibition without appearing to condone fascism.

He concluded,

It is hard for me to comprehend how any one in the slightest degree progressive, in the slightest degree solicitous about art, can aid and abet a regime of black chauvinists, cultural obscurantists, book burners; a regime of reactionaries who openly glory in their medieval practices. My reply to your invitation is most emphatically NO.

The boycott of the Olympics was followed by one of an international exhibition in Venice in April. Members of the American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers refused to participate because exhibition organizers would pay no rental fees, and AAC members boycotted because it was being held in a fascist country. The American pavilion was cancelled as a result, and boycotters of both shows participated in a rebel exhibition in Amsterdam, "The Olympic Games under a Dictatorship." The show opened in August 1936, concurrent with the games, and consisted of works both by boycotters and by artists banned in Germany.

Later, boycotting efforts extended to German art work. When the Art Institute of Chicago sent invitations to Germany for its International Exhibition of Lithography and Wood Engraving, the Congress responded with a warning that artists could no longer treat Germany as they had before 1933. The German artist was not free to paint as he wished, and the Art Institute, through its exhibition, "accepts the German art world on the Nazi's terms. It fortifies Hitler in his position of cultural dictatorship and gives the stamp of implicit approval to the system of repression
that has fastened itself to the German artists."  

With the onset of the Spanish Civil War, the AAC, under the aegis of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, committed itself to support of the Loyalist cause. The North American Committee was headed by Bishop Francis J. McConnell and the Reverend Herman F. Reissig of the Methodist Episcopal Church and served as a loose organization of Popular Front members, including the American League Against War and Fascism and the American Socialist and Communist Parties. The Congress and the Artists' Union especially supported the Medical Bureau of the Committee, co-sponsoring an American Writers and Artists Ambulance Corps. It also became involved in other programs related to the effort, such as a Foster Parents Plan for children in Spain, and a People's Boycott on trade with aggressor nations.

Artists passionately supported the Loyalist cause, seeing in the Spanish Civil War a confrontation between the forces of fascism and of democracy; with the future of world hanging in the balance. "We cannot do too much for [the Spanish Loyalists], and no matter how much we do we cannot escape the fact that we are doing as much if not even more for ourselves. They are bleeding for us. Their victory will be ours, their defeat a terrible setback for all of civilization," Max Weber wrote Herman Baron.

Support for Loyalist Spain largely involved raising money, and to that end the Congress held exhibitions,
usually at the A.C.A. Gallery, with proceeds of sales going to the Loyalist cause. It used the same method to raise money for other causes as well as to pay for its own administrative costs. As with the shows of the Artists' Union, social realism was the prevailing style at these exhibitions. In July 1936, the AAC held a competitive exhibit, juried by Congress members. A critic noted that "much of the work is so social in theme as to be on the borderline of propaganda or cartoon, or even over the line." Competitions were rare; usually, a show was held either to raise money or as a general membership exhibition, with no jury and no limitation on subject.

In October 1936, the Congress held an exhibition for the Popular Front at the A.C.A. In December of the following year, the gallery mounted "An Exhibition in Defense of World Democracy, Dedicated to the Peoples of Spain and China," held in concurrence with the Second American Artists' Congress sessions. Edward Alden Jewell, art critic for the New York Times, commented that

If the wars in China and Spain aren't stopped, and if application of the democratic principles isn't achieved on a world-wide basis, the fault cannot be attributed to any lack of earnestness on the part of the American Artists' Congress.

The show's theme was the curtailment of civil rights at home and abroad. It included paintings by Ilya Bolotowsky ("Air Raid"), William Gropper ("Sniper"), Margaret Bourke-White ("Georgia Chain Gang"), Harry Gottlieb ("Steel Town Company Street"), Picasso ("Dreams and Lies of France"), and
drawings by school children of Madrid.\textsuperscript{29}

The exhibition catalogue noted that the show was an example of artists' awareness of world affairs and their acceptance of a responsibility to work for what they believed in.

[Artists] are abandoning the easy policy of laissez faire. They are clarifying their philosophy, planning and carrying out a program. They are assuming the dignity of leadership in the department of human life wherein they are equipped by professional practice for meeting the rigors of the esthetic winter needlessly imposed on the nation by the thought habits of our time.\textsuperscript{30}

Not all shows were related to a specific cause. The AAC held its first national membership exhibition from April 16 to 24, 1937. It did not have a jury, and any theme was acceptable. The show was set up on a regional basis, in order to reach a broader public, with cooperation from AAC branches in Portland (Oregon), Cleveland, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Baltimore, New York, and Chicago. Artists contributed works on a variety of themes; critics noted that the lack of a jury system meant that good, bad, and indifferent art was accepted, and that in many works it was difficult to find a specific social message.\textsuperscript{31}

Another show, at the A.C.A. Gallery in November, included oils, watercolors, drawings, and prints by over 100 artists, including Stuart Davis, Moses and Raphael Soyer, William Gropper, and Philip Evergood. Proceeds from the sale of works for $10 a piece went into the general fund of the Congress.\textsuperscript{32}
The AAC's most ambitious artistic project was "America Today," a show of graphic art in 1936 that resulted in a book of reproductions the next year under the same title. Prints were reproduced in enough quantity so that identical exhibitions ran simultaneously in thirty cities, in order to bring "art into the lives of people who have been without it." The use of regional exhibits also indicated artists' awareness of the need to develop public patronage. An exhibition of graphic art was chosen for this reason.

The American Artists' Congress is attempting to help the artist reach a public comparable in size to that of the book and motion picture, and to bring the artist and public closer together by making the print relevant to the life of the people, and financially accessible to the person of small means. It is trying to bring about that healthy interaction between artist and public which alone can develop a great popular movement in American art, and re-establish the high traditions of such masters of the print as Dürer, Callot, Rembrandt, Goya, Hogarth, and Daumier.

In discussing the show, Lynd Ward, a member of the AAC's executive committee, explained that artists were also aware of the need to fight for freedom, the only condition under which art can flourish.

The artist must have complete freedom of expression, freedom to deal with any aspect of life without hindrance . . . He must have an audience that is in its turn free, not bound down by taboos and superstitions or kept from contact with art by barriers of another sort, lack of education, lack of leisure, lack of money to buy and to own.

The number of themes and styles contained in the exhibition indicated the variety of AAC members' concerns,
as well as their commitment to their art. Some work was in the social realist manner, other pieces were abstract, and still others were done in a simple realism. Pieces ranged from Doris Lee's "Corn Field," a simple farm scene, to Maurice Merlin's stark "Black Legion Widow" to Allen Fruhauf's satirical "Baseball Team," a portrait of the members of the Supreme Court. 36

Despite its members' varied interests, the AAC's program remained, as its motto stated, "For Peace, For Democracy, For Cultural Progress." Increasing threats oversees--Italy's war in Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, Nazi Germany's blatant militarism--as well as conservatism in America, convinced the Congress that it must work even harder to fight anti-fascism, particularly in concert with like-minded organizations. In 1937, the Congress stated that

our actual basic unity of purpose with progressive workers' organizations, unions, anti-Fascist societies, etc., has not been fully realized. It remains a potentiality which we must strive to develop since we have a common cause, and a large general public whose interest are affected by these problems. 37

Yet, the Congress felt that it had already accomplished a great deal, having already gained for itself a place of respect and influence in the sphere of American art. In the coming months we must consolidate our resources through better organization, the establishment of new Branches, and by a militant economic, social and cultural campaign which concerns the welfare of the American artist. 38

Concern over world events dominated the Second American
Artists' Congress, held in New York in mid-December 1937. Members and supporters of the arts came together to affirm their opposition to fascism and their "determination to defend democratic liberties and freedom of expression." Holger Cahill spoke at the opening session on the Federal Art Project as the only hope for the future of American art, and resolutions were passed in favor of the Federal Arts Bill and the Artists' Unions, but the majority of time was spent in discussion about the growth of fascism.

Resolutions passed included protests against militarism, fascism, the Japanese attack on China, and the Spanish Civil War, and support of a boycott of Japanese goods, the passage of Federal anti-lynching legislation, and the defense of democracy.

Messages from two fellow artists strengthened members' resolve. One was sent by writer Thomas Mann, exiled from Germany in Switzerland. Read by his daughter, it saluted the Congress for its efforts "against those barbaric elements which today endanger all that we understand by civilization and culture and all that we love." Picasso had been invited to speak on what would have been his first visit to the United States, but illness detained him in Europe, and he sent a message that read in part, "I have always believed, and still believe, that artists who live and work with spiritual values cannot and should not remain indifferent to a conflict in which the highest values of humanity and civilization are at stake."
Artists affirmed their membership in the world community through participation in the American Artists' Congress. Artists were clarifying their social philosophy and program and explaining their position to the American people. By so doing, they accepted and tried to meet their responsibility to the future of American culture. Their commitment would be sorely tested by world events.
CHAPTER V
THE END OF THE DECADE

The last years of the decade were marked by a growing conservatism at home and the increasing threat of war abroad. Artists had faced budget cuts throughout the decade, but conservative strength in Congress increased, especially after the failure of FDR's purge in 1938, and the WPA came under the scrutiny of more determined budget-cutters. "To liberals and ractionaries alike it was obvious that nothing short of a marked change in Congressional membership—or a renewal of economic crisis—could destroy the conservative blocs in both houses."¹

The art projects were especially vulnerable because of their "impractical" nature, and their support in Congress was limited, as discussions about the Federal Arts Bill revealed. Roosevelt realized the danger that the projects were in, but his power to do anything about it was diminishing.

There is no question that all of these people, perhaps the artists even more than any others, have done an amazingly constructive piece of work which has made itself felt throughout the country . . . [I]t is extremely difficult for the average Member of the House or Senate to realize the importance of continuing the projects in some form . . . Unfortunately there are too many people who think that this type of white collar worker ought to be put to work digging ditches like anybody else."²
Added to the problem of budget cuts was conservatives' anti-communist fervor, which focussed on artists and intellectuals. Earlier in the decade, Representative Edward A. Kennedy proposed that all teachers be required to take a loyalty oath. "The menace of communism and socialism are abroad in the land and the real and great danger is in the child—the chief prey of these disloyalists." The National Republic charged that Communists had set up a "cultural front" in the United States.

Conservatives found a specific target in the WPA arts projects, particularly in the Federal Theatre, which was the most radical of the four. The House Subcommittee of Appropriations, which verified WPA administrators' requests for funds, became known as the Woodrum-Taber Committee in 1938 and 1939. Clifton Woodrum, a conservative Democrat from Virginia, and John Taber, a New York Republican, began to investigate Federal I, both on the grounds of subversive activities and in disagreement with the supposition that government should sponsor the arts. The arts projects were both radical and wasteful, the Committee charged, and it conducted a number of interviews with persons involved with the arts, particularly in New York.

Workers on the projects were asked to respond to a questionnaire which asked such things as where the respondent received his art training and the type of work he did. He was also asked about his membership in any unions or political
parties and about the activities of those organizations. The
Union warned its members not to answer these latter questions.
"Firstly, the Committee has no authority from Congress to
ask you such questions; secondly, these matters are your
personal affair--it is a violation of civil rights to be
forced to answer such questions."7

Similarly, the Dies Committee, set up to investigate
un-American activities in the United States, found an easy
target in Federal I. Martin Dies later concluded that his
hearings had

revealed that there was a high percentage of
Communists and fellow-travelers in both the
Federal Theater Project and the Federal Writers'
Project, aiding the Communist cause at taxpayers'
expense. Our findings were sufficiently impressive
to cause a Liberal Congress to abolish these
projects.8

Walter Goodman has noted that

Even if Federal Theatre had been operated in a
condition of absolute ideological purity, it could
not have held out against the anti-New Deal forces
who were regrouping in 1938 . . . if they could not
have hung Federal Theatre on a charge of radicalism,
they would have done it on a charge of using dirty
words.9

Hearings began in December 1938, and despite a strong defense
by Hallie Flanagan and other Federal I authorities, enough
damage was done to the FTP that Congress abolished it the
following year.10

Attacks on Federal I, both for reasons of subversion
and finance, and the death of the Theatre Project made the
Artists' Union's fight for the arts projects and for the
Federal Arts Bill more and more futile. Meanwhile, the American Artists' Congress faced internal division that finally led to its dissolution.

An AAC report to its membership in January 1939 indicated the pressures building in the decade's last year. World events, reported the executive committee, showed how much the Congress was needed. The threat of war continued overseas, and in this country "reactionary budget-cutters" were trying to divert WPA funds to national defense, while the Dies Committee, with its "wild red-baiting charges," was "the spearhead of this attack upon the American people."

There was only one answer to these conditions, a "stronger and more effective organization of artists, enlisting the support of labor and all progressives . . . . The survival of the artist is bound up with survival of democracy in America. And in the next year or two, democracy will be under fire as never before."

Beyond that, however, concern was growing among AAC members over the excesses of Stalin's government. What had begun as a new economic order in a revolutionary setting appeared to be turning into a violent totalitarian state. Max Weber's friend, Byron Tudor Harris, confided his doubts in April 1938. While not quite sure that Stalin himself should be held responsible for the purges, and convinced of the necessity for some use of "the iron hand" in revolutionary state born in violence, Harris nevertheless believed that American supporters of the Soviet state had been betrayed.
While Russia might yet prove to be "humanity's liberator," the route to that great end need not be paved with skulls ... The imposition of a single set of ideas upon a people or an individual is as evil a tyranny as any other ... [T]he Russian experiment ... has not yet brought with it freedom of speech, release from intellectual bondage, from the imposition of a revolutionary and ideological pattern upon the arts ... and from any and all other whip-cracking and propagandist brain-herding without which you have but a sheep-run, not a nation of free men."

Doubts about Stalin because of the purges turned to dismay when the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed on 19 August 1939. "The two powers struck a bargain on the basis of a partition of Poland and an informal division of the remainder of Central Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence." Suddenly, any pro-communist stand was incompatible with anti-fascism. Earl Browder, Secretary of the Communist Party of the United States, claimed that the Pact "was an act of friendship between these peoples and in no way an alliance between governments." The American League for Peace and Democracy announced that it neither condoned nor condemned the Soviet actions. "Our members will have their own opinions on these matters and will express and implement them in their political organizations outside the League." Within four months, the League had dissolved.

The same inability to make a negative statement about the Soviet Union gripped the AAC, and the situation worsened with the division of Poland and the invasion of Finland. Ardent Soviet supporters insisted with Max Weber that Russia
had taken the action to confuse reactionary forces. "Russia's position will soon be clear to everyone gifted with the slightest touch of truth and human feeling... This is the most intense historic struggle between animalism and the new humanity. It is a great showdown!" After the invasion of Poland, Weber blamed her for her situation, feeling that "had she cooperated honestly with Russia—this could not have happened. Hitler would have been stalled." After the invasion of Finland, the Congress refused to support Hoover's relief program there, asserting that large sums of money given to a population in a time of crisis can have a negative effect on the destinies of the people. (No mention was made of the funds raised by the Congress during the Spanish Civil War for the Loyalist forces.) The AAC claimed that after World War I, Hoover's relief money had been used by Baron Mannerheim to crush a revolutionary movement in Finland. The same thing was likely to happen again, as there was no guarantee that Hoover, who had not come out in favor of Loyalist Spain, who ordered Bonus Marchers bayonetted, who had a "callous disregard" for the hungry and unemployed in the United States, would see that the money would be used for humanitarian purposes. The Congress closed the issue by stating that "Finland having concluded a peace treaty with the Soviet Union, many consider the question of Finnish relief as a dead issue."
A number of AAC members disagreed with this attitude, believing that the Congress must make a public statement opposing Russia's actions. In a petition signed by such mainstays of the organization as George Biddle, Lewis Mumford, and Stuart Davis, the disaffected members demanded a revision of past policy statements. Officers of the Congress throughout 1938 had supported the plan of collective security with Russia and the United States against Germany, Italy, and Japan, and affirmed their part in the struggle to prevent war. Recent events had made those stands irrelevant, and the signers of a petition to the AAC's Executive Committee demanded some sort of updated statement from within the Congress. "Otherwise the Congress as an organization can make no claim to leadership of the progressive artists in this country, nor can it fulfill its original purpose of the defense of art against war and fascism." 19

The petition prompted a meeting in April 1940 at which Stuart Davis resigned as National Chairman because of his discontent over the situation. He took with him the other petition signers when the National Executive Committee issued what they considered an unsatisfactory statement. 20

The A.C.A. Gallery soon felt the repercussions. William Gropper was to have a show commemorating his activities as a cartoonist on various leftist periodicals, including the Daily Worker and the Freiheit. Invited by Herman Baron to be a sponsor of the show, Lewis Mumford declined, one of many who refused. Mumford wrote Baron, explaining that he
could not in good conscience be a sponsor of an exhibition of the works of someone who was an avowed Communist, although he admired Gropper as an artist.

Gropper is a political thinker and a Communist; this makes him at the present moment an ally of those barbaric forces that I believe are destructive to everything that Gropper the artist stands for. Six months ago the problem would not have existed; the Communists still professed to respect democracy and to hate Hitler . . . Since my sponsorship of Gropper the artist might easily be construed . . . as sponsorship of what at present stands for Communism, I am in a dilemma.21

Despite Baron's warning that his attitude placed American art in grave danger, Mumford refused to take part in the exhibition.

Some disillusioned members joined the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism, whose members believed that in the Soviet Union "where nationalism and personal dictatorship are replacing the revolutionary ideals of freedom and democracy, culture suffers regimentation and debasement no less severe than in Germany or Italy."22 Others joined the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors. The Federation was founded in 1940 in response to totalitarianism in Germany, Russia, Italy, Spain, and Japan. With the war, its founders contended, the responsibility for the preservation of world art had fallen to the United States. The Federation pledged to foster the creation of art without racial, religious, national, or political prejudice.23

The remaining members of the Congress went ahead with plans for Congress sessions in June 1941. In the formal
Call to the Congress, readers were reminded that the AAC had warned the world since 1936 about the dangers of fascism and war and had urged concerted action by artists for peace. Termed meetings "In Defense of Culture," the sessions discussed how the drive toward war could be stopped, the community interest in art preserved, and the government art projects perpetuated.24

Some still held to Max Weber's belief that the Soviet Union was the world's best hope. In a letter to a discouraged friend, he wrote:

You ask a very logical question why you and I (no longer really young) after so many years of indomitable perseverance and devotion to art each in our own way should still feel the threat of insecurity and the doubt and fear that it gives rise to. But that's why you find me leaning to that political-economic philosophy that seeks and hopes to liberate mankind from just that. And in spite of the bloodshed and iniquity in the struggle that we are witnessing--the philosophy of life dear to me will some day be established in spite of reaction and hypocrisy.25

Such faith was in some sense rewarded when Germany invaded Russia in 1940, and hundreds of prominent writers and artists, along with other public figures, joined the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.26

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor made any movement to keep America out of the war irrelevant. In March 1942 an Artists' Council for Victory was formed at a joint meeting of the recently organized Artists' Societies for National Defense and the National Art Council for Defense.27 The AAC and United American Artists' formed an Artists' Front to Win the War, stressing that artists had an important
role to play in the war effort. Similarly, the UAA reported that the WPA art projects could further civilian and military morale.

Indeed, many artists become defense workers as WPA efforts were channeled into the war economy. After December 1941, the entire WPA machinery was given to the War and Navy Departments, and the arts projects came under the WPA War Services Subdivision. Artists created posters, uniforms, and military models, as well as a variety of furnishings and decorative objects for military bases and service clubs. Creative activities were largely subordinated to practical ones because of the demands of the time.

The phasing out of the WPA (and the arts projects) was completed by mid-1943. By that time as well, both the Congress' and UAA's efforts were channeled exclusively into defense work. Formed in response to specific situations—the Depression, the New Deal art projects, the anti-fascist movement—neither organization had a basis broad enough to ensure its existence when World War II altered those circumstances.
CONCLUSION
THE LEGACY

After World War II, the conditions to which the founders of the Artists' Union and the American Artists' Congress had reacted no longer existed. The Depression, the New Deal, and fascist states in Germany and Italy were gone. Disillusionment with and fear of the Soviet Union, general post-war prosperity, and the enormous growth of abstract painting also made the organizations' basic premises obsolete.

Yet the artists who "came down from the ivory tower" used the experiences of the decade to establish other organizations. The AAC and the Union, along with the government art programs, had helped to carve a place for the artist in American society. With the popularity of abstract art, painting moved away from a commitment to realism and social action. However, artists' groups built upon the notion of the artist as worker and defender of freedom and culture and also upon the recent history of federal sponsorship of the arts.

The Artists' League of America was founded in 1940. The League, read its Preamble, "is concerned with the problems of the artists in their social, economic and cultural aspects
and with the attainment of the cultural aspirations of
the people of the United States of America. Among their
aims were the advocacy of sponsorship of the arts by the
government and by private industry (an important addition). Similarly, the National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions was established to enable professionals to work for federal, state, and city support of the arts.

The Artists' Equity Association was founded in March 1947 "to advance, foster, and promote the interests of those who work in the Fine Arts . . . to procure appropriate legislation upon matters affecting their professions" and to protect their interests in contracts, agreements, and compensation. With the AEA, an organization of artists undertook an advocacy role for its members, assuming an authority among artists and in the public that probably would not have been possible without the first steps taken by the founders of the American Artists' Congress and the Artists' Union.

Government and private industry have continued to support the arts, through the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and state and municipal groups. Organizations like the Rockefeller and Mellon Foundations and corporate sponsors like Mobil and Xerox have contributed as well. In addition, television and the expansion of mass communication have made the arts ever more available to the public, and, through the Public
Television System, individuals are given the opportunity to participate in sponsorship. Despite continual problems of funding, the country since World War II has been able to "make art a part of daily life" as never before in its history.

The most important legacy left by the artists of the 1930s is in the work they produced. The World's Fair in New York in 1939 included an exhibition of contemporary American art. Through efforts of the Artists' Coordination Committee, eight artists, including Stuart Davis, William Zorach, Paul Manship, and Hugo Gellert, assisted a governing board of museum officials in the design and execution of the exhibition. The full range of American art was represented in 1214 works selected by regional juries from some 25,000 entries of paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints. Titled "American Art Today," the exhibition was designed to be an appropriate contribution to the World's Fair's "cooperative demonstration of the creative and progressive forces of modern civilization."

More important, with "American Art Today," its organizers felt they had shown that America's long apprenticeship to European art styles was over. Some critics were dissatisfied with the quality of work exhibited, yet the range both of style and subject matter indicated the overall enthusiasm and energy of American painting at the end of the decade. "This is an artist's exhibition."
Vitality and growth indicate health. Democracy in art has discovered and honored these qualities."

The New Deal art projects gave some of the artists in the World's Fair show the only financial stability they had during the decade, and thus enabled them to create the art of the 1930s. The Artists' Union supported their identification with workers and their problems, and the Congress gave them their ideological perspective. The style of painting known as Social Realism best expressed the ideals and goals of these organizations, and, along with Regionalism, made the 1930s the last decade of realism in American art before the dominance of the abstract movement after World War II.

The artists who founded the Artists' Union and the American Artists' Congress responded to cataclysmic changes brought about by the Depression and the New Deal. Through these organizations, they fought for those issues—anti-fascism and economic security—that most closely concerned them. In so doing, they broke irrevocably with the caricatured artist in his ivory tower, and established a precedent for collective action by artists on matters involving the development of their work, their responsibility to society, and their place in the fabric of American life.
CHAPTER I

1 WOR, radio symposium by members of the Public Use of Art Committee, 2 March 1938, Max Weber; text of speech in Max Weber Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter abbreviated AAA.)


5 See McKinzie, The New Deal for Artists.

6 George Biddle to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 9 May 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. (Hereafter abbreviated FDR Papers.)

7 Ibid.


9 The CWA was formed in 1933 out of an allocation from the Public Works Administration, and was headed by Harry Hopkins.


11 PWAP report, p. 10.


John S. Ankeny in the *Times Herald* (Dallas), 20 December 1934.


Edward Bruce to James L. Montague, 2 April 1934, FDR Papers.


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Ibid., pp. 39, 42.

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Franklin D. Roosevelt to Edward Bruce, 18 October 1939, FDR Papers.


33. Harry Hopkins to his staff, quoted in McKinzie, New Deal for Artists, p. 16.


35. Newspaper clipping in Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.

CHAPTER II


3. Alexander, Here the Country Lies, p. 177.

4. Aline Kistler, "'We are What We Are...',' American Magazine of Art, 28 (October 1935): 621; also see Constance O'Rourke, "American Art: A Possible Future," American Magazine of Art, 28 (July 1935): 390-404.


7 Holger Cahill, New Horizons in American Art, p. 15.

8 Transcript of completed questionnaire for Matthew Baigell, 1967, Louis Lozowick Papers, AAA.

9 Ibid.

10 Quoted in Herman Baron, Unpublished history of the A.C.A. Gallery, Herman Baron Papers, AAA.


12 Michael Biro, "'Art' or Political Posters," Art Front, 2 (May 1936): 10-11.

13 Max Weber to Herman Baron, 3 January 1939, Herman Baron Papers, AAA.


16 Quirt, Statement on the American Artists' School, Max Weber Papers, AAA.

17 Ibid.

18 Louis Lozowick, with the perspective of thirty years, commented that "No nation, much less an individual artist, can change the world through art... It is enough that the artist try to influence, in whatever measure, the direction of mankind towards higher values." Transcript of Baigell questionnaire, Louis Lozowick Papers, AAA.

CHAPTER III

1 Constitution of the American Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, 1919, Max Weber Papers, AAA, which also contain a list of members in the 1930s.

2 Annual report of An American Group, 1942, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.


20 E.E. Williams, report in "From the Atlantic to the Pacific," American Federationist, 44 (April 1937): 434.

21 Philip Evergood to Max Weber, 13 January 1938, Max Weber Papers, AAA.

22 Philip Evergood, "Union President Views C.I.O. Affiliation; Three Art Unions Join," Art Front Organizer, 18 June 1937.

23 Ibid.


27 Artist Unions Conference to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 25 April 1938, FDR Papers.


31 Art Front, 1 (November 1934): folio 1.

32 Stuart Davis to members of the American Artists' Congress, July 1937, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.

33 Petition, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


[Notes to pages 41-49]


40. Letter to Union members, July 1937, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


42. Byron Tudor Harris to Max Weber, 7 February 1938, Max Weber Papers, AAA.


49. Stella Buchwald, obituary of Herman Baron, Herman Baron Papers, AAA.


52. Ibid.

53. John Erskine et al to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 13 May 1934, FDR Papers.

54. F. Ballard Williams, National Chairman, and Wilford S. Conrow, National Secretary, American Artists' Professional League, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7 November 1934, FDR Papers.

56. William I. Sirovich to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 19 June 1935, FDR Papers; see Art Digest, 15 October 1937, p. 17, for the text of the Resolution.


59. George Biddle to The American People, 24 May 1937, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.

60. Max Weber, note, n.d., Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


64. The Bill's sponsors included the Cartoonists' Guild, the National Negro Congress, Labor's Non-Partisan League, Actors' Equity, and Sheet and Metal Workers' Union, and the Newspaper Guild, among some thirty other organizations and over fifty individuals.

65. Congressional Record, 4 April 1938, v. 33, p. 5186.

66. Quoted in Art Digest, 1 February 1938, p. 16.

67. Quoted in Art Digest, 15 February 1938, p. 12.

68. Ibid.


71. Max Weber to Doris Kravis, 19 April 1938, Max Weber Papers, AAA.
CHAPTER IV


2Organizations like the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship worked toward that end.


5Report to membership, American Artists' Congress, November 1936, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


7Art Front, February 1936.

8See Reports of American Artists' Congress sessions, 1936, 1937, Herman Baron Papers, Harry Gottlieb Papers, Louis Lozowick Papers, AAA.
9 Call to the American Artists' Congress, Herman Baron Papers, AAA.

10 Ibid.

11 American Artists' Congress, Report to members, November 1936, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


14 Ibid.

15 American Artists' Congress, Report to Members, November 1936, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA. Officers of the AAC included Stuart Davis, Secretary; Lynd Ward, Treasurer; Louis Lozowick, Chairman of the Cultural Committee; Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Chairman of the Exhibition Committee, Harry Gottlieb, Chairman of the School Committee, and Hugo Gellert, Chairman of the Organization Committee. Other members of the Executive Committee included Margaret Bourke-White, William Gropper, George Biddle, Rockwell Kent, Lincoln Rothschild, Ralph Pearson, and Lewis Mumford.

16 American Artists' Congress, Report to members, November 1936, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.

17 American Artists' Congress, Constitution and By-Laws, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


20 Mrs. Peter Oliver to Louis Lozowick, April 1936, Louis Lozowick Papers, AAA.

21 Louis Lozowick to Mrs. Peter Oliver, 12 April 1936, Louis Lozowick Papers, AAA.


25. Max Weber to Herman Baron, 20 October 1936, Max Weber Papers, AAA.


27. Herman Baron, Unpublished history of the A.C.A. Gallery, Herman Baron Papers, AAA; also see notes of Baron's and correspondence with various artists.


29. Exhibition catalogue, Max Weber Papers, AAA.

30. Foreword from "A Note on the Exhibition," Max Weber Papers, AAA.


38. American Artists' Congress, Report to membership, November 1936, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


42 Quoted in Report of Second American Artists' Congress.
43 Ibid.

CHAPTER V


2 Franklin D. Roosevelt to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 6 June 1939, FDR Papers.


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12 Byron Tudor Harris to Max Weber, 3 April 1938, Max Weber Papers, AAA.


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16 Max Weber to Herman Baron, 5 December 1939, Herman Baron Papers, AAA.

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18 Artists' Congress News, April 1940.

19 Petition, Ilya Bolotowsky Papers, AAA.

20 "Revolt of the Anti-Reds," Newsweek, 29 April 1940, p. 41.

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23 Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Constitution, Records of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, AAA.

24 American Artists' Congress, Call to 1941 Congress, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.

25 Max Weber to J.B. Neumann, November or December 1939, Max Weber Papers, AAA.

26 For a complete list of sponsors of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, see Max Weber Papers, AAA.


CONCLUSION

1 Artists' League of America, Constitution, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.

2 National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, Constitution, Max Weber Papers, AAA.

3 Artists' Equity Association, Constitution, Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA.


8 Ralph M. Pearson, "Artists' Point of View; Contemporary Exhibition at the New York World's Fair," Forum 102 (September 1939): 143.
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The Papers of Phil Bard
The Papers of Herman Baron
The Papers of Ilya Bolotowsky
The Papers of Harry Gottlieb
The Papers of Yasuo Kuniyoshi
The Papers of Louis Lozowick
The Papers of Max Weber

The Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, at Hyde Park, New York, also proved valuable.

The major periodical of the movement was Art Front, published irregularly between 1934 and 1937. Other UAA and AAC-related publications were:

Art Project Reporter, 1936
Art Front Organizer, 1937
Artists' Congress News, 1938-1940
American Artist, 1937
Other periodicals that proved helpful for the period 1932 to 1940:

American Magazine of Art
Art Digest
Congressional Record
Current History
Forum
Nation
National Republic
New Republic
New York Times
Newsweek
Time

Published works used in the course of research:


VITA

Susan Marjorie Eltscher


The author has been employed since June 1980 as archival/reference assistant at the American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, New York.