

ART FRONT

DECEMBER

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NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

To meet the general call for information about the New York Artists' Union, the ART FRONT has established this department as a permanent feature of the magazine. It will be under the auspices of the National Correspondence Committee of the New York Artists' Union. It will contain information given in answer to the numerous questions asked about the organizational problems of organizing artists' groups on an economic basis, the artistic standards of the new organizations and particular local problems of each group. It will also feature articles and correspondence from artists, artists' organizations and affiliated groups throughout the country.

"What is the qualification for membership in organizations like the Artists' Union of New York?" is a question that is raised frequently in correspondence. The New York Artists' Union professes no aesthetic standard and demands only that the artist applicant show art work of professional competence, whether academic, modern, or abstract, and that he has practiced art for at least five years. The following article from the Woodstock Artists Group describes a typical situation.

"Last Winter, it became known that New York State might sponsor relief projects for artists. Realizing the necessity for this outlet for the artist, a group of Woodstock artists tried to obtain a local project. A committee of local exhibitors was successful in putting through a project employing twenty-six persons. After

the project was under way, the Guild of Mural Painters and Sculptors was organized in the interests of insuring the proper handling of this project, of representing Woodstock artists as a group, and of obtaining future projects. Since, at the time, it was clearly stated by the authorities in New York that the quality of work produced was extremely important to the success of this project, and to the obtaining of further projects, there was written into the constitution of the Guild, as one of its chief aims, that it was vitally interested in maintaining a high standard of work.

"The facts have emerged slowly in the months that the projects have been going on. Instead of what was originally understood, the truth now is that the State's only interest in standards is that those artists who are put on relief shall be professionals. It has vested in the supervisor the authority to decide that question. It has given the supervisor the further authority of distributing, at his own discretion, jobs among those artists who are on the project. The State is interested in artistic standards only to this extent; it has absolutely no concern with aesthetic creeds. This is a professional works project, for professional people. Economic need is the only criterion.

"The Government has already indicated to us where the true emphasis lies in suggesting that Judson Smith, our local supervisor, should not be a member of any organization of the artists working on the projects. If the Guild were a purely cultural organization, concerned only with

delivering the highest possible quality of work to the Government, there could be no conflict between Judson Smith, as representative of the State, and the Guild of Mural Painters and Sculptors. The Government, however, realistically recognized that organization among relief workers holds the possibility of future economic demands, and asks that its representative remain in the position of employer to employee.

"It is necessary to realize that the State accepts only economic qualification in putting artists to work. To try to impose on the Government an artistic standard in which it has no important interest is only to confuse the issue, to hinder further projects. The place for consideration of quality of work produced can sensibly come only after the artist, who is in need, is put to work. After that it is within the discretion of the local supervisor to see that the artists are given those jobs best suited to their talents.

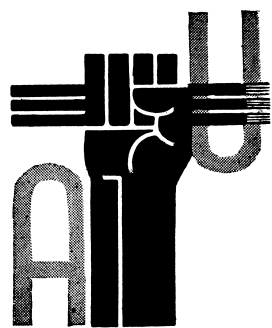
"For one group to attempt to enforce its own limited aesthetic standard in the interest of securing future projects is a mistaken and incompetent method of dealing with the situation. While one group is operating within such a limitation, another group organizes with a different standard. They both have the same aim, which is—putting artists to work, but so long as they concern themselves with the completely irrelevant matter of aesthetic standard, it will be impossible for Woodstock artists to gain the greatest possible benefit from the Government program of relief.

"An organization based on an arbitrary aesthetic standard will be forced to exclude from membership artists whom it recognizes professionally, but not artistically. It is unfair for any group to exclude, on the basis of artistic taste, any fellow artist from an opportunity to develop his talents. No group of artists should presume to exclude a fellow artist from the right to economic security offered him by work on Government art projects."

NOTE: The above report of the special committee was unanimously accepted by the Guild of Mural Painters and Sculptors. At a special meeting held in Woodstock, where all artists were invited, they reorganized into the Ulster County Artists' League to include all professional artists, regardless of aesthetic creed.

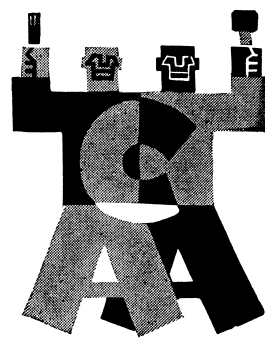
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ART FRONT

DECEMBER, 1935



ART AND THE NAZIS

ART FRONT views with satisfaction the resolution passed by the National Society of Mural Painters boycotting the art exhibition to be held in conjunction with the Olympic Games. We have always maintained that exhibiting art in Nazi Germany is like draping a garland of flowers around the neck of a monster.

We hate to quibble with Mr. Biddle, with whom otherwise we are in hearty agreement, but there is just that word "logic" he uses in his comments in this issue of ART FRONT. Mr. Biddle says that fascism is a logical economic experiment to which Germany, in self-preservation, is resorting. Mr. Biddle, of course, detests the experiment. Is fascism a logical economic experiment? Yes, we must say. It is the logic of organized political gangsterism. The Hitler mob bumps off any opposition to the racket of the man behind the scene, the Thyssen, the Krupp, the powerful financial magnate. The working people of Germany, the small business men, the religious minorities, are subjected to the most bestial persecution ever perpetrated by any gang of degenerate criminals. The German people are paying dearly for this "logical economic experiment." Mass stultification in place of Germany's magnificent culture, women relegated to the kitchen and the delivery ward, psychopathic nonsense about the supremacy of the Aryan spirit, wanton hounding and social torture of Jews, Catholics and Protestants, grinding poverty and the prospect of war for the German masses.

Does any artist wish to send his pictures to the Nazified Olympic Games? Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and the amiable Julius Streicher would just love to have them!

THE LAG IN THE W. P. A.

MAY, 1935—President Roosevelt announces the W.P.A. program to give jobs to 3,500,000 "employables." These jobs are to last until August 1, 1936. The new program to solve the relief problem is heralded as the one year "security" plan for the unemployed.

November, 1935 (six months later)—almost no W.P.A. projects have been started outside of New York City. With previously existing work relief jobs and 600,000 C.C.C. placements included among the "employables" at work, 2,000,000 jobs still remain to be filled. Very few new jobs have been distributed. Many states have stopped their local relief, dumping millions of needy into the waiting rooms for the W.P.A. jobs.

With the cessation of local relief, the plight of the unemployed is a very desperate one. Ten million of them are waiting for these 2,000,000 promised jobs. Certainly no excuse is adequate to explain the long delay. Six months of the promised "security" year have passed. Many more precious months will pass before the projects get under way. Before the first benefit of relief from the dole can be felt, the time limit will be over. And then what? The short-lived W.P.A. job will taste better than the miserable home relief, but tasting cannot satisfy the hungry millions.

Thousands of needy artists are included among the waiting unemployed. Four thousand artists are to be employed outside of New York City on the art projects. From reports of fellow artists' organizations and artists throughout the country, the art projects still remain to be started. Artists, as well as all unemployed, are no longer interested in promises of just one "security" year—which is not a security year at all.

The actual W.P.A. program of the government belies its much ballyhoed interest in the arts. Does it propose advancement of culture for one year only? The meaning of the word "culture" is quite clear. Culture can only be fostered by a long period of encouragement and support. America's artists have a *bona fide* need for this support and, while the government may give one year promises, the artists know the necessity for some permanent form of a National Art Project.

The struggles of artists in the face of desperate economic need are forging the

instruments necessary to remind the government of its responsibility toward unemployed artists and toward the development of arts and culture in the United States. These instruments are the many local Artists' Unions being formed throughout the country. Working together in a National Artists' Union, they can and will win security in the form of a permanent National Art project.

WAGES AND HOURS

WE may point with pride to another decisive victory for the Art Projects under the W.P.A., namely a reduction of working hours from thirty to twenty-four, which creates a four-day work week instead of a five-day week with the same pay. Furthermore, pay has been granted in the case of a certified illness. These rulings have gone into effect on November 4. This is one more step in the artists' goal for a union scale, as accorded other professionals. And we must hail the City Projects Council, head of the white-collar projects, which include the Artists' Union, for their participation in this struggle as well as the organized efforts of Projects 1259 (teaching project) and 1262 (mural project).

WATSON VS. ARTISTS

FORBES WATSON takes the occasion, in his review of the Carnegie International (in the November *American Magazine of Art*), to attack the American Artists' Congress and the Rental Policy of the Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, within the economical confines of one short paragraph. Mr. Watson says, "Some of the very artists who greatly cherish their capitalistic prizes will be present at the forthcoming Congress of Artists in New York and be ready to speak bitterly against the Carnegies and Mellons of this world. But the painters have not yet developed their theories of proletarianism to the point of refusing prizes endowed by the profits of United States Steel. And I think it will be some time before they boycott any of the exhibitions resting upon the solid founda-

tions of iron or aluminum profits. In other words, their talk and their practices are not in every case inseparable. And I am wondering how deep will be the inspiration of those artists who have most recently embraced Communism, as long as they continue to play both sides."

Mr. Watson's careless habits of thought and his frequent characterization of anything he doesn't understand as "Red" or "Communitic", make him somewhat of a pest in the field of art reporting. His confusion of ideas is so manifest at all points of this article that it is difficult to pick one contradiction over another; one or two will have to suffice. He speaks sympathetically throughout the article on the international purpose of the Carnegie Show and its contributions to friendly understanding between nations and world peace; and yet without logic or information, he makes the slurring reference to the Artists' Congress as quoted above. He twice refers to the disagreeable presence of Mussolini in world affairs and sneers at the Artists' Congress, which is dedicated to the Defense of Culture and against War and Fascism.

His falsification of the whole Rental Policy situation, we must suppose, is due to ignorance. The pictures in the Carnegie Show were collected before the Rental

Policy went into effect and the artists were not under obligation to boycott this exhibition. The fact that the members of the Painters, Sculptors and Gravers as well as other artists' organizations all over the country are boycotting all exhibitions which refuse the just demand for rentals, remains unmentioned by Watson, who passes the matter off with a scepticism born of lack of information, to give him the benefit of the doubt. If Mr. Watson would pull himself together and realize the fact that all artists who try to bring a little reason into the present confusion and who sponsor a necessary economic measure are not of necessity Reds and Communists, his contribution to current evaluations in the field of art would be of more use to himself and to those artists who are sincerely interested in clarifying their own problems.

VAN GOGH

THE old story of a genius neglected in his lifetime is being told once more. It is being retold in the familiar, vicious manner which invokes pity instead of rousing burning indignation. Were this story properly understood and all implications carefully analysed, some future Van Gogh might be spared a similar fate. But the exhibition at the Museum of

Modern Art will serve quite another purpose. The publicity which makes Van Gogh known to the people is also erecting a barrier between him and them. Already the free days at the Museum have been restricted to Mondays. And, as the prices for his pictures soar still higher, there is little likelihood that a large group of his work may ever be assembled again.

Van Gogh can safely be classed among the great artists. The showing of his work is an event which deserves the widest possible attention. This attention, however, should be directed toward counteracting statements by men like Forbes Watson, who, as quoted in the November *ART FRONT*, insisted that he wanted fewer and better artists and that of 3,000 works examined by him on the W.P.A. only 500 could be said to have been by artists, without quotation marks. If there is a genius painting today, he is most likely to be found among the 2,500 Watson dismisses so lightly. During the lifetime of Van Gogh, there were keener judges of art than Watson and they were equally blind. At least one lesson can be learned from all this: No critic or collector can recognize genius; and for that reason we must make it possible for all who want to paint to do so. This is the policy steadfastly adhered to by the Artists' Union.

THE RENTAL ISSUE

By Frederic Knight and Julian Levi

THE art museums of America have for the past fifteen years, shown an increasing interest in bringing the works of living American artists to the attention of their public. Such exhibits have contributed very considerably to the museum's prestige in the community and have interested many thousands of persons in their activities, because of their direct appeal in content and character to the contemporary mind. While the artists who have participated in these exhibitions are not ungrateful for this cooperation in bringing forcibly to the attention of the public the fact that art production is a continuous, living, matter, and not exclusively an historical affair, the precipitate decline of income which most of them have experienced as a result of the depression has brought the economic aspects of the transaction to the fore.

It was this circumstance that led the American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers to pass a resolution last spring which read in part as follows:

The members . . . agree that a rental charge for paintings and sculpture, water colors, drawings and prints, be made to all art museums,

colleges, art associations, groups and individuals having invited or jury exhibitions.

This charge to apply equally, no exceptions being made for those organizations having prize awards or purchase funds.

This rental fee to consist of 1 per cent per month of the price of the work with a \$1,000 maximum and as of \$100 minimum. The minimum charge shall be as of one month. After the first month a weekly charge shall be $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 per cent additional for the duration of the exhibit. . . .

The Society was shortly followed in this course by An American Group, Inc., an organization which currently includes over twenty well-known painters and sculptors. The museum directors on their side had lost no time in announcing an absolute refusal to consider the terms of the resolution and had even refused to meet with the Society's committee to discuss the matter. There was thus precipitated a situation which is rapidly bringing into the open questions having a direct bearing on the relation of the artist and the museum to each other and of both to culture and the public. If the museums are to play a vital part in the cultural life of a people, and not revert to mausoleums, they are compelled to hold exhibitions of the work of contemporary artists.

The plain purpose of the stand which the artists have taken on the rental question is to shift an item of expense which should properly be charged to the "cost of exhibiting" from the shoulders of the artists, where it is, we must stress, a heavy burden, to those of the museums with their large endowments and incomes. Briefly summed up, the museum directors have expressed themselves as follows: While sympathizing with the artist in his economic distress and admitting that private patronage has proved a failure, it is, they claim, no part of the museum's function to provide financial assistance in any form. The directors have gone so far as to make the shocking declaration that they will be forced to exclude from their exhibitions the works of artists who demand the rental fee.

Putting aside for the moment consideration of a state of affairs which allows the directors even to contemplate the exclusion of contemporary art from the American museums, let us point out one or two significant contradictions inherent in the position they have taken. First, while claiming that a museum's function is primarily to acquire and exhibit great



Museum Director: "Insurance is a necessity—but WE can well afford to do without rentals."

Adolph Dehn
Courtesy of Weyhe Galleries

works of art of the past and stating that in supporting public demands such an interpretation of its function as a cultural institution, the directors go on to admit that it is "wise" to hold exhibitions of contemporary American art, for they "help to keep the institution alive and in more direct contact with the creative people of this country." Secondly, while stating that sums of money are usually given and bequeathed "for general purposes," they insist that the public interpretation of this phrase demands that the money be used, for the most part, for the acquisition of works of the past or at least of those works which time has proved to be of "sound" value. (Perhaps it should be pointed out here that the Whitney Museum of American Art stands as an exception among museums in this respect, since it is especially dedicated to the promotion of contemporary American art).

Thus, though "general purposes" would seem to be a broad and inclusive requirement, it has been interpreted to the artists as preventing the museums from sharing, even to the minimum extent demanded, in meeting an expense long borne by the artists without protest. In this connection it should be pointed out that the

museums are still able to follow the established custom of spending large sums in assembling and importing exhibitions of works of art of the past, and even of living foreign artists, and of paying rentals on the pictures to institutions that lend them. Such exhibitions, undeniably of great cultural value, clearly illustrate the ability and willingness of the museums to spend sums on a single show which would be sufficient to cover all expenses, including the rental charge, for many exhibitions of contemporary American art. This circumstance would seem to qualify the interpretation now being advanced to the disadvantage of living American artists.

The large exhibitions of contemporary American art represent an expenditure on the part of the artist in time, labor and money, beside which the relatively small sums spent by the museums on insurance and shipping costs are negligible. Under the present system the artist in America must find his own living, produce his work at his own expense, provide the frames, without which pictures cannot be exhibited. Many an artist has been prevented from sending his works out to exhibitions because he could not afford

frames for them. It is with the view of tempering this exceedingly unjust state of affairs that the rental proposal has been advanced.

Within the past few weeks various organizations of artists have voted to support the resolution on rentals, notably and significantly, the Artists' Union, Denver Artists' Guild, and Taos Artists' Association; and a vote of approval has been passed by the Woodstock Art Association and the Sawkill Painters and Sculptors; And was endorsed by the American Society of Mural Painters.

The time has clearly come when the relations of artists and museums must be put on a sound and equitable basis. By resorting to the technical argument that their budgets are not at present arranged to meet the additional cost and by refusing to discuss the matter the museum directors stand in the way of an adjustment. The only method by which the artist can meet the organized stand of the museum directors is to support those organizations which have sponsored the resolution as originally drafted. We strongly urge the collaboration of all artists and artists' organizations on this vital question.

NOTE—Mr. Knight is President and Mr. Levi, Corresponding Secretary of the American Group.



Museum Director: "Insurance is a necessity—but WE can well afford to do without rentals."

Adolph Dehn
Courtesy of Weyhe Galleries

ARTISTS' BOYCOTT OF OLYMPIC GAMES

By George Biddle

AT the last regular meeting of the National Society of Mural Painters the following resolution was moved from the floor and carried:

"Whereas the present German Government, judged by the statements of their own leaders, has suppressed freedom of religion and freedom of thought and—

"Whereas they have exiled, or caused to live in exile, many of their own greatest scientists, writers, and artists—

"Be it now resolved that the members of the American National Society of Mural Painters will take no part in the exhibitions of painting to be held in concurrence with the Olympic Games in 1936, and it further urges all other American art societies and individual artists to refuse to exhibit in Germany, as a protest against the spiritual intolerance and suppression of free thought, which the present German Government not only condones but openly boasts of."

As an individual artist, I should like to

add to this statement of policy a few comments, which might seem superfluous, if it had not been evident from the discussion of this resolution that certain artists were troubled by the implication of the resolution.

In the first place I have always loved and admired the Germans, and still have many warm German friends. It is, however, as nonsensical to feel that a condemnation of the warped and pathological barbarity of the Nazi regime is a condemnation of the German race as to believe that a condemnation of lynching is un-American.

Others may prefer in the agenda of art societies a certain gentlemanly aloofness and professional restraint, toward, let us say, the ethics of the outside world we live in. But this aloofness is hardly justified where the artists' professional code of ethics is concerned. From the standpoint of newspaper kudos it is indeed a trifling matter whether a few scattered artists exhibit or not next year in Berlin. But it

seems to me of most vital importance that the corpus of artists in this country can feel that certain social or moral standards challenge the validity of their profession. And, since as individual artists, we have been invited to exhibit by those who sponsor the destruction of all freedom in art, then, as an art body, we can most emphatically state our mind upon the subject.

In the cold light of history, Germany, in self-preservation, is attempting a logical economic experiment, which in the judgment of history will have its moment of success or failure. I do not wish so much to deny their logic a necessity as to state emphatically that this process or logic denies every value which life has for me and would create a world which to me is hideous.

I am optimistic myself about freedom of expression in America. But, if there is to be a struggle, let us choose our colors from the start and get on the side of the fense where we feel we belong.

LE CORBUSIER'S CITIES IN THE AIR

By Jerome Klein

A SELECT audience sat in rapt attention for nearly two hours one evening recently at the Museum of Modern Art, when one of the world's foremost architects, Le Corbusier, in his first public appearance in the United States, presented a survey of the revolutionary architectural ideas which he has been developing on the printed page and the lecture platform for more than fifteen years.

Mild exclamations of mingled surprise and satisfaction swept the audience when the famous architect set out by contrasting the present typical urban dweller's day, composed of eight hours' sleep, eight hours' work, about four hours spent in transit, etc., and the remaining four hours for leisure, with the disposition of the day to be made in Le Corbusier's ideal—but entirely practicable!—*ville radiieuse*. In the "joyous city" of the architect's dream, there would be eight hours for sleep, but only five for work and, with

transit simplified in a rationally planned community, there would remain a block of fully nine hours for leisure every day!

By the deft manipulation of brightly colored crayons, accompanied by a continuous flow of language quite captivating in its facility, the architect proceeded to define the now familiar points of his program.

Thrusting aside all academic inhibitions and compromises, the revolutionary city-planner would, through utilization of the technical possibilities opened up by the industrial age, replace the dense slums of the Park Avenue, as well as the Second Avenue type, with great skyscraper housing units of steel, glass and concrete, covering only 12 per cent of the ground space, and designed with maximum sunlight and air for all living quarters. Raised on stilts and connected by elevated one-way automobile highways, these widely spaced structures would leave the entire ground

space of the city free for pedestrians who would circulate freely under the buildings as well as between them, liberated from the deadly traffic menace of the city of today. The ground between dwelling units would be given over to parks and playgrounds, so that the carefree city dweller would have, only a minute or two from his door, all the outdoor sport and recreational facilities he might desire.

Le Corbusier went on to explain how this entrancing prospect could only be realized by giving due consideration to the peculiarities, topographical, historical, etc., of any city to be rebuilt. He showed how he would renovate Paris without touching the revered *cite*, how Antwerp's cathedral would be spared, how the traffic problem of Algiers could best be solved through a superb plan that would clear out all its squalid hovels, etc. The exposition sparkled with such words as "communal" and "collective," and more especially "order and harmony."

What was noticeably lacking in the architect's two-hour barrage of words, drawings, slides and movies, was any reference to the pertinent question, why his blueprints for the *ville radiieuse*, even though worked out in detail for half a dozen specific cases, have always been laid on the shelf? And a second question



BORIS GORELICK

A New Art Patron

Boris Gorelick

—what are all the conditions necessary for the realization of his grandiose projects, which amount to nothing less than a wholly new design for living?

Anticipating such a possible "oversight," I had plied Le Corbusier with questions on these points at a press conference prior to the opening of his lecture series.

What was his purpose in coming here to lecture? Did he entertain serious hopes of seeing his city plans take actual form in the United States?

"Yes, certainly," and he proceeded to wax lyrical over *machinisme* and the United States as the "land which has practically created the machine age single-handed. The first era of the machine age, magnificent in its achievements but full of confusion, is now over. There is a new need for order and harmony, which my city plans provide."

"Yes, but what practical steps are necessary?" I asked.

"Well, laws must be created to free the ground for use."

"Have you any knowledge of the fate of public housing projects in the United States under the New Deal?"

When he confessed he knew nothing

about it, I pointed out that big realty investors and supporting institutions had blocked low-cost housing projects that would have competed with their investments and thus threatened their income. And none of these projects, I insisted, cut so deeply into the network of existing property relations as Le Corbusier's revolutionary proposals.

"Yes," he admitted ruefully, "it's the crisis. Modern civilization is not ready—"

"What do you mean by modern civilization?" I interrupted. "Are you referring to capitalist society?"

"No, modern civilization," he began again—

"Do you mean the capitalist order?" I insisted.

Visibly annoyed, he finally blurted out, "Here are my plans. To me it is indifferent whether they are carried out under Bolshevism or fascism."

But Le Corbusier did not see fit to go into this problem in his lecture. He was content to put on a brilliant show which wound up in the clouds. And his fashionable audience, after enjoying the high fantasy to the fullest, was able to leave, untroubled by any contact with pressing actualities.

But Le Corbusier is not unaware of the crux of the matter. Who could be in his situation? The man who was once considered a mere eccentric is now recognized in progressive circles the world over as an architect second to none. Here is a man hailed as a genius by a society which is powerless to utilize, except on a small and abortive scale, the fruits of that genius!

Le Corbusier's dilemma explains his vacillations, causing him to declare about a year ago in an Italian fascist journal that he was the architect not of the future, but of today, though in New York recently he said he was the architect of the future.

Though his urban plans are sound from the engineering standpoint, since they cannot be executed under existing property relations and since they have no bearing on the totally different needs of a classless society which could carry them out, they are, notwithstanding Le Corbusier's protestations of practicality thoroughly Utopian.

Until he frankly faces the social problem which confronts him, Le Corbusier is condemned to be a prophet uttering a futile cry in the wilderness.

THE AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

By Stuart Davis

THE Call for an American Artists' Congress, as published in the November ART FRONT, has attracted a wide and sympathetic response. As defined in the Call, the Congress is called against Fascism and War and for the Defense of Culture. It is a Call to all artists of standing who are aware of the critical situation which confronts the artists of the United States and who have the desire to do something to defend their own interests. The Call was sponsored by 110 of the leading artists of the country and, since its publication, the enrollment has been doubled.

The Writers' Congress, held in New York, in April, 1935, and the Congress for the Defense of Culture held in Paris, in June, 1935, have performed a service for the writers similar to the objectives of the coming Artists' Congress, set for February 14, 15 and 16, 1936. The change of date from December, 1935, to February, 1936, was necessitated by the rush of applications for membership, which has exceeded the most optimistic hopes of the sponsors, and which has added greatly to the complexity of organizational detail. This unusual enthusiasm

of the artists, unaccustomed as a class to concern themselves with the relationship of the practice of art to concerns outside that field, bears witness to the reality of the critical conditions as outlined in the Call.

The objectives of the Congress are to point to the threat of the destruction of culture by fascism and war; to point out specific manifestations of this threat in this country; to show the actual accomplishment of such destruction in those countries where fascism holds power; to show the historical reasons for fascism; and to clarify by discussion what the artists must do to combat these threats. But the objectives of the Congress are not only defensive. A prominent part in the discussion will be given to an analysis of contemporary art directions; to the historical role of the artist in society; to the relation of subject and form in art to environment; the relation of media and techniques to environment, etc. This will give the artists who participate a picture of their position in the world today, a picture which could only be built up by such a Congress. But the work of the Congress does not stop here. It is planned

to form at the Congress a permanent organization of American artists on a national scale, which, unlike existing artists' societies, will seek to keep itself in live contact with world events that affect the artists, instead of forming an economic and esthetic clique.

Properly within the scope of such an organization would be private and public symposia dealing with problems within its concern, the publication of a magazine reflecting its activities, and possibly the conduct of an art school where the students would have the benefit of the larger viewpoint, which will logically be developed by the organization as contrasted with the academic or completely individualistic and uncoordinated art schools, which are the rule. The Artists' Congress promises to be the most important single event in the field of American art since the Armory show of 1913, which so strongly affected the ideas and styles of American artists.

Application for membership in the Congress can be made by writing to Stuart Davis, Secretary, Artists' Congress, 52 West 8th Street, New York City.



Behind the News

Hugo Gellert

From "Comrade Gulliver"—G. P. Putnam's Sons

THE NEW REALISM

By Fernand Leger

Lecture delivered at
the Museum of
Modern Art

DURING the past fifty years the entire effort of artists has consisted of a struggle to free themselves from certain old bonds.

In painting, the strongest restraint has been that of subject-matter upon composition, imposed by the Italian Renaissance.

This effort toward freedom began with the Impressionists and has continued to express itself until our own day.

The Impressionists freed color—we have carried their attempt forward and have freed form and design.

Subject-matter being at last done for, we were free. In 1919 the painting "*La Ville*" was executed in pure color. It resulted, according to qualified writers on art, in the birth of a world-wide publicity.

This freedom expresses itself ceaselessly in every sense.

It is, therefore, possible to assert the following: that color has a reality in itself, a life of its own; that a geometric form has also a reality in itself, independent and plastic.

Hence composed works of art are known as "abstract," with these two values reunited.

They are not "abstract," since they are composed of real values: colors and geometric forms. There is no abstraction.

Subject-matter being destroyed, it was natural that the problem of the movie-scenario should be taken up next. Two art-films were completed between 1923 and 1924. The "*Ballet Mecanique*" and "*Entr'acte*."

Freedom was achieved in every realm—the "*Ballet Mecanique*" set out to prove that it was possible to find a new life on the screen without a scenario, through making use of simple objects, fragments of objects—of a mechanical element, of rhythmic repetitions copied from certain objects of a commonplace nature and "artistic" in the least possible degree. Montage is purposeful contrast through slow motion and speed-up. It aims to work out in the movies an interest in the isolated object on the screen, as well as in painting.

"*Entr'acte*" likewise expresses the will toward freedom. It is the expression of the Dada era. The desire to flatten out everything solemn, respectable, too much

taken-for-granted, too indisputable—and thus to open the door to the freest fantasy.

These two films are a landmark in the history of plastic revolutions.

This analysis of the isolated object can go beyond simple artistic and pictorial relations. I should maintain, for example, that from the dramatic viewpoint, a single hand which slowly appears on the screen and reaches toward a revolver is more dramatic than if one beholds the whole actor.

A hand—a leaf—a revolver—a mouth—an eye—these are "objects."

The sentiment of beauty is completely independent of our comprehensive faculties—emotion, admiration, belong to the realm of sensibility.

"What does that represent?" has no meaning. For example: With a brutal lighting of the finger-nail of a woman—a modern finger-nail, well-manicured, very brilliant, shining—I make a movie on a very large scale. I project it enlarged an hundredfold, and I call it—"Fragment of a Planet, Photographed in January, 1934." Everybody admires my planet. Or I call it "abstract form." Everybody either admires it or criticizes it. Finally I tell the truth—what you have just seen is the nail of the little finger of the woman sitting next to you.

Naturally, the audience leaves, vexed and dissatisfied, because of having been fooled, but I am sure that hereafter those people won't ask any more of me and won't repeat that ridiculous question: "What does that represent?"

There was never any question in plastic art, in poetry, in music, of representing anything. It is a matter of making something beautiful, moving or dramatic—this is by no means the same thing.

If I isolate a tree in a landscape, if I approach that tree, I see that its bark has an interesting design and a plastic form; that its branches have dynamic violence which ought to be observed; that its leaves are decorative. Locked up in "subject-matter," these elements are not "set in value." It is here that the "new realism" finds itself, and also behind scientific microscopes, behind astronomical research which brings us every day new

forms that we can use in the movies and in our paintings.

The commonplace objects, those of the "*Ballet Mecanique*," objects turned out in a series, are often more beautiful in proportion than many things called beautiful and given a badge of honor.

It is also "new realism" to know how to employ in decorations raw materials like marble, steel, glass, copper, etc.

At this point, I cannot refrain from commenting upon two recent feats which possess considerable importance as modern creations. I mean—a French feat, the steamship *Normandie* and an American feat, Radio City. The *Normandie*, unfortunately, fails to fulfil our hopes from the viewpoint of interior decoration. It is a retrograde conception which belongs somewhere between the taste of the eighteenth century and the taste of 1900.

The French, who have a heavy artistic tradition behind them, often make such errors. They forget that they constructed the Eiffel Tower fifty years ago—and that's just too bad! Naturally, it's always easier to look backward, to imitate what is already done, than to create something new.

Radio City, on the other hand, is the true expression of modern America. Apart from certain decorations which, to my mind, are not architectural, the rest is absolutely perfect. The raw materials I spoke of above are used there with a great deal of talent and appropriateness. The steel door is very much in place in a marble frame.

America knows how to make things luxurious while making them simple. And it is a social luxuriousness, luxury through which crowds circulate. It was necessary to discover that—and it has been done.

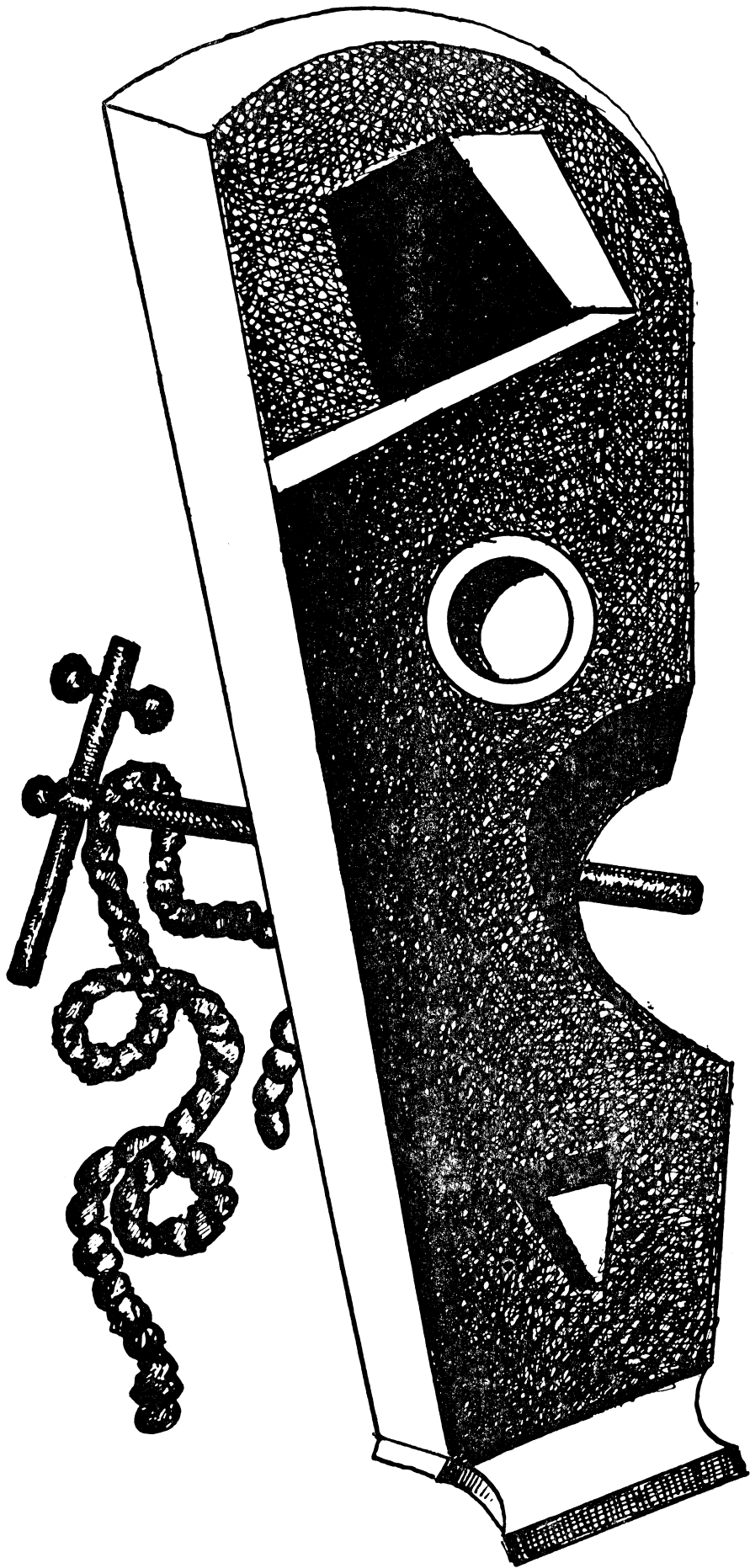
To create luxury by means of complication and piled-up decoration, that is all old art. To create luxury with simplicity, that is the modern problem, and Radio City has solved it.

Color, being a new powerful reality, ought to be kept "under surveillance," whenever it comes in contact with architecture. It ought not to overflow nor encroach upon the walls, as in the case of the monuments of the Italian fifteenth century. The architect ought to defend himself against the painter who has too great a tendency to "slap it on thick."

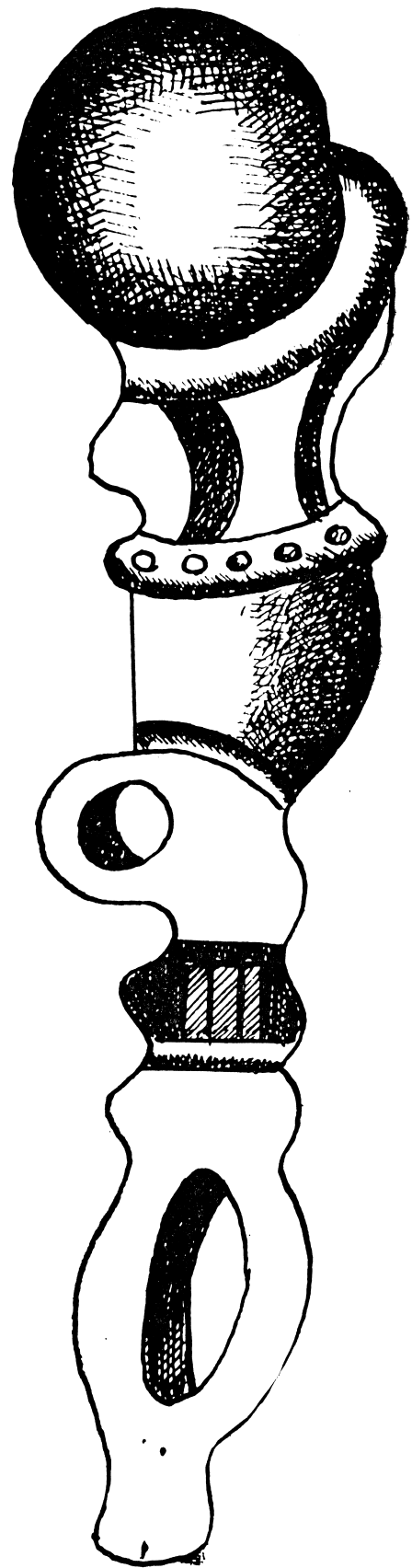
Once these conditions can be taken for granted, it ought to be possible to achieve the unity of three arts: architecture, painting and sculpture.

We shall see some day, I hope, vast modern monuments which shall stand as the Acropolises of tomorrow.

TRANSLATED BY HAROLD ROSENBERG

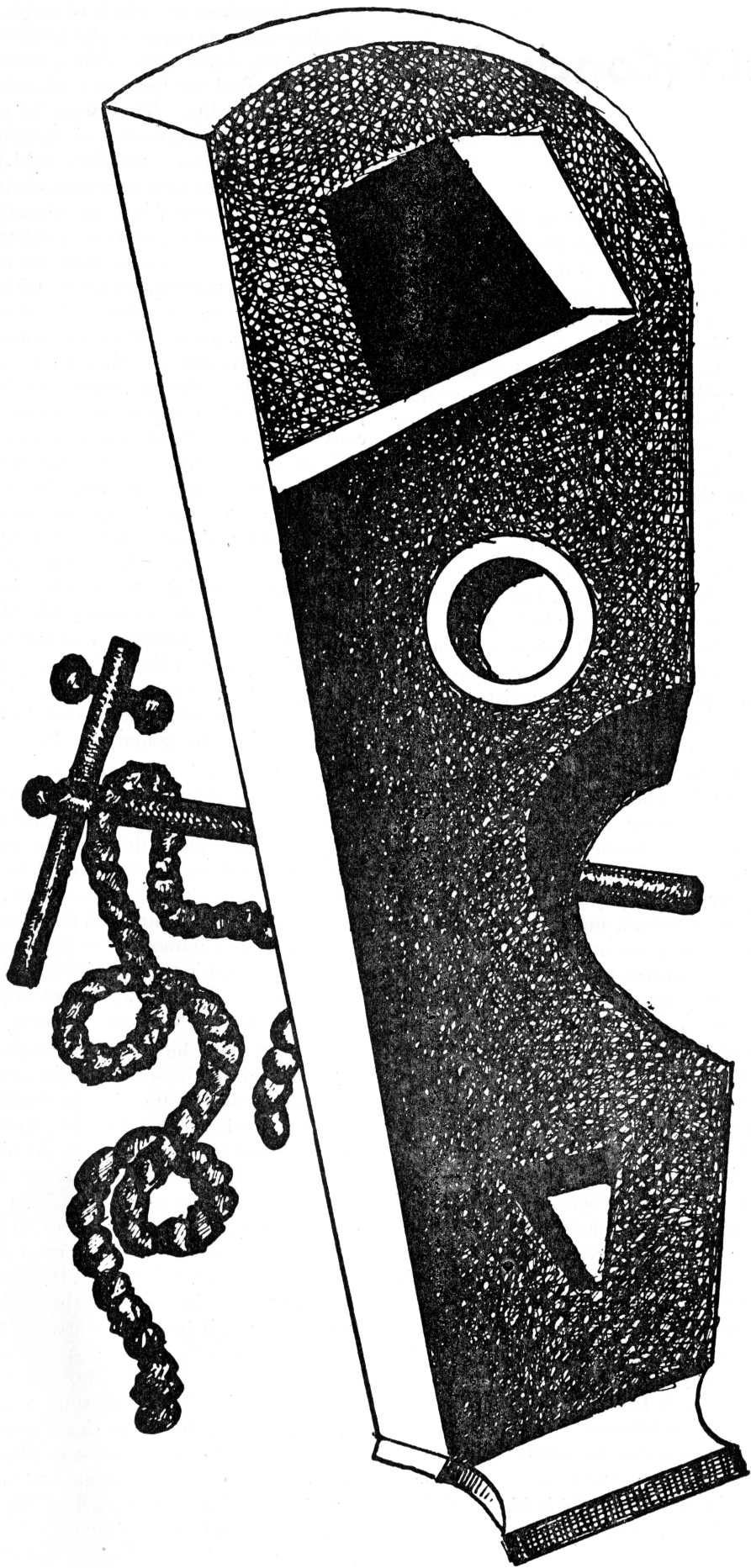


Composition

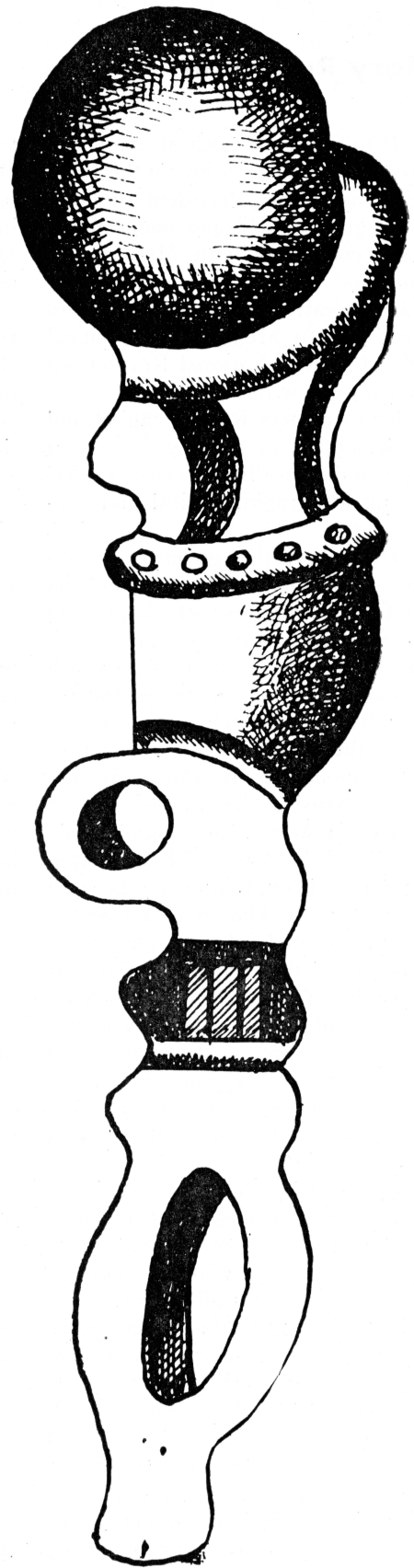


Fernand Leger

Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art



Composition



Fernand Leger

Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art

RIVERA'S MONOPOLY (Conclusion)

By Mary Randolph

MEXICO'S second richest man and second largest depositor in the Bank of England is former President Plutarco Calles. To guarantee his personal interest in foreign companies with Mexican investments and his private ownership of a huge and lucrative hacienda, his policies as present boss of Mexico's one political party, the P.N.R. (National Revolutionary Party), become obvious.

In order to protect foreign capital and private ownership in the face of rising discontent and spreading distrust, Calles' machine made a rapid, radical and far-sighted move.

Last December, the government declared itself socialistic. It garnished its oft-unfulfilled promises of land and schools, labor law enforcement, etc., with Marxian phraseology. Efforts to crush the church were made more spectacular than usual by a government-sponsored organization, the Red Shirts.

The masquerade has proved fairly successful in confusing the people. Rivera paints faces of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the walls of the National Palace; Red Shirts parade through the streets with police escorts; the Hammer and Sickle are stamped on federal announcements. Surely these are the draperies of socialism, yet feudalism, capitalism, and foreign imperialism continue to exploit away unmolested. In a word, a Mexican fascist government crushes and cuts the people with a hammer and sickle more effectively and more subtly than it could with a *Hackenkreuz*.

Rivera is far too intelligent and subtle himself to be hoodwinked by all this folderol. He was well aware that contemporaneously with the government's December declaration of socialism went the official announcement that Americans' property would be respected and protected. He knows that since the new program went into effect almost every strike has been broken by labor-board compromise or by force on the part of the Red Shirts. He is not uninformed concerning the government's recent appropriation to increase armament of a part of the budget set aside for building 2,500 new rural schools. Nor is he blinded by the government's fanning of the old church controversy in order to divert the people's attention from their more fundamental economic problems. The fascist

trends are far too obvious for a staunch old Marxist like Diego Rivera not to recognize the wolf in grandmother's clothing. Rivera is not innocent Red Riding-Hood. He is a willing prostitute who makes his work pay.

No Pompadour ever used power in a more arbitrary or dictatorial way than Rivera does in his capacity as supervisor of government-subsidized murals. A recent episode in relation to the decorations of the huge public market, *Mercado Roderiquez*, exemplifies the dead hand he holds over the younger artists. He was given the contract to do the walls of the market by the Central Department of Education. Owing to bad health and other jobs, he couldn't complete it in the allotted time, so he called upon a group of unemployed left-wing artists. Being revolutionary painters, they wanted the murals to represent in proper social perspective the position of the hundreds of poor people who make and buy and sell the daily stuff of life between the great market walls. Some wanted to do revolutionary painting even if they should lose their federal pay-checks. But finally they compromised, under Rivera's supervision, upon a scientific treatment of the subject of nutrition. Thus, the market walls now bear graphic designs of colorful vitamins. This is supposed to give the Mexican people the much-needed information of what constitutes a healthy diet. Nevertheless, everyone realizes such teaching is futile when the people are too poor to buy the right foods.

Why didn't Rivera use his drag to obtain government permission for a socially valuable treatment of this all-important problem—the production and distribution of food? Yes, why didn't he? He has just finished an academic mural of his own in which the arm of a worker points to the happy Communism of the future. If he can get permission for himself, he can do the same for the contracts he lets. Nevertheless, he doesn't, and he won't, because then he would lose the distinction of being "the most revolutionary painter in Mexico." He holds his vicious monopoly even in revolutionary subject-matter.

The younger artists despise him for this tyrannical use of power. They hate him for selling out and for forcing them to sell out. The revolutionary painters

have no definite program nor have they any set standards by which to judge art; yet they are conscious of the general direction they must take. They sincerely attempt to find the best way of relating their art to reality. They want to make their medium an expression of fundamental social problems. And they hold that, under the exigent circumstances, their art must be transformed into an educational instrument. Today and now, a relatively illiterate Mexican people must be made aware of the political situation which is driving them into fascism. To do this they must get around Rivera's monopoly on public influence, and they have. Fast and furiously series of posters are being painted. With a marvelous clarity and convincing force these posters reveal the evils of the existing order—the church and state together misguiding the people into the vicious trap of Mexican fascism; the capitalist and *hacendado* draining the people of their life's blood; the foreign imperialists choking the wealth out of Mexico. With great insistence, the Mexican revolutionary painters send out to all people the call to strike, to unite, to fight for the rights they must fight for. These posters are exhibited in workers' clubs, in schools, in rural community houses all over the country.

Thus the same timely message is carried from the mining towns of the north to the sugar cane plantations of the south, from the workers in the capital to the remotest agricultural community; it reaches the best-educated and the illiterate alike. Rivera's monopoly on revolutionary painting can't control this "wild cat competition." The truth will out in spite of the "*Fyusa* of Mexican Painting."

It is true that he hasn't succeeded in cornering the truth—he has managed in good part to pervert it—but he does control the only fields in which all Mexican painters must make their living. As above mentioned, there are two alternatives—government subsidy or selling to tourists. The Mexican people are too poor to support by individual purchases even their most esteemed artist. And so, if a person won't paint in the manner the government demands, if he won't waste his time illustrating nutrition, he must starve or do something besides painting. How can he sell his revolutionary work to even the most liberal-minded American tourists when Rivera, the richest artist in Mexico, has through the most strategic and widespread self-publicity, directed all the demand toward his own painting?

By sticking his thick neck into Mr. Rockefeller's noose and then raising such a howl when the rope was tightened, he successfully created the illusion that he was a noble martyr of the people. All the

arty humanitarians immediately leaped to his cause, so that now almost every American who comes to Mexico has heard of Rivera, whether he has seen any of his murals or not.

If by some chance any tourists had escaped hearing the name "Rivera" before, they could not remain in this uninformed state one day after their arrival in Mexico City. In all public buildings government-censored guides offer to explain the meaning of the Diego Rivera murals; the book shops display whole windows of his books; the art galleries are cluttered up with his drawings, his water colors, his oils; the photo stores hang in their windows enlargements of his face; and every cigar store has his reproductions for sale.

No other artist, however good a painter he may be, can compete in a market so well covered by Rivera's large-scale advertising. Even Orozco cannot make enough money to live comfortably. So how can the younger revolutionary artists, who won't be bought off by the government, expect to sell their brutally truthful works to American tourists?

The way he set himself against the workers' art schools, which have been instituted recently, shows how astutely he handles his American buying public and how little he cares for the development of the revolution or of revolutionary art. A radical group of art teachers in the Federal Department of Education began in 1932 to attack the Open Air Art Schools. In these schools, the students came mostly from the lower class. They were taught an art-for-art's-sake credo, which completely maladjusted them for the place in society they had sooner or later to take. The teachers attempted to make an artist out of every worker. Self-expression was cultivated. A Millet-Monet type of back-to-nature impression-

ism was revived. By this program, the students became pure artists who considered themselves removed from their class. They went out of these schools unequipped with even the fundamental principles of drawing technique. The government could employ only one or two out of every hundred as art teachers, and advertising offices had no use for ability in self-expression, however good. Thus they became maladjusted bohemians, painting junk for souvenir shops in order to keep their hands clean.

This open-air art movement became well-known in America, because the students' pictures were sold to tourists. The paintings were so pretty, inoffensive and cheap that all who saw them exhibited in the patios of the schools were glad to pay a couple of dollars for one. The teachers made money and the students became corrupted. Emphasis began to be placed on selling value rather than artistic merit.

The last of these schools was closed in February, 1935. Now the Socialist Art Schools have replaced them. The aim of these new Workers' Schools is threefold—first, to teach the students to be skilled workers in their respective jobs; second, to give them a way of expressing their social needs, demands and hopes, so that art can be a weapon for them in the class struggle; and third, to make them class-conscious, toward which end courses in history and economics are given in the art schools.

"The Revolution gave Rivera great opportunities," Spratling, a Rivera-worshiper, lately wrote. That Rivera has used these opportunities in a most opportunistic way cannot be doubted. This conflict between the Open-Air Art Schools and the sponsors of the Workers' Art Schools certainly gave Rivera an opportunity to champion a good and successful revolutionary cause. But he faked it. The American art magazines had much to say about the Mexican government closing down on the freedom of the artist; the ruthless destruction of local color and folkways by industrial education; in a word, lots of fuss was made because art critics like pure art better than social art, and because the art collectors' ten-cent holiday was at an end. Rivera took this opportunity to leap into the American limelight as a defender of art freedom. His position of a self-declared Communist preserving pure art is a bit incredible, but the Americans like him the better for being a champion of "freedom," and they go on buying more and more of his pictures.

The tourists can be excused but Rivera cannot. In spite of his greatness as an artist, he must be labelled opportunist, monopolist and counter-revolutionary.

EXHIBITIONS

A. C. A. Gallery—52 W. 8 St. American Artists' Congress makes it debut. Nov. 10-23. **John Reed Club's Comment on Capitalist Crisis.** Nov. 24-Dec. 13. **Artists' Union**—60 W. 15 St. Self-Portrait show by members. Nov. 8-28. **American Place**—Stieglitz—509 Madison Ave. Recent work by America's foremost water-colorist, John Marin. Through Nov. **Bignou**—32 E. 57 St. Cezanne and the impressionists, with several important examples. Through Nov. **Brooklyn Museum**—Eastern Parkway. A large show of textiles, pottery and sculpture from the South American countries. Now a permanent feature of the museum. Also lithos of Matisse and Czechoslovakian art. **Brummer**—53 E. 57 St. Opening of comprehensive exhibit of Jacques Lipschitz's work. A chance for Americans to see Europe's outstanding modern sculptor. Nov. 30 through Jan.

Contemporary Arts—41 W. 54 St. Work of Alice Tenney, young American painter from the Middle-West. Nov. 18-Dec. 7. **Delphic Studios**—724 Fifth Ave. Sculpture by Katchamakoff, water colors by Beckwith. Nov. 25-Dec. 9. **Dorothy Paris Gallery**—56 W. 53 St. Work of Fega Blumberg, an American expressionist who has not exhibited in five years. Nov. 25-Dec. 15. Work of Nathaniel Dirk. Nov. 25-Dec. 15. **Downtown Gallery**—113 W. 13 St. Ernest Fiene—Oils and water colors done in the West. Nov. 12-Dec. 2. **Durand-Ruel**—12 E. 57 St. Paintings by Alfred Sisley, one of the important impressionists. Nov. 11-30.

Guild Gallery—32 W. 57 St. Work by Aaronson, Gorki, Forbes and others. **Julien Levy**—602 Madison Ave. Oils by Leonide, a leading neo-romantic who casts his somber gaze over Italian fishing villages. Nov. 19-Dec. 17. **Kleemann**—38 E. 57 St. Drawings by Harrison Cady, young American. Nov. 18-30. **Knoedler**—14 E. 57 St. Loan collection of work by Hogarth, famous satirist of English 18th Century manners. Nov. 11-23. Important showing of African Sculpture from Benin Tribe. Nov. 26-Dec. 5. **Marie Steiner**—9 E. 57 St. Work by Ainsley Salz and Caroline Durieux. Dec. 9-21. **Metropolitan Museum of Art**—82 St. and Fifth Ave. Large loan exhibit of 18th Century French Art, including Chardin, Watteau, etc. **Midtown Galleries**—605 Madison Ave. Group show of Americans, including Mommer, Kroth, Simpson, Waldb, Pierce and others. Nov. 21 through Dec. **Marie Harriman.** Exhibit of 19th Century primitives.

* **Museum of Modern Art**—11 W. 53 St. The long-awaited Van Gogh show. Probably the most important exhibit of the year. A chance to reevaluate the father of Expressionism. Nov. 5-Jan. 5. **New Art Circle**—J. B. Neumann—509 Madison Ave. New work by Max Weber, one of the earliest American moderns. Nov. 18-Dec. 9. **Pierre Matisse**—51 E. 57 St. Work of Giorgio Di Chirico, painted during the years 1910-1918, depicting haunted memories of Italian towns at night. Probably this important Surrealist's best period. Nov. 22-Dec. 22.

Rehn Gallery—683 Fifth Ave. Oils by James Chapin, American. Nov. 11-30. **Valentine**—69 E. 57 St. One-man exhibit of Utrillo, poet of old streets. One of the most genuinely lyrical painters in France today. Nov. 4-23. **Wildenstein**—19 E. 64 St. Early French Masters.

* Admission 25 cents. Free to members of Artists' Union upon presentation of card from 5 to 6 p.m.





GRAPES.

THE ARTISTS' COOPERATIVE IN THE U.S.S.R

By Florence Sachnoff

THE "Artists' Cooperative" in the U.S.S.R. has proved the advantage of organization for artists. One finds, when making a study of the functions of this union in Soviet Russia, that all the aims of our union here are being fulfilled.

The "All-Union Artists' Cooperative" or *Vsekhudojnik*—the Russian word for it—has its headquarters in Moscow, with 26 filial organizations in various cities throughout the Soviet Union. Of its 7,000 national membership, the bulk of which consists of painters, sculptors, and graphic artists, 3,000 live in or around Moscow. Here an artist may obtain work in whatever field of art he happens to be fitted for. Here also all the important exhibits are planned a year in advance. Large traveling exhibitions are launched, which make the rounds of factories, collective farms, workers' clubs, Red Army barracks and Parks of Culture, all over the country. These exhibitions consist of material which has been purchased from the artists for the Cooperative's permanent collection.

At the opening of each exhibition, an open forum is held at which criticism and discussion are invited from all interested artists, workers and critics. This is an occasion for all to become better acquainted with the meaning of art and its relation to the people. "Art Appreciation" groups of students and workers make the rounds of all the galleries and debate the merits and demerits of the pictures.

The larger shows call for definite themes, such as, "Fifteen Years of the Red Army," "Leningrad Festival," "Fifteen Years of Art in the Soviet Union," etc. There usually are 500 or more paintings in these exhibitions. For 1937 a number of wide scale exhibits are being planned to cover such huge themes as, "Industrial Socialism," "Pushkin's 100th Anniversary," "Twenty Years of the Red Army," "Progress in Villages," "Railroad Transportation and Water," "Life in the Arctic." These exhibitions play an im-

portant role in the education of the people, not only from the cultural viewpoint, but also help to bring about a better understanding between the artist and workers from other fields.

The artist goes about getting a job by submitting samples of his work to the Cooperatives. He explains to them the type of commission which interests him. There is a competent jury called the "Artists' Soviet" consisting of a group of 21 outstanding critics, directors of galleries, and artists, which judges its merits. The artist is also present at this meeting, and discusses his work with them. A contract for one year is then drawn up between the Cooperative and the artist, with a maximum salary of 24,000 rubles a year, and a minimum of 6,000 rubles. There is no such thing as a time-keeper to make the artist feel that he must put in a day's work at painting. He has an entire year to work on the project, at his leisure. If at the end of the commission the artist has done better than was expected (as has happened in a number of cases), he receives more money than the contract specifies.

The Cooperative supplies all working material, models, paints, drapes and costumes and consultation with specialists, when needed. The artist on the other hand specifies a plan of the work he intends to cover. The Cooperative is given first option on any material besides that contracted for during this period. There are two other forms of contracts, one in which the artist chooses his own subjects; and the other in which he is sent on what is called *Commendeerovka*, or expeditions to various parts of the country—the Crimea, Caucasus or Arctic regions to bring back material, which he uses for easel painting, murals or sculpture. The sketches remain in the artists' possession. On these tours, which last anywhere from six weeks to six months, all expenses are paid, besides which he receives a stipend of 1,500 rubles a month.

There are sixty or more exhibitions a

year in Moscow alone. Those who are invited to exhibit are notified at least a year in advance. Others who have not been invited and wish to have one-man shows submit work to the Artists' Soviet for criticism. If it is mature enough, an exhibit is arranged for. The government committee has first choice in purchasing pictures for museums. The Cooperative buys for its own exhibitions. Organizations and individuals have third choice. All proceeds from these sales go to the artists.

Here we see how all the problems of the artist are solved. If he is talented, everything possible is done to encourage his work. He may rise to national and even international fame without going through periods of starvation, if he doesn't happen to have a private income, without being forced to play politics with a wealthy patron, if he is lucky enough to have one. If he is mediocre, he is assured of a comfortable job in one of the numerous projects which interests him most.

One of the most interesting achievements that the All-Union Artists' Cooperative can boast of is a huge project which will be a city in itself, devoted entirely to the manufacture and distribution of every type of artists' material. This project, when completed in 1937, will also include hundreds of modern studios for both individuals and collective groups.

CORRESPONDENCE

Rhinebeck, N. Y.
October 31, 1935

To the Editors of ART FRONT:

No one will ever know, probably, just what the trouble was with the hundred or more sketches turned in on the competition for the Department of Justice building and pronounced "inappropriate" by a very official committee. It seems strange that out of that number, making all due allowances for mediocrity, two or three (the required number) could not have been chosen. It seems more than likely that the very official committee lacked conviction, not only as to how the murals should look, but also what they should represent.

Those painters who were invited to compete last spring were given very brief specifications as to subject matter. The following statement appeared in the invitation: "The subject matter of these murals should deal with some phase of the administration of justice in relation to

contemporary American life". In other words the painter not only had to create a design for the space, but also to think his way through one of the most controversial subjects and come out with the happiest of all possible compromises. From the start, it looked like a thousand to one shot. It has proved once again the well-known fact that you can't convince with a two-inch scale sketch a client who himself has no point of view.

Everyone knows the usual arguments in favor of competitions, *i. e.*, they are democratic, fair, discover new talent, allow the best man to win, etc., etc. Of course, there are closed competitions and open competitions and the Section of Painting and Sculpture in Washington has called theirs closed in spite of the fact that none of the invited were paid a small percentage on the job, as is usual, and that twenty or more had been asked to try for a single project. In spite of the New Deal ballyhoo, there is some indication that for once the government tried to turn its back on the academic hack and attempted to throw open its buildings for the painter to decorate as best he could. If the government is truly sincere in its efforts to find good work, someone should take the trouble to point out that the best work of the past has always been done where there was a sympathetic cooperation between client, architect and decorator, working together from the start on the same idea and together watching it grow to completion. In the Department of Justice competition it is doubtful whether any of the painters saw the buildings or spaces to be filled and there was no chance to discuss their own ideas or find out those of the architect or client.

The competitive sketch is a deceptive thing, as the Section has already found out. Government competitions are deceptive things, as the painter has found out.

Yours very truly,
HENRY BILLINGS

Extracts from a Letter

To the Editors of ART FRONT:

... From the very inception of the Section of Painting and Sculpture, their Bulletins promised the artists of America new, better, and fairer methods of picking the winners in the local as well as the federal art competitions. No more favoritism for the well-known names among the artists, or for those artists who had friends or relatives to pull the proper strings in Washington for the fat commissions in art. The Bulletins promised that the younger, less-known artists would be given a break! . . .

The Government's show of interest in the contemporary and modern artist is false at the outset. This is apparent from the very fact that it still insists in hiring the old standby architects, no doubt old friends of long standing to Government officialdom. If this sounds like an unwarranted accusation, then what excuse is there for the appearance of the new Post Office and Justice Buildings in Washington? Why the Greek architecture in all of the Government buildings? We have excellent native, modern skyscraper forms of architecture which are truly American in conception and have limitless and beautiful possibilities for architectural development and should be, by all means, adapted to Government and public buildings. If truly American creative architects were engaged to design our buildings and to advise the Section of Painting and Sculpture, then only would there be a fair chance for a modern, abstract, or proletarian artist to do something worthwhile! . . .

How can it be expected of the contemporary American artist, an abstract artist for instance, to harmonize his designs with Greek architecture? On the other hand his murals or sculpture would fit very well with the skyscraper form of architecture.

... There are many very capable and truly original young modern painters and sculptors in this country. Many artists of whom we should all be proud. How about a real chance for these talented young artists?

LOUIS FERSTADT

To the Editors of ART FRONT:

The Models' League, which meets every Friday at 5 P. M. at Artists' Union headquarters, is pleased to announce the functioning of the Models' Placement Bureau. The purpose of this Bureau is to organize and place unemployed models, and to centralize the hiring of models by artists. We hope to acquaint artists and models with the excellent service the Placement Bureau can give. The Bureau is open from 1 to 4 P. M. every day at Artists' Union headquarters, a secretary being in charge.

Painters, sculptors, artists, we ask you to cooperate with the Models' League by contacting our Placement Bureau, whenever you need a model. You will receive prompt attention.

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