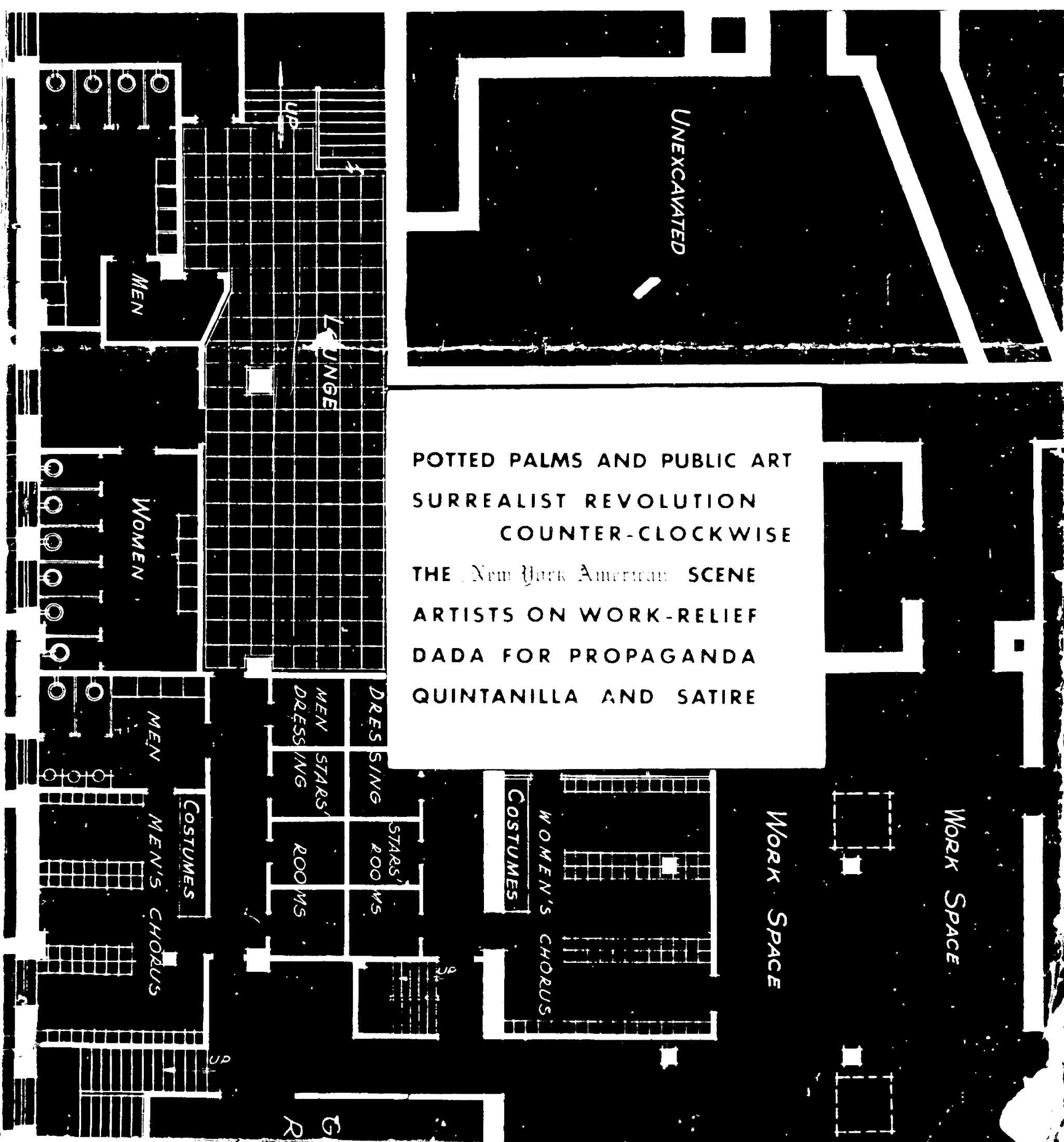


ART FRONT

FEBRUARY 1935

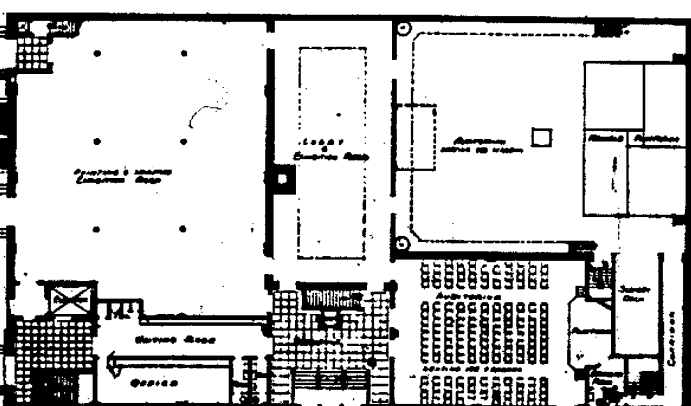
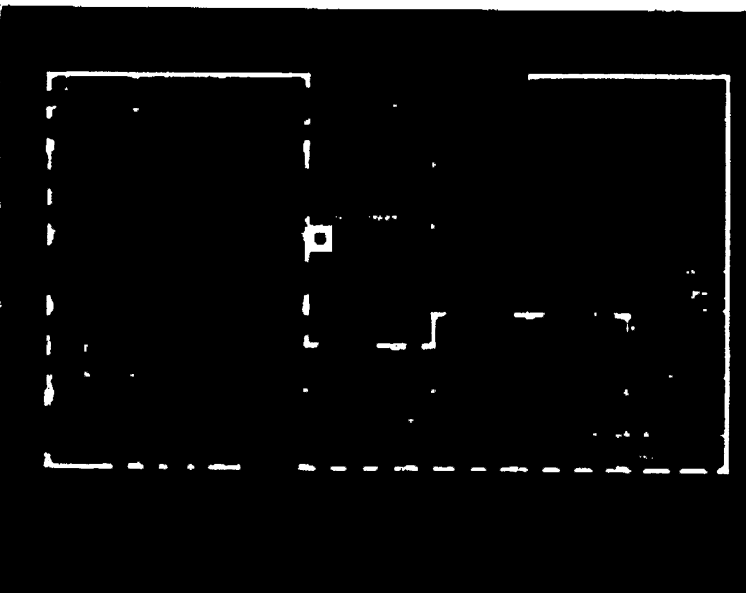
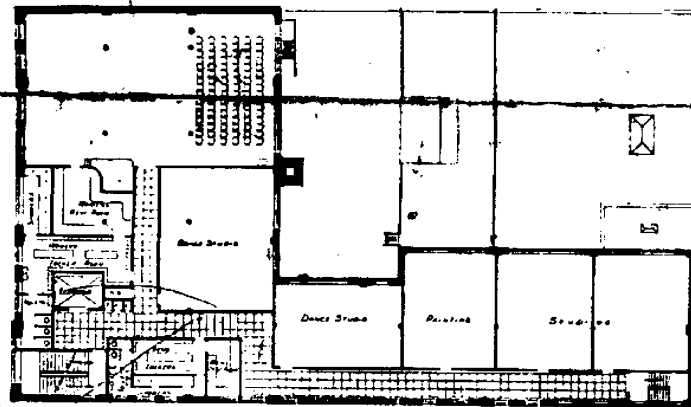
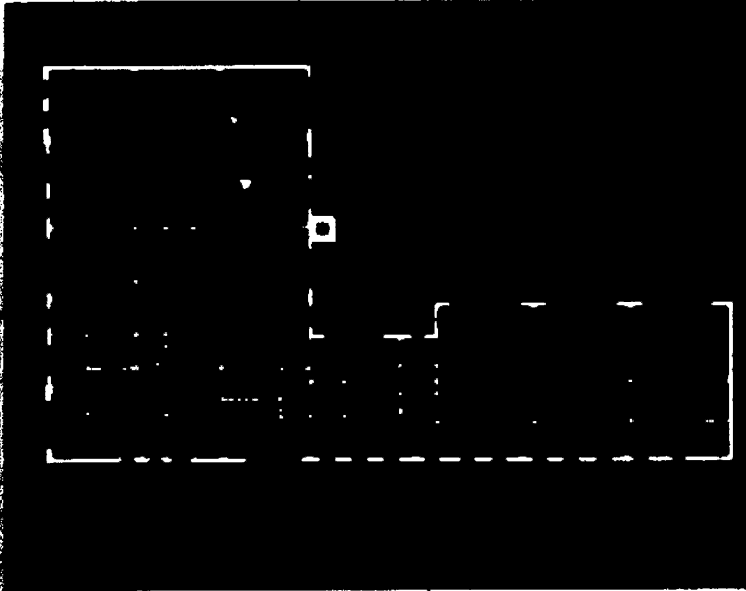
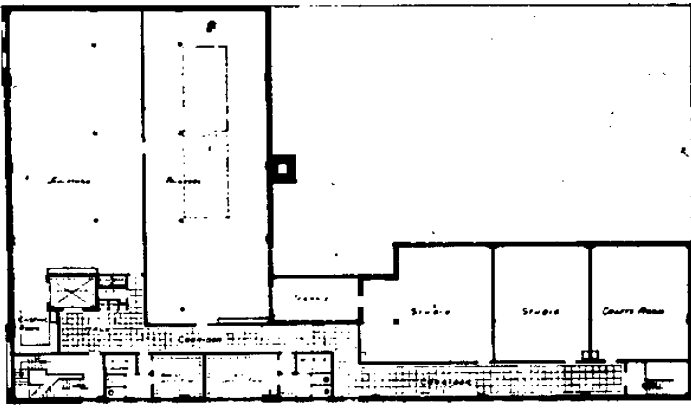
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POTTED PALMS AND PUBLIC ART
 SURREALIST REVOLUTION
 COUNTER-CLOCKWISE
 THE New York American SCENE
 ARTISTS ON WORK-RELIEF
 DADA FOR PROPAGANDA
 QUINTANILLA AND SATIRE

A Set of Plans

The following set of plans was designed by members of the Federation of Architects as a practical illustration of how a public building might be converted into an art center.



What Is Rock-Bottom?

IN the past the artist has fought as an individual to maintain both his economic and artistic standards. The futility of such a course, under the impact of the depression, has been tragically demonstrated in lowered working and living conditions. Aware of this, the commercial artist today is beginning to organize in an effort to halt the growing tendency toward still longer hours, lower wages, unpaid overtime, and lower prices, a situation which affects us all, employed, unemployed and free-lance.

The Commercial Artists' Section of the Artists' Union, which has a membership of 900, is an organization which arose on the basis of the needs of the commercial artist and reflects his changing attitude from one of individual protest to that of firm, united action.

The following is the proposed program for all commercial artists, based on their general demands.

PROGRAM:

Employed Artists

Thirty-five hour week—no reduction in pay. \$40.00 minimum. Equal pay for equal work. No discrimination because of organizational or union activity, sex, political belief, race or color. For the right of the artist to belong to a union of his own choice, and for the right of the union to bargain collectively on behalf of the artist with the employer.

Apprentices

Eighteen dollars minimum per 35-hour week for the first six months.

Unemployed Artists

For the creation of commercial art projects for all unemployed commercial artists by the administration. For adequate cash relief. For a Federal Art Bill. For H.R. 2827.

Free-Lance Artists

For the right of the artist to obtain orders containing all terms and specifications of work. For just payment of work in proportion to use, not specified in order. All changes or additions not the fault of artist, and all work complete or incomplete which is stopped by the buyer, must be paid for, on the basis of time or effort expended. Unauthorized use of artists' work shall be paid for on the basis of finished work. All speculation work to be paid for on the basis of time expended.

It is not enough for the thousands of commercial artists to have a program. Commercial artists by the thousands must rally behind it, organize it, fight to realize it.

All commercial artists are called to a Mass Meeting, to be held at the Artists' Union, 60 West 15th Street, on February 15, 1935. Ruth Reeves, leading textile designer; Linn Ball, noted still-life painter; Melisse, well-known modern fashion artist, and others will speak on the "Problems Facing the Commercial Artist Today."

The Commercial Artists' Section of the Artists' Union.

An opening exhibition is being arranged at the new headquarters of the Artists' Union, at 60 West 15th Street. This will be a non-jury show. Artists are asked to bring one or two pictures. In order that all work may be well hung, the exhibition committee has planned to arrange the work into several groups, each of which will be hung for two weeks.

Sculpture, because it suffers in a painting exhibition, will be grouped with models done by architects of the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians, as part of a projected housing plan.

The sketch class of the Artists' Union will be resumed in the new headquarters on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The class will be under the supervision of Moses Soyer.

Revolutionary Art School

THE mid-year exhibition of students' work of the John Reed Club School of Art was formally opened Wednesday evening, January 23rd, with a reception at the Club Gallery, 430 Sixth Avenue. The exhibition will continue through February 6th, after the opening of the new term. It contains representative work from all the classes, including the Saturday Children's class.

Some of the work of these youngsters in past exhibitions has shown startling political development and a refreshingly unself-conscious use of proletarian themes. Of special interest to mature artists is the work of the Political Cartoon Class and the Fresco Mural Class, which are the only classes of the kind in the city, and which are particularly adapted to the expression of art with social content, which the school consistently fosters. Artists who are interested in observing the work of the fresco group may do so on Sunday afternoons while the exhibition is on, from 2 to 5 o'clock. The exhibition is open from 2 to 5 P.M. daily, and Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9 P.M.

Three new courses are announced, to begin with the opening of the new term on Monday, February 4th. A lecture and laboratory course on the "Chemistry of Artists' Media" will be conducted by Frederick Rogers, who previously gave the course at the California School of Fine Arts. Actual tests will be made for permanency of various types of colors and finishes, and a palette of colors will be ground in the laboratory which will provide students with colors for their own use for some time. A course in the woodcut will be given by H. Grintenkamp, and a class in Poster Design and Lettering, which will include work in silk-screen reproduction, will be given by Charles Dibner, Joseph Kaplan, and others.

The school, which is in its fifth year, offers this year for the first time a complete curriculum and complete schedule of day, evening, and week-end classes. The steady growth of the school from twice-a-week evening life classes several years ago, to a full-blown, full-time, self-sustaining school, is evidence of the fact that the school is filling the need for a place where students are encouraged not only to develop their talent, but to put that talent to active use in the social conflicts of today.

The complete list of courses includes: Drawing and Painting from Life; Mural Painting and Composition; Sculpture; Political Cartoon; Lithography; Chemistry of Artists' Media; Woodcut; Poster Design and Lettering. Members of the regular faculty and guest instructors include Nicolai Cikovsky, A. Harrigan, Aaron Goodelman, H. Grintenkamp, James Guy, Anton Refregier, Phil Bard, Jacob Burck, Kenneth Chamberlain, Hugo Gellert, William Gropper, Russell Limbach, Robert Minor, Walter Quirt, William Siegal, Jacob Friedland, Louis Lozowick, Raphael Soyer, Marya Morrow, Charles Dibner, Joseph Kaplan, Maurice Sieven, Philip Reisman, Ben Shahn, Frederick Rogers, and others.

An important feature of the school this year has been a series of lectures on Wednesday evenings, covering discussions of both general and technical art matters and current happenings in economic life which will be valuable in developing a social approach to art.

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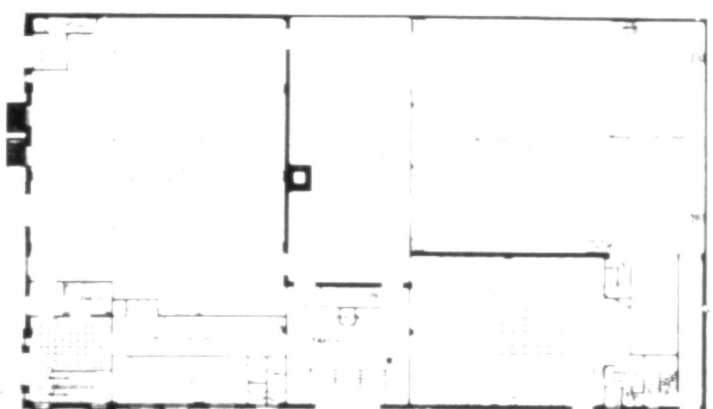
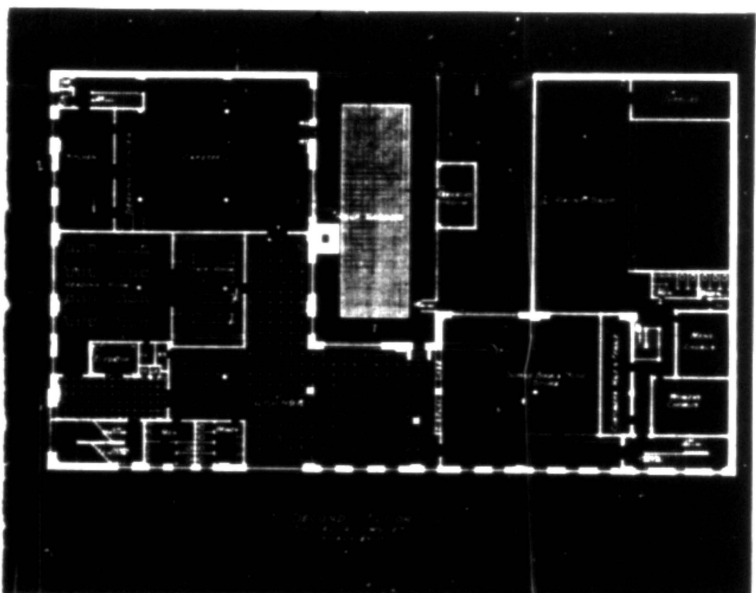
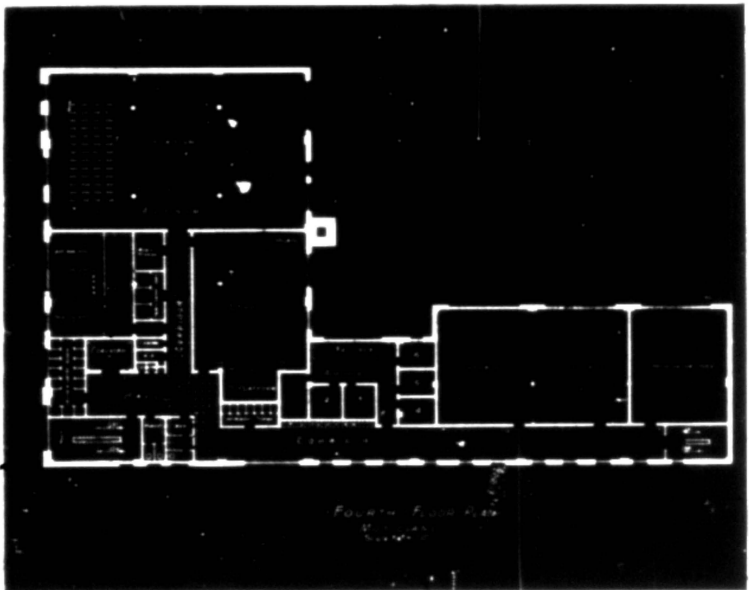
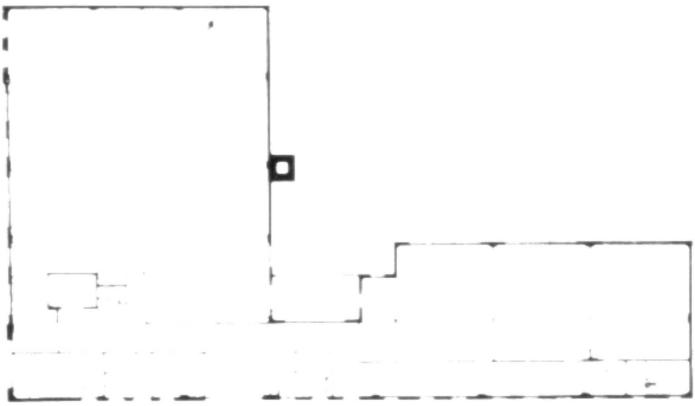
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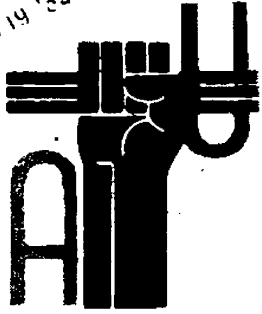
A Set of Plans

A set of plans for a building, showing the layout of the structure. The plans include a floor plan, a section, and a detail view. The floor plan shows the overall layout of the building, including the main structure and an attached wing. The section shows the vertical structure of the building, including the roof and the foundation. The detail view shows a close-up of a specific part of the building, such as a window or a door.



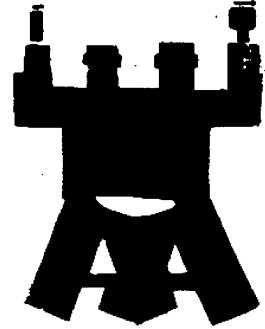
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Vol. 1, No. 3



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H. R. 2827

THE Congress for Social and Unemployment Insurance convened in Washington on January 5, 6 and 7. Delegates from all parts of the country and from all trades and professions were there. Industrial workers, dentists, doctors, engineers, artists, writers, and numerous students of social insurance came together to discuss and agree upon a form of insurance adequate to take care of the needs of American workers.

The Lundeen Bill, formerly H.R. 7598, which was last year supported by great numbers of workers and by the Artists' Union, was discussed in detail. Many improvements were made in its provisions, and is was readopted under the title, H. R. 2827.

There will be two unemployment insurance bills before the present session of Congress. One, the Wagner Bill, is not designed to insure the millions of persons now unemployed, but will apply only to those employed for six months or over. This bill requires that a tax be paid by all persons employed to help provide for their possible future unemployment.

The Lundeen Bill asks for unemployment insurance at the expense of the industrialists who irresponsibly employ and discharge great numbers of workers at will.

The Lundeen Bill should be of especial interest to artists because they, more than most classes of workers, have suffered acutely the failure of government to make such provision for all workers.

The Federal Art Bill, which is being drawn up by the Artists' Union, and which will provide for a permanent art works programs, is now in the hands of lawyers who will put it in its finished form. ART FRONT will print the completed bill in a future issue.

Surrealist Revolution Counter-Clockwise

ONE of the most curious incidents in the current history of New York's artistic life was the recent resignation of Alan Blackburn and Philip Johnson from the staff of the Museum of Modern Art. The one, its executive director; the other, chairman of its architectural department. The two, as one, left to join Huey Long in New Orleans for preliminary instruction in fascist methods before assuming active command of a new party, of which Blackburn is "Leader" and Johnson "Co-founder." Their departure was reported at some length in both *The New York Times* and the *Herald-Tribune* under the caption of a "Surrealist Party."

Johnson and Blackburn are both clever and able executives. Johnson is responsible for the dramatic presentation and amusing arrangement of the exposition of "Machine Art" held last year at the museum, and was the organizer of the impressive international invitation show of architectural models held some years ago, and subsequently routed through the country. Blackburn raised the level of the museum to its present business-like efficiency, and the trustees were deeply grieved at his departure. With some experience in advertising and high pressure salesmanship, he is credited with combining Macy department store methods and Johnson's super-window-display decoration in the most successful feat of selling a museum to a large public yet known in this country.

Johnson and Blackburn were at Harvard together. Their connection dates from school days. Johnson, primarily interested as an enthusiastic amateur in architecture, studied the housing problem in Hol-

land and Germany in considerable detail. His admiration for the men of the Bauhaus and their elimination by the Nazis did not, however, in any way hinder his enthusiasm for Hitler and the principles of Nordic Supremacy. Like Helen Appleton Read, the art critic, Johnson has been one of Hitler's few apologists in the last few years in New York.

Feeling New York had insulated them against an accurate knowledge of the country as a whole, they together took a motor trip throughout the Union to feel the pulse of the United States, not as reported by the newspapers, but as it is. They had previously organized their Grey Shirts, a party which held a few semi-secret meetings, pasted black papers over their windows against possible agents of a future Cheka and which quickly abandoned the shirts in the face of friendly laughter. A few visits to German films in Yorkville convinced them by the example of Horst Wessel and the battles around the lakes of Maszuri that a knowledge of military tactics was necessary. But they must see America first.

They did. In San Francisco they coincided with the longshoremen's strike. Mistaken for Communists by the police they were severely beaten. Angry, they complained to the police who laughed at their complaints. They had no witnesses. Instead of harboring any false pride, they quickly decided this was quite the way a country should be run. They returned to New York, their flying wedge developed; bombarded Huey Long with letters and telephone messages; prepared to throw up their jobs and join him.

This they have done. Long, unenthusiastic at first, now harbors them. The Museum of Modern Art is forgotten. However, adopting some of their protector's idiosyncrasies, they carry about with them blacklists of people who will be disposed of when their day arrives, if not before. Prominent on the list are two well-known Jewish art enthusiasts, Lincoln Kirstein and Edward Warburg, who were their college boy-friends. Not far down the list is Nelson Rockefeller, also prominent in the affairs of the Museum of Modern Art. His favor they curried, but aside from the fact that he thought they were crazy, his relationship to Huey Long's mortal enemy, the Standard Oil Company, has settled it that his head also will roll in the sand.

Their aim is to develop a strong private army. Huey, they consider an able charlatan from whom they can learn much. They have been taught to shoot with small arms and are erudite in the catalogues of machine gun and revolver companies. Laurence Dennis, the eminent Fascist is their political mentor. The Harvard Club holds many sympathizers. Henry Goddard Leach of the *Forum* sent them a letter of congratulations; at last there were some young men with red (sic) blood in their veins. Considerable national editorial comment was not wholly agreeable to the trustees of the Museum of Modern Art. In fact, a Baltimore paper taking up the *Herald-Tribune* headline: "Museums heads leave for Surrealist Revolution" decided in their well-meaning provincial way, that the boys who vigorously deny they are Fascists must then perforce be Communists. Baltimore had heard of the Parisian Surrealist manifesto, "*Au Service de la Revolution*." If they weren't Fascists, they could only be Communists. Fair enough—more work for Hamilton Fish.

Salvador Dali, the Surrealist painter, recently as an example of interest and respect, ate the buttons off his hostess' dress: "Permit me," he said, "to do this as a token of my paranoiac esteem." Julien Levy, Dali's dealer, was asked what would happen to Philip Johnson. "Oh, well," he replied, "he'll probably come back with Alan Blackburn's tail between his legs."

Great Expectations

ROOSEVELT'S public works program goes into effect on or about February 15th. The art projects, as well as all the other work-relief projects, are only written up until this date. At this time a complete reorganization of the relief administration will take place and the much-heralded "magnificent" program will be substituted.

The present work-relief program has been woefully inadequate. Out of the thousands of unemployed artists in this city, only three hundred received jobs at \$24.00 per week. The major portion of the unemployed have not been taken care of as is testified by the fact that relief applications are still coming into the Home-Relief Bureaus at the rate of 1,250 per day. On the thesis that relief must be administered as cheaply as possible, the La Guardia administration gave Wall Street its fullest cooperation. Instead of insecurity, pauperization was made the basis of need. The Sales Tax, which throws the major burden of relief upon those who need it themselves, was passed, though no legislation was made to tax those who certainly could afford to pay. All the manual workers were shifted from work to home-relief except those who would receive more on home-relief because of a large number of dependents. The young men were forced to go to the militarized C.C.C. camps, if they did not wish to have their families thrown off home-relief. Salaries of those on work-relief were slashed at least twice, though supervisors received increases. The unemployed on work-relief were sniped at continually ever since mass lay-offs were found to be "impractical" because they stirred up too much resentment against the administration.

However, now the eyes of all the unemployed are turning to the new public works administration. They expect much from it. But let us examine its provisions and see whether these hopes are justified.

First of all, it provides for a housing construction program. This will provide work for the building trades workers—but at wages lower than their trade union rates. This is a direct attack initiated by the government against the standards of workers, won after long and bitter struggles. Private industry will be quick to follow the precedent set.

Secondly, the program provides for the expansion of the C.C.C. camps which are nothing more than military training camps in a disguised form.

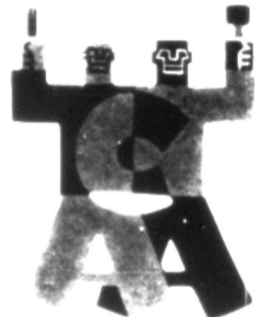
In the third place, subsistence farms will be set up all over the country. In some localities where they have already been set up, they have taken the following form: The unemployed on home-relief are forced to work in factories where they receive no pay. In exchange, they are given a shack to live in and a small plot of ground for a vegetable garden. They are also given a few meagre necessities of life. The owner of the factory who ordinarily would be forced to pay trade union wages to these workers is thus enabled through Roosevelt's program to make exorbitant profits. If those on home-relief refuse to accept this forced labor, they are thrown off home-relief.

Furthermore, although according to generally accepted figures 15,000,000 persons are unemployed at present, this program plans to provide for only 3,500,000 unemployed. 4,500,000 persons—"the remainder" according to the latest figures in the Roosevelt plan—are to be termed "unemployables" and will be thrown to the tender mercies of the local and private welfare agencies.

To date not one penny has been allotted for art or white-collar projects.

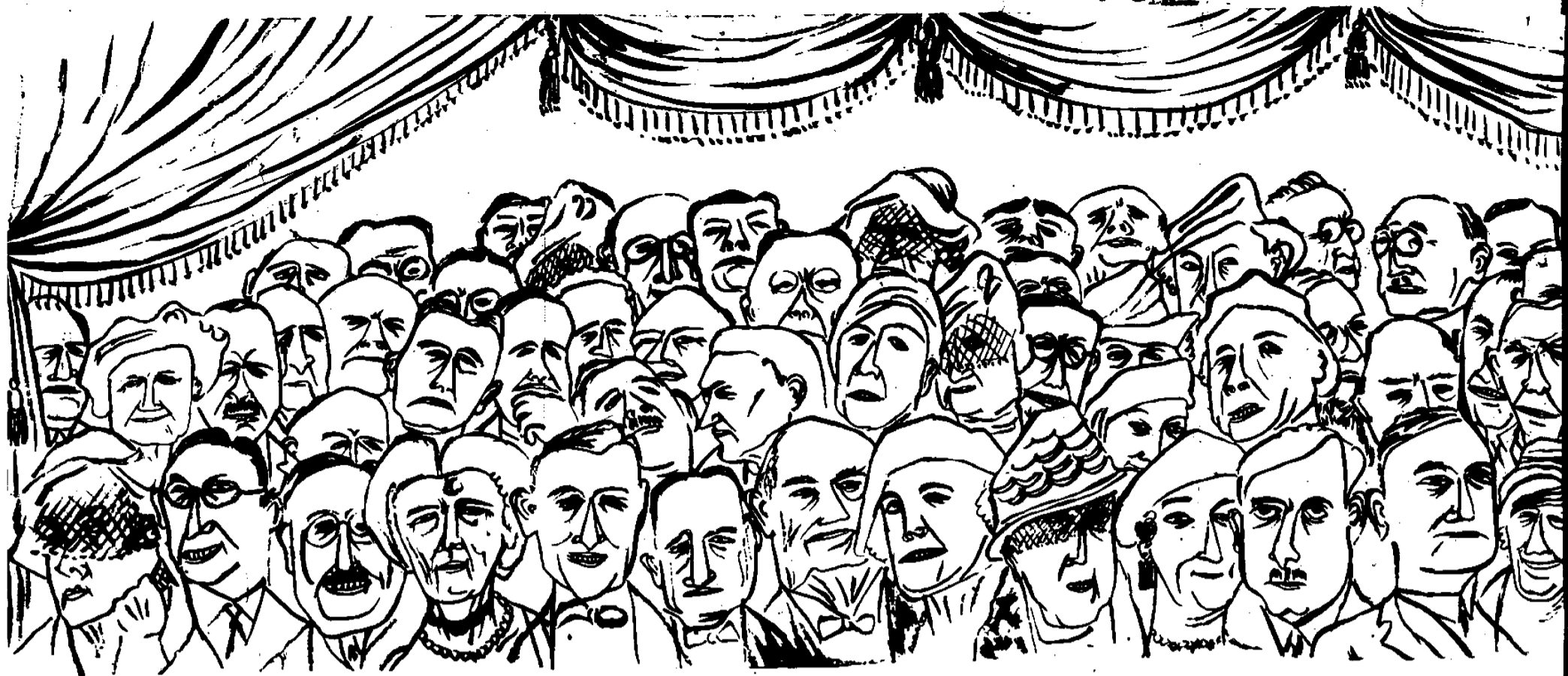


ART FRONT



H. R. 2827

Great Expectations



The Committee of 100 count 'em.

Potted Palms and Public Art

THE cop stationed outside the City Hall was in sore need of a friend. The situation was unprecedented, not to say desperate. Should he send in a riot call?

It was hard to say what the cop feared, perhaps a bourgeois-democratic revolution led by embattled Social-Registries. City Hall Park was crammed with limousines, and gossiping chauffeurs in nifty uniforms took the places of the usual unemployed.

Inside, amid the potted palms, the Corinthian columns, the crystal chandeliers and dropsical draperies of the rococo Governor's Room, Culture Defender Fiorello H. La Guardia was giving a select group the low-down on the future course of history.

"I have conceived," he modestly declared, "a plan so startling that I do not reveal it fully at this time!"

The wealthy and powerful patrons of the arts who constitute the Mayor's Committee of One Hundred received this amazing half-revelation in impressive silence. Even the artist or two present were awed, for they were thinking about the months of struggle for a Municipal Art Center by the Artists' Committee of Action and the Artists' Union. They thought of the gigantic effort that had been expended to organize the artists into a united force to make the city rulers see the need of such a center, of the cooperation of the Federation of Architects who had labored over a complete set of plans for the conversion of a city owned building now unoccupied, of the delegation after delegation that had been sent in vain attempts to bring the project to the attention of the Mayor, of the quantities of mail sent by artists which had never been answered or apparently read, and here—like an unscheduled shaft of Jove's lightning cracking down from high Olympus—came this amazing and original inspiration from Mr. La Guardia himself!

The plan which the Mayor's cops had driven so often from the City Hall steps had evidently been allowed to trickle into Mr. La Guardia's office by the back door.

Once more the real authors of the plan—the Committee of Action's delegation, were kept outside clamoring for admittance, while within the sacred precincts the Mayor went rhapsodical and One Hundred patrician heads nodded in silent agreement. Mr. La Guardia was making history. He had mobilized all these lorgnettes and pince-nez for the purpose of telling them that their Mayor had had a Dream.

He painted a glowing dream picture of a municipal art center which would house all the arts but which would deprive no commercial gallery of its hard-earned commission. His chimerical colossus would coordinate not only all arts but all the separate and distinct functions of all the arts. It would include art workshops, studios, exhibition rooms, dance studios, and marvels too many to enumerate. He went on to indicate that he had even dared to dream of a High School of Music, "just as today we have technical high schools." In fact the Mayor's inspired vision very nearly approached the Promised Land, so far as culture is concerned. Thus

all the arts would one day be drawn together into one great, harmonious, glowing whole—"an announcement," beamed the Dreamer, "which is fitting in this chamber of harmony!"

Long before his address was over, the polite audience began to suspect that perhaps the Mayor's Utopia was a thing of the remote future. They could not, then, have been greatly surprised when the Dreamer finally came to grips with grim reality, as he sees it, and pointed out that just now the city finances were burdened with the heavy load of unemployment relief and that it seemed improbable that his dream could be realized until this burden were shifted from its shoulders. Experts in the intricacies of city politics will, doubtless, smell a rodent in this cogent message; to artists who struggled for a municipal art center it was a not unexpected anticlimax, but to the majority of the One Hundred it was a gentle gesture of sad farewell, like words mumbled over the grave of a departed creditor.

And while the Municipal Art Center was being made the excuse for all this genteel back-scratching by the Mayor and his hand-picked committee of "New York's most splendid citizens"—yes, at that very hour on Tuesday, January 15th, representatives of the artists themselves clamored vainly to be heard. They represented hundreds of painters, sculptors, actors, writers, architects, musicians and dancers, professions whose very existence depends for the immediate future on action from the administration. They felt they had a right to a voice in the deliberations of the Mayor's committee. But the Mayor and his committee felt otherwise.

Yet except for the tireless work of these same artists, the meeting would never have been held. The fact that it was held at all shows that mass pressure by thousands of New York artists had been felt by the powers of the art world and by their captain-general on the political front, Mayor La Guardia.

Thousands of these artists are now struggling with no means of subsistence other than inadequate work-relief or home-relief, without even the promise of any effective art program which will give them regular employment and enable them to continue as contributors to, and builders of culture. The Utopian dream of Mayor La Guardia will buy them no bread, nor give them back their useful function in society, nor will it keep them from losing their skill and identity as artists.

They will have to maintain the precious unity they have gained through the past months of struggle, and carry their program forward with renewed vigor until the Mayor and his hand-picked committee are forced to acknowledge their existence with something more tangible than a far-away dream which was "conceived" with its eventual craniotomy clearly in mind.

The Art Center plan can be achieved; it is quite within the power of the city's cultural and political moguls to provide for it, but it will be granted only as a result of a determined and united struggle by the artists themselves.

Alfred Sinks

Quintanilla

AS the artist in America turns to the workers to join them in their demand for work, food and recognition, he learns that he must fight ignorance, stupidity and prejudice with every available weapon. Satire is not the least of these.

Radicals the world over have been lampooned by well-fed wits. The long hair of the men and short hair of the women, the questionable linen, the passion for talk and the jargon of the Marxian vocabulary have been ridiculed with deadly effect and the advance guard spokesmen, when they have retaliated, have often been much too indignant and ponderous and thus have played into the enemy's hands.

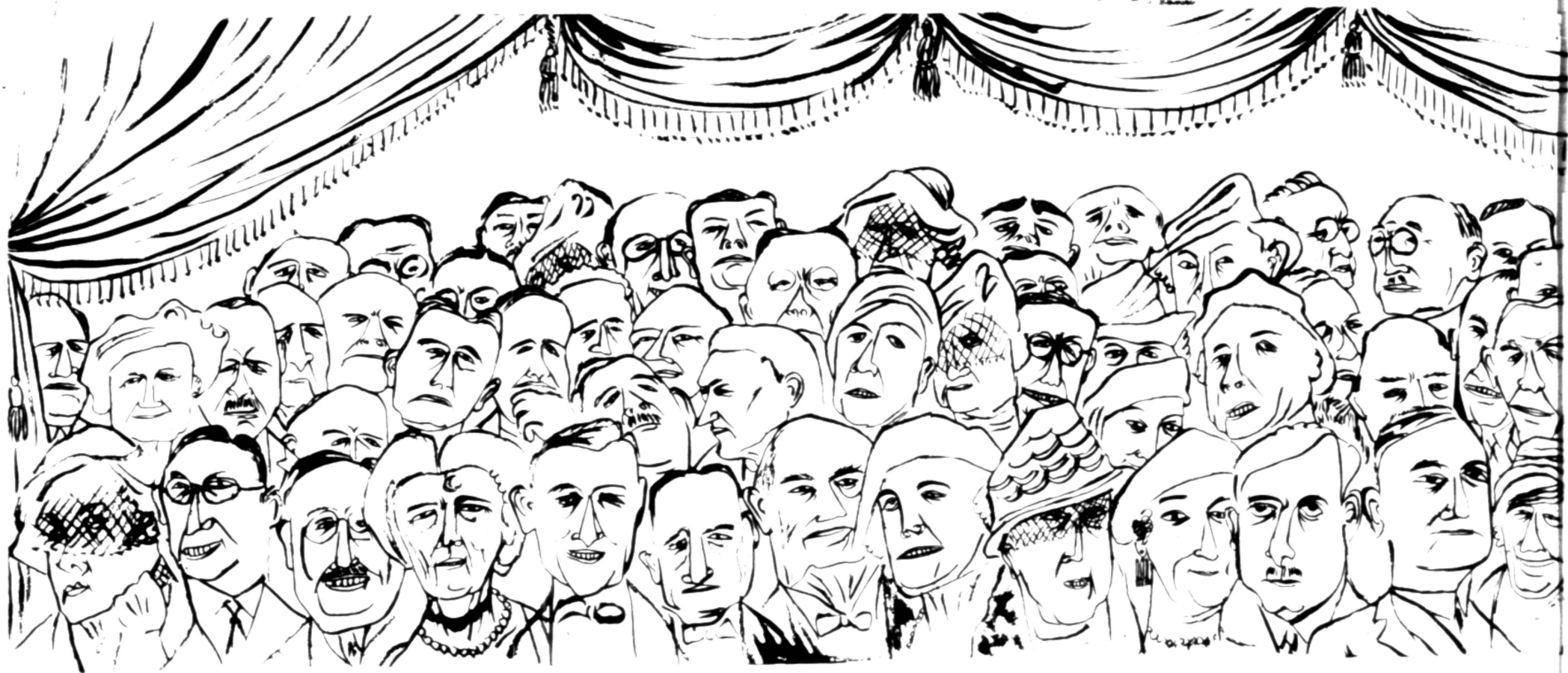
Today in Germany and in Italy it is forbidden under penalty of castor oil, infested prisons, forced military drill and firing squads to make fun of those superbly comical figures, Hitler and Mussolini. The suffering these clowns are causing, the rank injustices and contemptible frauds, the drain upon the self-respect of their respective followers, will surely pass into oblivion before their clownishness is forgotten. In fact, wherever he is to be found, the hero of the middle classes is pathetically ridiculous and is more afraid of being caricatured than of being assassinated. And in America the reactionary chiefs have not yet been so badly frightened as their European brethren, and still may be made the target of radical humorists.

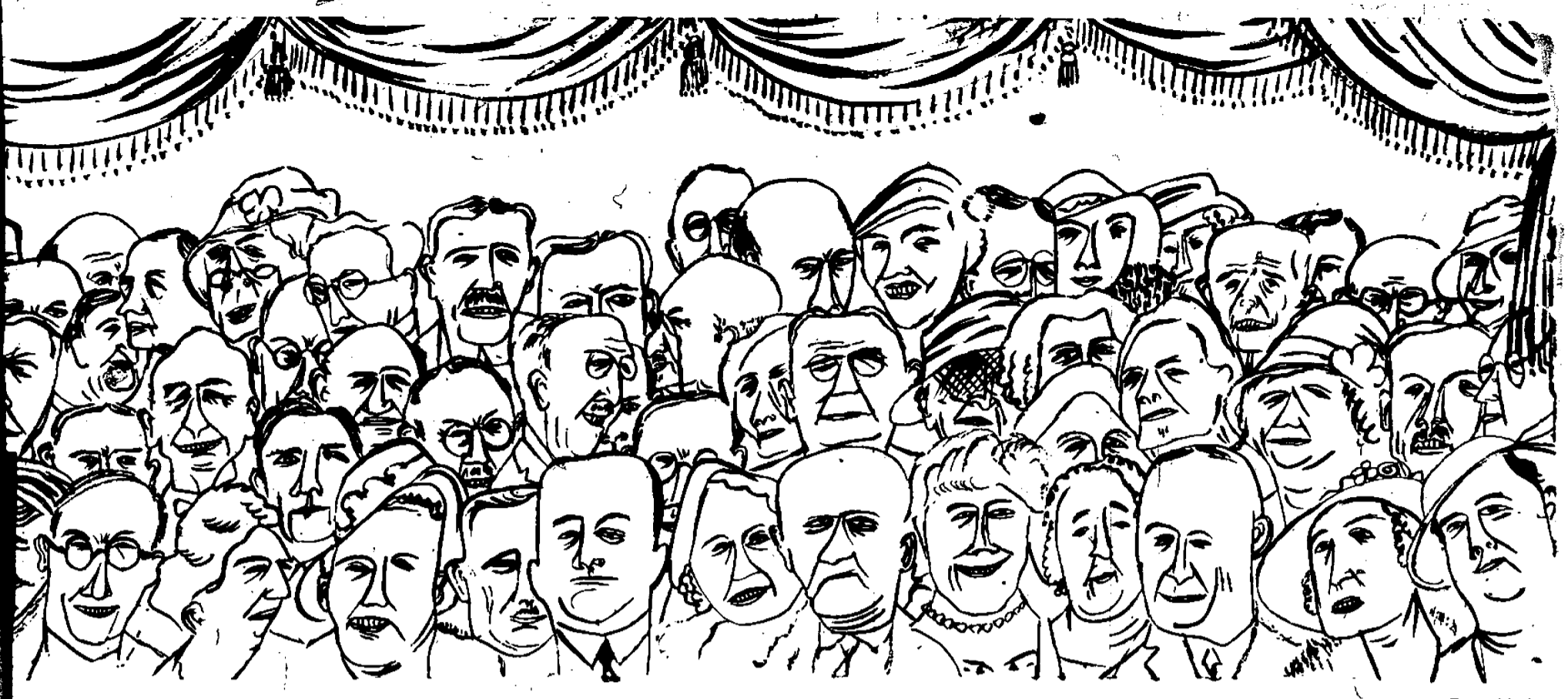
The degree to which the painter may be effective as an agent of progress and sanity is well illustrated by a distinguished line of artists of Spain, a line extending from the days of Ferdinand and Isabella to the present moment when Luis Quintanilla, Spain's foremost frescist, known among the workers of Madrid as "the painter of the revolution", is in jail for attempting a second time to overthrow a corrupt and contemptible government. It is astonishing to find that in Spain, where the self-styled aristocrats, if they think at all, do so in terms of the Middle Ages and the clergy's blatant political actions can be smelled as far as their badly ventilated robes, the workman is clear-headed and well organized and that he has a sound contempt for his exploiters.

That he failed in his recent uprising is tragic and regrettable and it is to the credit of his leaders recruited from the intelligentsia that they suffered with him, or in a higher proportion according to their numbers, and are all, as in the days of Alfonso, either in exile or in prison. What has brought about this healthy attitude of the Spanish proletariat? It seems clear to me that the Spanish painters, nearly all the significant ones, have not only been revolutionaries at heart but have been more nimble-witted than their priests and kings.

One must not be misled by the fact that so many

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Ben Shahn

and Satire

Spanish painters have been employed to decorate churches or monasteries or by the inaccurate biographies which represent them as having been pious men. Even Murillo, forerunner of the Maxfield Parrish virgin, was a tippler and blasphemer. So was Zurbarán. The Divine Morales interrupted royal and ecclesiastical compliments to ask abruptly for his pay. Alonso Cano caricatured royalty under the thin guise of his imaginary Visigothic kings.

Early in the sixteenth century, Alonso Bereguette was painting scenes of the Spanish inquisition. And it was not the condemned men and women in tall peaked caps on whom his satire fell but on the judges, whose faces and paunches were distorted by immoderate living and ferocious fanaticism. Because he was light-hearted and quick-witted, Bereguette escaped being roasted and left his splendid protest against injustice and his works are now on the walls of the world's principal museums.

El Greco met the inquisitors on their own ground and argued them out of court on such questions as the proper length of angel's wings. It is impossible to suppose that a man of his mental gifts could take part in such a farce without his tongue in his cheek.

Today, thanks to painters like Quintanilla and writers like Luis Araquistain, the Spanish workman knows that a share of the brains and genius of his race are on his side, that he has advocates whose pencils are sharp, whose brushes are incorruptible and who are not afraid of cold hard steel. And so it is Quintilla in prison today who laughs and his jailors who are sick with fright, and quite rightly so.

Hemingway, perhaps, was unjust in his preface to Quintanilla's catalogue of the recent show in the Pierre Matisse gallery, for he implied that American radicals should be modestly silent until they had stood upon barricades. After all, in Spain there have been two *bona fide* revolutions within five years. Here no such opportunities have presented themselves. Doubtlessly there are American painters who, if tested as Quintanilla has been, would acquit themselves honorably. In the meantime they should be willing to take a lesson from the illustrious Spaniards who have made their ideology clear by means of humor and of satire and surely, in America, the champion of the *status quo* is more comical and vulnerable than the "wildest" radical could be.

Elliot Paul.

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Whistler Canvas
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Manufactured on the premises.

On Work Relief

THE growing unionization of artists on work-relief projects is meeting with direct opposition by the administration. Knowing that they cannot carry through their program of wide-spread lay-offs and wage-cuts in the face of a strong organization of project workers, they are resorting, on the art projects, to the following devices to break organization:

On Project 259 which consists of 150 artists teaching in settlement houses and public institutions, the College Art Association, which is administrator, set up the machinery for the formation of seven groups comparable to company unions. Each of these groups was to elect its own Steering Committee which was to consist of art teachers. The avowed purpose, as given by the administration, was to facilitate discussion of problems pertaining to art pedagogy. However, the real purpose was clearly exposed at the first meeting of the seven groups. In each region, the College Art was represented in full flower, with a complete staff of supervisors present directly to intimidate the art teachers. In those regions where the Artists' Union was represented the demand for the election of a temporary chairman was immediately made. In this way, the meetings in some of the groups were put in the hands of the art teachers and Steering Committees consisting only of art teachers were elected. In other groups, the College Art succeeded at the start in running the meeting and intimidating the artists into "requesting" supervisors to assist them on their Steering Committees.

Shortly after these preliminary meetings, the Steering Committees met separately to draw up programs of action. The committees, which consisted in part of union members, drew up plans along the following lines:

1. That action be taken by the art teachers to restore their salary to \$27.50. (They were cut from \$27.50 to \$24.00).
2. That a Central Grievance Committee be set up consisting of representatives from each region to handle grievances such as lay-offs, time-keeping, etc. (It is the practice of time-keepers, on this project, to deduct a half day's pay under any pretext.)
3. That action be taken to stop investigations and to make the project permanent. (Four workers now are known to have been laid off on the basis of investigations.)

In those groups where supervisors had influence, the meetings degenerated into teas. Because of this, the teachers lost interest and very few attended meetings. In the other groups, however, a great interest in the discussions and plans developed among the artists since they were dealing with basic problems whose solutions were of concern to them.

Meanwhile, the College Art Association looked on in growing disapproval at these developments. They had hoped to divert the attention of the project, with the approach of the reorganization of the relief administration, from the growing threats of lay-offs and wage-cuts. And here, under their very noses, the project was organizing on a sound basis with the aid of the machinery they themselves had

set up. They then thought of a stratagem which later proved to be ineffectual. "If the art teachers won't discuss pedagogy," thought the College Art Association, "We'll send them to college and make them discuss lectures on their working time." So Project 259 was sent to college. They are now taking a course of ten lectures at New York University where pedagogy is dramatized by "interesting pedagogues" who describe how the art urge is stimulated in their wealthy pupils. Following this, a bulletin was issued to the project artists stating that the project was expected to discuss these lectures in their regional groups (*i.e.*, company unions) and they called together the chairmen of the Steering Committees to inform them of this decision. Here again they unwittingly facilitated the organization of the project. The chairmen objected to this arbitrary procedure and insisted that all the Steering Committees be called together to decide whether they wished to abide by this decision. This meeting was called. It was the first meeting of all the Steering Committees in one body, a meeting the union members had been waiting for. At this meeting the following was decided:

1. That discussions of the lectures were not to be included in the program of the regional groups. They were to remain self-governing bodies as first set up.
2. That further meetings of this type be called to coordinate the activities of the project.
3. That the College Art Association publish a bulletin to this effect and distribute it at the payoff. (This they did.)

The next step taken by the College Art Association was of the highly unethical nature of many of their previous tactics. Supervisors were sent to whisper confidentially to the teachers that leading union members were "radicals," and that their interest was not in the economic security of the artist, but rather that they hoped to win their sympathies for radical causes. They hinted that teachers who carried out the plans of the regional groups would lose their jobs.

Union leaders pointed out that these frantic attempts of the administration to break the union leadership had one aim only, to destroy the growing unity of the project and thus disarm the artists when their security, such as it is, is threatened. However, this disruptive action split the project into two definite factions. The administration's supporters have a minority in the Committee and the following proposals were passed:

1. That the wage be restored to \$27.50.
2. That the Grievance Committee act on all cases of lay-offs and discrimination.
3. That a petition be circulated demanding that the project be written up permanently.
4. That investigations stop and artists be employed on the basis of insecurity and not pauperization.

Project Committee 259.



REVIEWS

The New York American Scene in Art

The U.S. Scene in Art. Time Magazine, Dec. 24, 1934

IN the above article, the magazine *Time* gives a short resume of the life and work of Thomas Benton, Reginald Marsh, Charles Burchfield, John Steuart Curry, Grant Wood and others. These artists are reported to have in common, first—a passion for local Americana, and second—a contempt for the foreign artist and his influence. They have the "my country right or wrong" attitude and are suspicious of strangers. New-fangled ideas in art are not for them, and they would probably support a movement to prove that Artemus Ward or Josh Billings had more on the ball than Rene Clair. They demand that the artist paint the American scene, although their works suggest that what they really mean is Hearst's *New York American* scene. They paint burlesque shows, Civil War architecture, the wonderful meals that farm help receives under the New Deal, Mother Nature acting tough in Kansas, and caricatures of Negroes and farmers done in a style which is an amazing filly out of EARLY PUCK AND JUDGE by REPRODUCTION OF MICHAEL ANGELO.

This is the work of the men who, to quote *Time*, "are destined to turn the tide of artistic taste in the United States." They offer us, says *Time*, "direct representation in place of introspective abstractions." Is the well-fed farm-hand under the New Deal, as painted by Grant Wood, a direct representation or is it an introspective abstraction?

Are the gross caricatures of Negroes by Benton to be passed off as "direct representation"? The only thing they directly represent is a third-rate vaudeville character cliché with the humor omitted. Had they a little more wit, they would automatically take their place in the body of propaganda which is constantly being utilized to disfranchise the Negro politically, socially and economically. The same can be said of all people he paints including the portrait of himself which is reproduced on the cover of *Time*. We must at least give him credit for not making any exceptions in his general under-estimation of the human race.

Benton, according to *Time* was saved by the U. S. Navy and he wants to do something big in return. So he has fired off a big gun in salute to America which was loaded with a commodity not listed in the *Consumers' Weekly*.

The U. S. scene in art and direct representation, as opposed to introspective abstraction — this is the program of these artists, a program so general and undefined as to be valueless. In the absence of theory we must judge them solely by their works.

By John Steuart Curry we have a series of rural subjects, cheaply dramatic and executed without the slightest regard for the valuable, practical and technical contributions to painting which have been carried on in the last fifty years. How can a man who paints as though no laboratory work had ever been done in painting, who wilfully or through ignorance ignores the discoveries of Monet, Seurat, Cezanne and Picasso and proceeds as though painting were

a jolly lark for amateurs, to be exhibited in county fairs, how can a man with this mental attitude be considered an asset to the development of American painting? The people of Kansas, who are glorified in Curry's pictures do not buy his paintings, *Time* reports. Mr. Curry explains why this is so. "They have Kansas. They hardly need paintings of it," says Mr. Curry. Apparently the people of Kansas have some discrimination as to what kind of "direct representation" they want. Apparently they resent the insult to their intelligence implied in these works, which always present the obvious and stop. I think it is self-evident that Curry's pictures are technically and ideologically negative. How then are we supposed to benefit from his self-imposed isolation from the French school which, if nothing else, has important and advanced technical knowledge that is available to all artists. The Soviet Union which rejects our political and economic systems, nevertheless, admits our superior industrial technical equipment and seeks by study and advice to avail itself of it.

Painting the American scene is not a new manifestation. George Bellows, John Sloan, Glenn Coleman, John Marin are a few who have done so from their various viewpoints. A list of the artists who have concerned themselves with the American scene would require research which is unnecessary for the purposes of this article. All of these artists without exception were deeply influenced by foreign art and most of them studied in Europe. There were some among them, however, who boasted that they had never been in Europe and seemed to regard it as a distinct advantage to themselves as American artists. Nevertheless, their library shelves were well stocked with books containing reproduction of the workers of European painters of the past and present. In other words, they travelled by proxy. With all respect for their great individual talent, the ideological content of the work of these painters was in a very general sense provincial, melodramatic and sentimental. Their direct representations were much the same in substance as the group referred to in the article in *Time*. The earlier group, however, had the advantage of not being burdened by the vicious and windy chauvinistic ballyhoo carried on in their defense by a writer like Thomas Craven whose critical values may possibly be clouded by a lively sense of commercial expediency. His efforts to bring art values to the plane of a Rotarian luncheon are a particularly repellent form of petty opportunism and should be so understood and explained whenever one has the misfortune to slip on them. Craven's ideas are unimportant, but the currency given to them through the medium of the Hearst press means that we must not underestimate their soggy impact. Artists are warned not to be complacent in the face of these insults.

"Well-bred people are no fun to paint," says Reginald Marsh. A proletarian orientation might be suspected in this statement. An examination of his work, however, quickly dispels this illusion. We find merely that he means exactly what he says,

namely, that painting is fun, and that excursions to the Bowery and the burlesque show to make sketches constitute his artistic horizon — the psychology of the bourgeois art school taken seriously and carried through life as a handicap. His paintings are made of a lot of these sketches put together on a surface and submitted to a series of glazings and tonings to give them a superficial correspondence to an equally superficial concept of what a Renaissance painting is. Can this be called "direct representation"? I think not. In his attitude toward his subject matter and in his attitude toward the technique of painting, Marsh reflects no objectivity. Would it be flattery to apply the term "introspective abstractionist" to him?

The slight burp which this school of the U. S. scene in art has made, may not indicate the stomach ulcer of Fascism. I am not a political doctor, but I have heard the burp and as a fellow artist I would advise those concerned to submit themselves to a qualified diagnostician, other than witch doctor Craven, just to be on the safe side.

Stuart Davis.

About Moses Soyer

THE exhibition of Moses Soyer at Kleemann's Galleries consists of paintings, watercolors, prints and drawings done during the past three years.

Moses Soyer belongs to the important, ever-growing group of artists that has chosen the American scene for its theme. He paints simply and honestly. He does not seek to astonish or surprise, nor does he try to be original at all costs. His art, though personal, is human and not isolated.

There exist a sympathy and a close kinship between the artist and his models, who are professional in the least degree. He paints the people he lives and mingles with, people he knows and understands best—his wife, his little son, his fellow artists, dancers, students. He paints them understandingly, in their own surroundings and in natural attitudes. His color usually quiet and of a mellow tonal quality often falls into drabness; his drawing, while capable, is never insistent.

Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, and all the other artificial schools of painting have passed him by. He believes that an artist should talk clearly without riddles so that everyone might understand him. He does not philosophize or intellectualize in his art. He is not a commentator on art as many of the eclectic moderns are but is, or rather would like to be, an interpreter of the life and manners of his time.

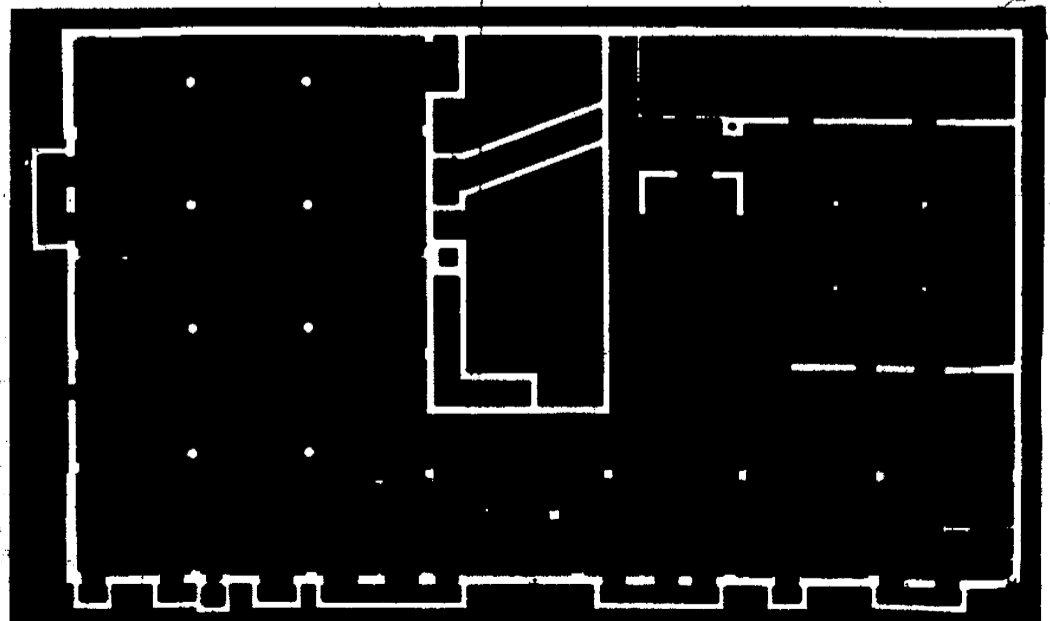
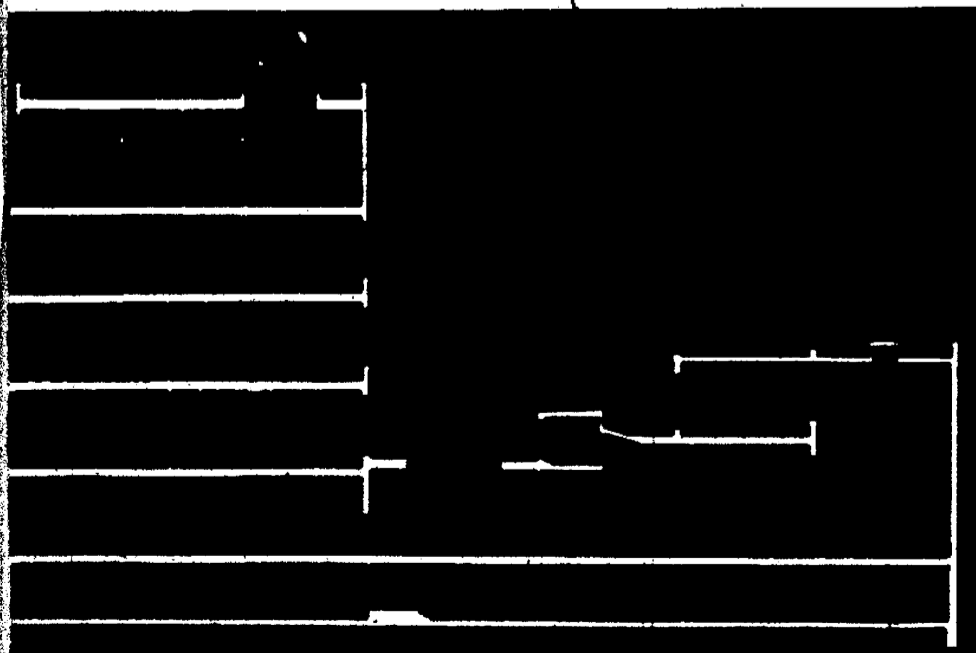
The absence of paintings dealing with the working class should not be taken as a lack of class-consciousness on the part of Moses Soyer but rather as an uncertainty in his own powers, an almost unconscious reluctance to tackle such a serious theme. He realizes that the isolation of the artist is a thing of the past and that his evolution must not be in relation to himself only and independent of outside influences. He must belong just as any worker who produces with his mind or with his hands belongs. Indeed one would be utterly blind, in these days of race hatred, depression, and the Blue Eagle not to align himself with the class to which he feels he belongs.

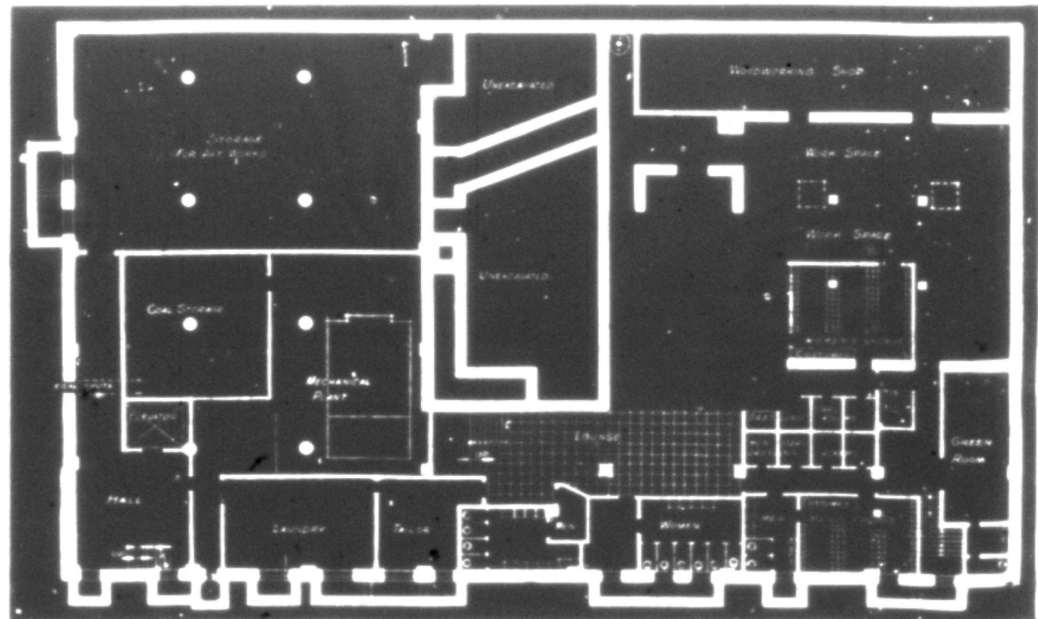
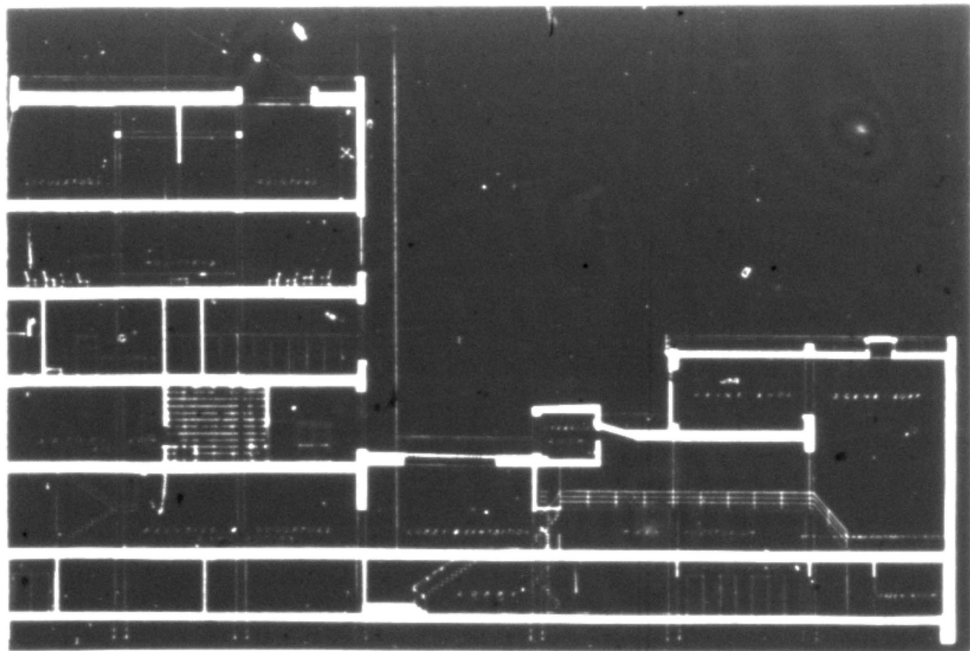
The present exhibition of Moses Soyer should be viewed as an apprenticeship, whether ably or poorly, honestly served.

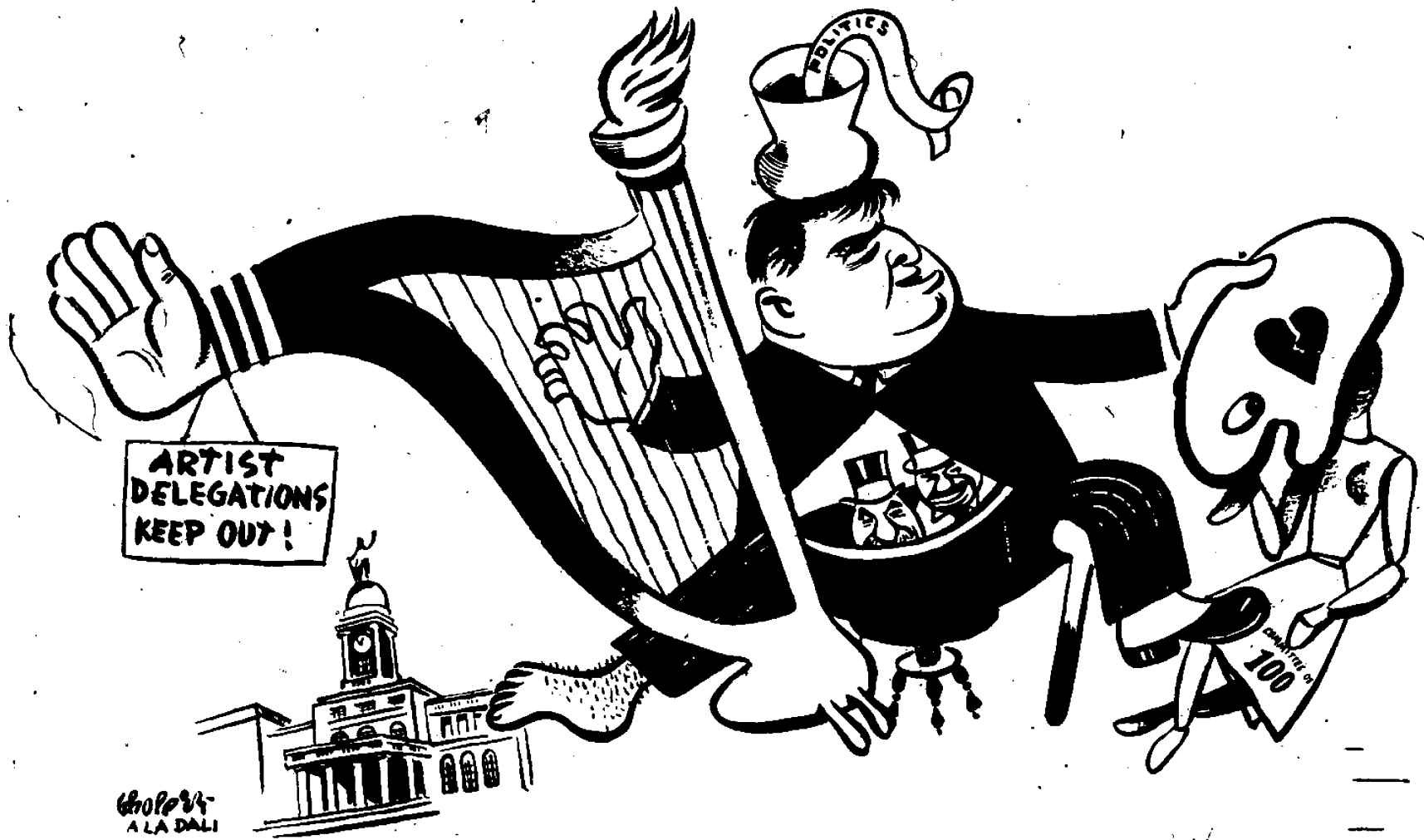
Moses Soyer

Left: Cross Section

Right: Ground Plan







Dada for Propaganda

THE development of art in bourgeois society has been marked at every progressive stage by violent antagonisms between advanced artists and reactionary elements in the middle class. Non-conformist in his mode of life, the progressive artist has attempted to slough off inhibiting conventions and express a new personal freedom through his art.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the artist's conflict with established "opinion" has been primarily a struggle against philistinism. With rare exceptions, it has involved no deeper political consciousness. The very position of the artist under capitalism as a free producer, working in isolation in a highly individualized manner, has for a very long time insulated him, strengthening his conception of artistic creation as an end in itself—*l'art pour l'art*.

Only with the first great crisis of capitalism was a whole group of artists awakened to a deeper political consciousness. In the midst of the World War, a group of expatriated artists gathered together in Zurich, acknowledging the destruction of their precarious basis, launched Dadaism as a subversive movement. Art was finished. Turning against the bourgeoisie, for whom art had been created, the Dadaists adopted systematic disorder, demoralization and confusion as a program.

Dadaism was an anti-bourgeois movement within the orbit of bourgeois ideology, or as Tristan Tzara put it—"within the European frame-work of weaknesses." Like those protozoa which can enter a drop of acid but, once within, can never leave it, the Dadaists gravitated about a center of extreme subjectivity inherited from the Cubists whom they condemned.

This movement was clearly politicalized only in Germany, where, in the period of revolutionary upheaval, the Dadaists went into the streets and put themselves at the service of the proletariat. Even in the German movement, there were doubts about the use of Dada for propaganda, and a desire to limit the manifestations to pure activity of the spirit.

Surrealism represents the stabilization of Dada in post-war Europe. It derived from Dada its anti-logical basis, its hatred of bourgeois order with all its conservative implications, its anarchic impulsiveness typified by Andre Breton's desire to go into the street and start shooting at the crowd. But, whereas the Dadaists had denied all reality, the Surrealists affirmed a positive order of reality,

namely that pure activity of the spirit which had been a latent force in Dadaism itself.

Determined to discredit the world of outer reality, the Surrealists withdrew into the world of the subconscious, bringing its imagery to the surface by a process of "pure psychic automatism." It was through this intuitive process that they were to attain their goal of the liberation of the human spirit.

Notwithstanding the intensive activity of the Surrealists, the human spirit, and body, continued to be oppressed over large portions of the globe, all of which was suddenly impressed upon them by the Moroccan War of 1925. According to Andre Breton, the impact of this event awakened the Surrealists to political consciousness and activity.

Forced to admit the compelling effectiveness of external reality, the Surrealists are represented by their spokesman, Breton, as having thenceforth abandoned their idealist position and accepted dialectical materialism. From 1925 he dates the "rational" period of Surrealism.

What are the distinguishing features of the "rational" period? A steadfast insistence upon the divorce of Surrealist manifestations from the control of reason!

In effect, the Breton group, admitting the liberation of the spirit to be contingent upon the liberation of man, in turn dependent upon the proletarian revolution, accepted the necessity for social-political action. But they insisted that this problem in no way touched the entirely separate Surrealist problem of the relation of the conscious to the subconscious. This is, of course, a tacit admission that the Surrealist process is unadaptable to a concrete revolutionary political end, a fact glaringly evident in the character of all Surrealist productions.

Nevertheless, Breton has attempted to gloss over this fact by proposing a pseudo-dialectical resolution of the contradictions between inner and outer reality. He is willing to resolve any contradiction except that of his clinging to an irreducibly personal, subjective technique to solve a problem he admits to be ultimately social. And he condemns Louis Aragon for his "left opportunism" in employing his art for militant political ends.

The man who is credited with putting new life in Surrealism in the last few years, Salvador Dalí, has little to say, at any rate in America, about the political implications of his activity as a medium. What Dalí has contributed to the advancement of the cause of the working class is the specific paranoiac-critical technique. He is able to see and project in "concrete irrationality" a horse that's a woman that's a horse, etc.

In his lecture at the Museum of Modern Art,

(Continued on page 8)

The Second Whitney Biennial

A YEAR or two ago Henri Matisse, the eminent French painter, entering the New York Harbor, was so impressed by the unique skyline of the metropolis that he exclaimed: "Why do American artists go to Europe to paint?"

The leading American art critics awoke. "Paint America" became their battle cry. "Come back. You have nothing to learn from the Europeans. Europe is dying. America is young and vast."

The artist took heed. He hurried back to Winesburg, Ohio, and set himself to create a specific American Art by painting specific American subjects.

Has he succeeded? Come with me to the Second Biennial Exhibition of American Art sponsored by the Whitney Museum.

Of one thing I am certain—had this exhibition taken place at the time of Matisse's arrival, he would not have asked the above question, for it amply demonstrates that the American artists are fully aware of their country. They have painted it from every conceivable angle, exploiting the unusual architecture of its great cities, the savage beauty of its wind-swept western plains, its rivers and endless mountain ranges.

He might have, however, asked: "Why does the American artist paint the Main Street of Winesburg, Ohio, in the manner and spirit of Utrillo?"

This is where the dog lies buried. Delacroix's Algerian paintings are no less French than his Parisian ones; Courbet's "Funeral of Ornans" could have well taken place in some western town in U.S.A.; Michael Angelo's "Struggling Slave," is not the symbol of Florence only, as he meant it to be, but of the entire struggling humanity. Great art is national, it is true, but not nationalistic. Great art by virtue of its humanity oversteps national boundaries and becomes international.

Artists, therefore, should not be misled by the chauvinism of the "Paint America" slogan. Yes, paint America, but with your eyes open. Do not glorify Main Street. Paint it as it is—mean, dirty, avaricious. Self-glorification is artistic suicide. Witness Nazi Germany.

But to return to the exhibition:

The eight galleries of the Whitney Museum are filled with paintings, almost everyone of them having some phase or aspect of America and its people as its theme. Technically they range from the ultra-modern to the most conservative, the modern tendency happily predominating. It is a pleasant

(Continued on page 8)



Dada for Propaganda

THE development of art in bourgeois society has

shown that the activity of the spirit which is at work in it is a latent force in Dadaism itself.

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The Second Whitney Biennial

Dada for Propaganda

(Continued from page 7)

Dali laid no claim to the fancy dialectical materialist pretensions of Breton. He simply declared that the language of the subconscious is direct and universal. And in the next moment he admitted that what he extracted from the recesses of his own imagination was quite often unintelligible to him.

His aim he explained as the destruction of the principle of reality by the principle of pleasure or the release of the individual through the discrediting of reality. Thus Surrealism winds up exactly where it began, after fifteen years of chasing its tail.

The old argument that the discrediting of reality is revolutionary is trotted out once more. The limited, ephemeral revolutionary role of Dadaism expired with the movement. Surrealists have assumed a mantle which no longer fits. They cherish the illusion that they have weakened or destroyed all the myths which permitted ideological as well as economic exploitation through the arts. Therefore, they argue, they have advanced the cause of the liberation of the proletariat, which will come into its own when it has seen through the illusions of capitalist culture.

In actuality, the Surrealists, far from playing a critical, destructive role, have created a new set of illusions in their flight from external reality into phantasy. Their manifestations, in limited editions and private views, have been so many tid-bits for a jaded idle upper class. These manifestations have neither touched the proletariat, which is no great loss, nor furthered the cause bound up with the political fate of the proletariat.

In the present period of the accentuation of class conflicts, a politically revolutionary art necessarily implies a clear description of the relation of classes in the real world, and an identification of the artist's will with that of the revolutionary class. While the Surrealist movement does represent a late phase of the artist's struggle for the realization of freedom, symbolic of the needs of the great oppressed majority in capitalist society, the artists of this movement, neurotically incapable of giving their effort a point of leverage in the real world, have ~~lost~~ ^{lost} the vital issue of revolutionary art.

Jerome Klein.

A Letter on Salvador Dali

WHEN I entered the Julien Levy Gallery, I felt as though I had come to some communal water-hole. All the members of the tribe were there to drink. I saw sadly that they were enjoying themselves. How they would pay for it in fever and confusion!

I should like, very briefly, to point out why Salvador Dali's influence is both dangerous and unwarranted. I put the words in this ascending order because artists would rather run a risk than be taken in. Dali is an eclectic, which means that his work

is nourished in part by experience but more by the museums of Europe. He is spoken of as a "miniature" painter. But his technique much more resembles that of the later Dutch painters, such as Jan Steen, Terborch, etc., particularly in effects of texture and artificial light. But Dali does not reach the very best of Steen, and his color, unusual to the objects to which it is applied, has often an ordinary, unmovable quality. The drawings are excellent and I should be unreserved in admiration, were I not restrained by the memory of certain Hokusai pen and ink drawings. This may be definitely unfair; but what can one do if a painter gives the impression of using ancient canvases as others employ ancient trees, of regarding them as forms of nature?

Painters praise Dali's skill, writers and readers are enchanted by his content, his humor. How does it become possible to write of these things, his form and his content, in such separate paragraphs, to think of them as easily sifted one from the other? Because Dali's form and content, like those of any eclectic, are separable not only in analysis but also organically. The "message" of the content does not depend on the excellence of formal qualities; on the other hand, the form has no vital relation to the meaning of the objects. From the point of view of content the work is a type of sophisticated illustration; from that of form, a type of "pure art". What could be dearer to the bourgeoisie?

As to Dali's humor, it may be observed that although the paintings have abstract titles, many of a conceptual nature, the jokes are on a much lower plane, depending not on intellectual but on psychological associations. Thus we have absurdities of objects in strange places, in curious company, in uncomfortable predicaments. But—as the element of time is so important in psychological humor, time in which a tremendous something can grow before it bursts, becomes a nothing and makes us laugh—painting is the poorest medium for this type of humor, time playing so small a role in its appreciation. Opposed to this humor is the intellectual humor of Breughel, Goya or Daumier, which has instant effect because it is based on a richness of ideas and any experience excites immediate reaction from this storehouse. The revolutionary tradition in painting must be intellectual, the reactionary tradition (outside the academy, where nothing matters) is forced to psychological portrayal, for the facts of the world make it ashamed to show its face on any other plane. By intellectual I, of course, do not mean abstract or conceptual, but, very roughly, what is subject to consideration by the "conscious" mind, eyes plus reason.

One hears that Dali's work is peculiarly contemporary. Where? To what class? In the galleries of Paris and New York. For those who can afford his paintings. His technique is an anachronism in the history of art and in relation to its content. His content is out of place, romantic in reference to the modern world. He is a man with an ever-decreasing audience. The future will reward him for the timeless, suspended, breathless quality of his paintings by identifying him technically with painters long preceding him, but note that he had not their love of natural—objects in their proper places—and it

Whitney Biennial

(Continued from page 7)

surprise to encounter upon the modernistic-colonial walls of the museum a number of paintings with social content. Well painted, though few in number, they dominate the conventional paintings that surround them. Lanning's rather obvious composition of a worker bearing upon his shoulders a priest, a capitalist and a militarist—figures symbolizing the ruling classes—Shahn's seedy "Pillars of Society," Curry's dramatic "Lynching," Hoffman's poignant "Death of a Miner" and Gikovsky's sad "Homeless Men" stand out.

Space does not permit me to describe individually the paintings which remain long with me. I must, therefore, content myself with mentioning the names of the following artists: Brook, Weber, Walkowitz, Marsh, Berman, Ribak, Cuning, Logaza, Raphael Soyer, Stuart Davis, Criss, Kantor, Benton and Sloan.

It is on the whole a good exhibition. A spirit of youth and vigor pervades it.

Moses Soyer.

will question the value of his fantasy, and say that it had no intensity because it did not arise out of the really vital movements of the time. Breughel's and Bosch's fantasy comes from the horrors of the Spanish invasion, Goya's from the horrors of the French one and of home oppression as well. But Dali's comes only from the sighs and laughter of certain expiring quarters of Paris—and this is not enough.

Clarence Weinstock.

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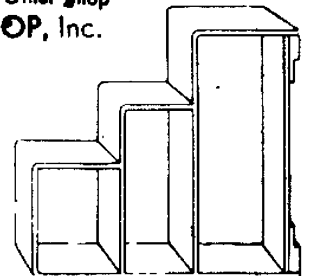
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