

Artists on the Left

American Artists and the Communist Movement 1926-1956

Andrew Hemingway

Yale University Press • New Haven and London

6 Social Art on Display: Organisations and Exhibitions

Like revolutionary art, social art was defined through a range of interconnected exhibition spaces, the key ones being those provided by bodies in which the Communist Party played a motivating role, namely the Artists' Union, the American Artists' Congress, the American Artists School, An American Group, Inc., and the ACA Gallery. A mere listing of these organisations indicates that social art had a broader institutional base than revolutionary art – as might be expected, given Popular Front strategy. As before, the annual exhibitions of the Whitney Museum will be used as a foil to help discriminate what was special about the shows of these collective bodies.

The American Artists' Congress

The American Artists' Congress has conventionally been seen as a response to the Comintern's shift to the Popular Front strategy in 1935,¹ but the chronology does not quite match with this. The phase from 1933 to mid-1935 was a transition period in Party tactics,² and Trachtenberg had already announced the plan to establish a 'higher type of writers' organisation' and a cognate body for artists at the national conference of the John Reed Clubs in September 1934. (The decision to do this was partly motivated by the clubs' evident shortcomings.) The idea of an American Artists' Congress was discussed at a meeting of the Party fraction of the John Reed Club in April 1935 (that is, before the Comintern Congress), with Trachtenberg in attendance. Twelve of those present were delegated the task of organising it, and Stuart Davis, who had joined the club the previous December, was given the job of forming a committee. After passing through various mutations the Organizational Committee began to meet weekly at the ACA Gallery in the summer of 1935.³ Although the goal of the Congress was to bring together artists of 'recognized standing' under the banner of anti-fascism, almost

all of those involved were established figures of the Communist left.⁴

The initial 'Call' for the Congress was published in the 'Revolutionary Art' issue of *New Masses* on 1 October 1935. While a few among the 107 signatories were not leftists – among whom I count Ivan le Lorraine Albright, Paul Cadmus and Lewis Mumford – the overwhelming majority had already had some connection with the John Reed Club or acted as fellow-travellers in the course of the decade.⁵ Among the latter one might instance the Woodstock-based artists George Ault and Henry Billings, who were both on the foundational committee.⁶ The 'Call' was directed at 'those artists who realize that the cultural crisis is but a reflection of a world economic crisis' and thus understood that collective organisation was necessary to combat fascism. Specific concerns included the decline of traditional forms of patronage, the inadequacy of government programmes, the censorship of works of art such as Rivera's Rockefeller Center mural, and various violations of civil liberties. The objective of the Congress would be the formation of a permanent nation-wide artists' organisation, which would affiliate with 'kindred organizations throughout the world.'⁷

A version of the 'Call' that circulated after the first congress had been put back from December 1935 to 14–16 February 1936 had 380 signatories, who were still composed mainly of leftists, but now also included Norman Bel Geddes, George Biddle, Alexander Calder and James Johnson Sweeney among the liberal element. The effort to make the organisation appear as a genuine alliance is evident from the fact that the opening address to the Congress was delivered by Mumford, while Biddle chaired one of the sessions. However, the real complexion of the organisation was revealed in effusive statements on the position of the artist in the USSR from Margaret Bourke-White and Lozowick, and addresses appealing to artists to join ranks with organised labour from Heywood Broun of the American Newspaper

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'

Guild and Francis J. Gorman of the United Textiles Workers, both of whom were fellow-travellers.⁸

The Public Session of the Congress was held in the New York Town Hall (erected by the League for Political Education in 1921), while the Open Sessions took place in the liberal ambience of the New School for Social Research. According to a Congress report, 'nearly two thousand people' attended the opening meeting, and 'hundreds more' had to be turned away. Four hundred members came from twenty-eight states, and there was also a delegation of thirteen from the Mexican League of Revolutionary Artists and Writers. It seems that speakers were advised to avoid 'any emphasis on extreme radicalism', and the Congress was conceived to help bring the uncommitted towards an understanding of the threat of fascism and their common interests with the workers.⁹ Most of the papers from the Congress were subsequently published in an edition of 3,000 which sold at 50 cents.¹⁰

Many speeches were hortatory, while others were essentially reports on such matters as the work of the Artists' Union, the campaign for museums to give rental fees to exhibiting artists and the fight for a proper Municipal Art Center in New York. However, there were also important analytical statements, including Aaron Douglas's 'The Negro in American Culture' at the Public Session (the only paper by a black speaker), Meyer Schapiro's 'Social Bases of Art', a brilliant analysis of the sociological formation of contemporary artistic individualism, and Lynd Ward's critique of nationalistic culture 'Race, Nationality, and Art', which was probably directed partly against the Regionalists, although he did not name them.¹¹

As Baigell and Williams have observed, the Congress – in line with its objectives – delivered no aesthetic prescriptions. Several contributors spoke on ways to expand the audience for art among the working masses through public murals, magazine illustration, mass-produced artists' prints and museum reform,¹² but stylistic differences were to be overlooked in the interests of 'collective solidarity'. As a later policy statement put it, while the Congress considered all aesthetic tendencies 'in their social and economic as well as their aesthetic aspects... [w]ithin the framework of this view, there is room for all schools of artistic practice.'¹³

The Congress's final act was to establish itself as a permanent body with a national office in New York. In other localities, groups of five or more members could establish autonomous branches that would run their own activities in line with national policy. An executive committee of forty-seven (later increased to fifty-seven)

was set up along with various sub-committees headed mainly by leftists. Davis remained secretary, and Ward was appointed treasurer. The following year the veteran modernist Max Weber was voted in as national chairman. (Concrete evidence of the operation of a CP fraction in the Congress survives in the form of a memorandum calling 'all friends of the Party and of Progress' to an evening conference in October 1938.¹⁴) In November 1936 the Congress claimed 550 members and had branches in Cleveland, Saint Louis, New Orleans and Los Angeles, with one in formation in Chicago. By 1938 further branches had been set up in Baltimore, Salt Lake City and Portland, and membership exceeded 800. That year the Congress, in conjunction with the Artists' Union, also established a student group with the title of Young American Artists.¹⁵

For the remainder of the decade the American Artists' Congress functioned as something like the elite wing of the Artists' Union, taking up the same causes but using the prestige of some of its members to generate publicity and exert influence. Like that body it agitated for a permanent federal art programme, it supported the Society of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers in its campaign to get a museum rental fee for exhibiting artists, it fought against all censorship of artists on federal programmes and it worked vigorously to get a showing of contemporary American art at the New York World's Fair. In relation to international events, it repeatedly condemned Nazi repression in Germany and fascist aggression in Spain and China, and raised funds for the Spanish Republican cause. The Congress managed to put on a second national meeting in December 1937, to which Picasso sent an address on 'The Defense of Culture in Spain', and where a message from Thomas Mann was read by his niece. Although neither Mayor La Guardia nor House Representative John Coffee appeared to deliver their scheduled papers, Holger Cahill did talk on the 'Cultural Aspects of Government Support of the Arts'. The Congress also organised numerous lectures and symposia.¹⁶

The second national meeting was probably the Congress's high point. In his account, Herman Baron claimed that the mid-term elections of 1938 were a turning point in its history after which 'some timid souls began to be less active' and 'others began to stay away.'¹⁷ Obviously, the Republican gains of that year would not have had any simple and direct effect on the Artists' Congress, but it is true that the federal arts projects, like the rest of the WPA, came under more conservative pressure thereafter. In August 1938 the House Committee on

Un-American Activities, under the chairmanship of the racist Texas Democrat Martin Dies, began to use allegations of Communist infiltration to smear the New Deal in general and the arts projects in particular. From the other side, the anti-Stalinist left was able to point to mounting evidence that the USSR was neither a true defender of democracy nor a model of cultural tolerance. In the spring of 1939 a group of anti-Stalinists and liberals formed the Committee for Cultural Freedom, which mainly became a vehicle for the anti-Communism of some of its leading members. Later that year another anti-Stalinist body with more left-wing aspirations was set up in the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism. Both bodies directed their principal energies against the various front organisations.¹⁸

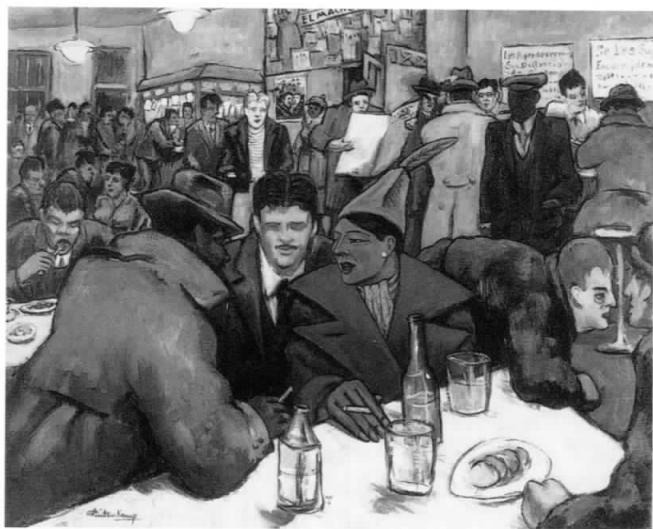
The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact of August 1939 caused considerable consternation and dismay in the CPUSA and lent weight to the case against Stalinism – a case compounded by the USSR's invasion of Poland and its aggressive war on Finland from November 1939 to March 1940. In accordance with the Party line the Artists' Congress took an ostensive stance of neutrality on the European war, and in February 1940 it organised two well attended symposia at the Museum of Modern Art directed against the 'rising wave of chauvinism', titled 'What is American Art?' and 'What is the American Tradition?'. However, divisions within the Congress came to a head over the executive board's refusal to issue a condemnation of fascist and Soviet aggression or contribute to the Finnish Relief Committee (headed by Herbert Hoover), and over Communist control of the board. In spring 1940 Meyer Schapiro and Ilya Bolotowsky formed a group to agitate on these issues, which succeeded in forcing a discussion of the Congress's stance on war and fascism at a large and rancorous membership meeting on 4 April. On this occasion Lynd Ward submitted a draft statement of Congress policy, and Schapiro spoke for the dissidents. Ward's report was then accepted by a majority of 'approximately 125 to 12'. According to a statement issued by the dissidents, this 'endorsed the Russian invasion of Finland and implicitly defended Hitler's position by assigning responsibility for the war to England and France.' Moreover, the Congress had shamefully reversed its position on boycotting fascist and Nazi exhibitions. On the following day Davis resigned, and on 15 and 17 April the New York papers carried announcements of the resignations of a range of the organisation's more prominent figures, including Biddle, Mumford, Ralph Pearson, Schapiro, Niles Spencer and William Zorach.¹⁹ Although perhaps only thirty or forty

members formally left, a great many more probably let their membership lapse, and the repercussions of this exodus were immediately felt in the poor quality of the annual membership exhibition in May.²⁰ The call for a congress of American artists held in New York in June 1941 could muster only 112 signatories, and it was held in conjunction with the Fourth Congress of the much reduced League of American Writers.

Yet decisive as these political developments undoubtedly were, it is important to note that the American Artists' Congress was in difficulties before them. Back in 1938 Lozowick (the executive secretary of the New York branch) was complaining that the organisation was 'so busy on so many fronts that there are not enough active members to attend to all the important work', and that summer the national office had to be closed for more than three months due to lack of funds and committed personnel. An attempt to raise funds by introducing a new category of Sustaining Members does not seem to have worked, and by May 1939 the financial situation was desperate. In 1939 there were also internal disagreements over the running of exhibitions, which were felt to have declined disastrously in quality. This all suggests that Congress suffered from the same tensions between professional artistic ambitions and the demands of political organising as did the John Reed Clubs.²¹

Exhibitions of the American Artists' Congress

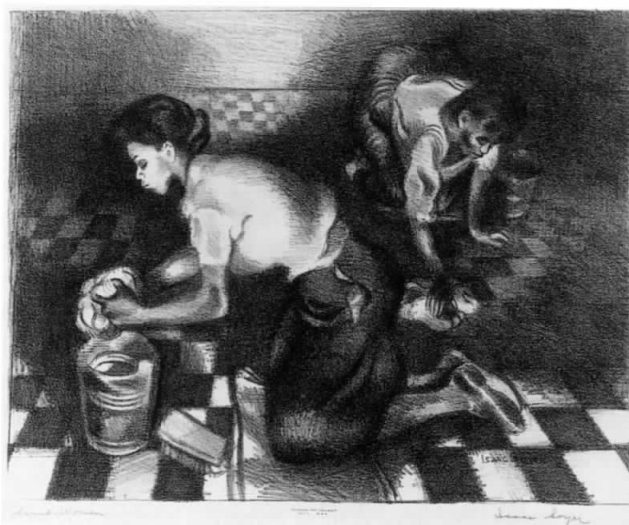
According to Baron, the most active of the Congress's committees was the exhibition committee. Initially headed by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, in 1937 he was succeeded by the Communist Henry Glintenkamp. Baigell and Williams have listed twenty-two Congress exhibitions in New York alone, and even this is an underestimate. These included a sequence of four Annual Membership exhibitions (1937–41), four Annual Competitive exhibitions (1936–9) and a range of thematic and cause-oriented shows, such as *War and Fascism* (New School for Social Research, 15 April – 6 May 1936) and *To Aid Democracy in Spain* (ACA Galleries, 11–18 October 1936). The competitive exhibitions were for 'younger artists, whose names for the most part are unknown to the general public and who have never had one-man exhibitions,' and their ultimate reward was a free solo show at the ACA Gallery. They were well subscribed and widely reported, and their aim was probably to draw into the Congress's orbit artists who were excluded by the membership requirements.²²



90 Hendrik Glintenkamp, *Cuban Workers Club*, 1937, oil on canvas, 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ in., Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Va. Gift of Walter P. Chrysler Jr, 71.2248.

The First Annual Membership exhibition in New York in April 1937 was matched by parallel events in seven other cities, while *An Exhibition in Defense of World Democracy, Dedicated to the Peoples of Spain and China* . . . (15–30 December 1937) involved simultaneous shows in New York and six others. *America Today*, an exhibition of one hundred prints, was shown in thirty cities across the nation in 1936.²³ Concern with reaching a wider audience also led to displays outside the normal exhibition venues. Although the majority of the smaller shows were hung at the ACA Gallery, the Annual Membership exhibitions of the New York membership were shown successively in the Mezzanine Gallery of the International Building at Rockefeller Center, the picture galleries at Wanamaker's department store, 444 Madison Avenue (a forty-four-storey skyscraper built in 1931), and at 785 Fifth Avenue. All the membership shows were non-juried and were financed either by a small exhibition fee or a commission on sales. They thus fall into the pattern of artist-run independent exhibitions initiated in the early years of the century by the Henri circle. Baron later claimed that the uptown shows were for prestige and the downtown (that is, ACA) shows were for profit, and that with the exception of the first membership exhibition all the former ran at a loss.²⁴

Since the exhibitions were intended to illustrate a common political stance among artists of different political allegiances and aesthetic commitments, it is hardly surprising that what impressed reviewers was their diversity. Whereas writers in the Communist press had tended to demand that the proletarian viewpoint be manifest in exhibits at the John Reed Club shows (while allowing for stylistic variation), now diversity became



91 Isaac Soyer, *Scrub Women*, lithograph based on 1936 painting, 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in., Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, US Govt WPA Allocation. 1943. WPA - 399.42.

a good in itself because it signified the spirit of the common cause. Thus Kainen remarked approvingly of the first Annual Membership exhibitions that 'every type of esthetic direction is represented', while Klein claimed that 'old battles over rival "isms" [give] way to a new stand, in which academicians, abstractionists, expressionists and realists join in a common front'. Such diversity seems to have been characteristic of all the exhibitions of this type.²⁵

The New York Annual of 1937 comprised 291 paintings, graphics, photographs and sculptures by 261 artists. Like all the membership shows, it had an illustrated catalogue which enables us to form some picture of the range of work on show. It was the largest and probably most successful of all the Congress's New York shows, and I shall take it as exemplary. Several stalwarts of the John Reed Club exhibited, including Burck, Gellert, Gibson, Ishigaki and Lozowick. Glintenkamp's contribution, *Cuban Workers' Club* (fig. 90) – which represents inter-racial solidarity in front of a background of agitational material – exemplifies the continuance of the proletarian motif. But against this must be set the exhibits of established gallery artists such as Leon Kroll, Brook and Kuniyoshi whose usual work had no connections with social art in any form. Even Biddle showed an innocuous portrait of the artist Marguerite Zorach rather than any of his more critically charged works. Indeed, one reviewer in the mainstream press commented that instead of art 'belligerently social in temper', the show abounded 'with landscapes, still-lives, portraits and abstractions'.²⁶ Proletarian naturalism was represented through paintings by Isaac (fig. 91), Moses and Raphael Soyer (although the latter



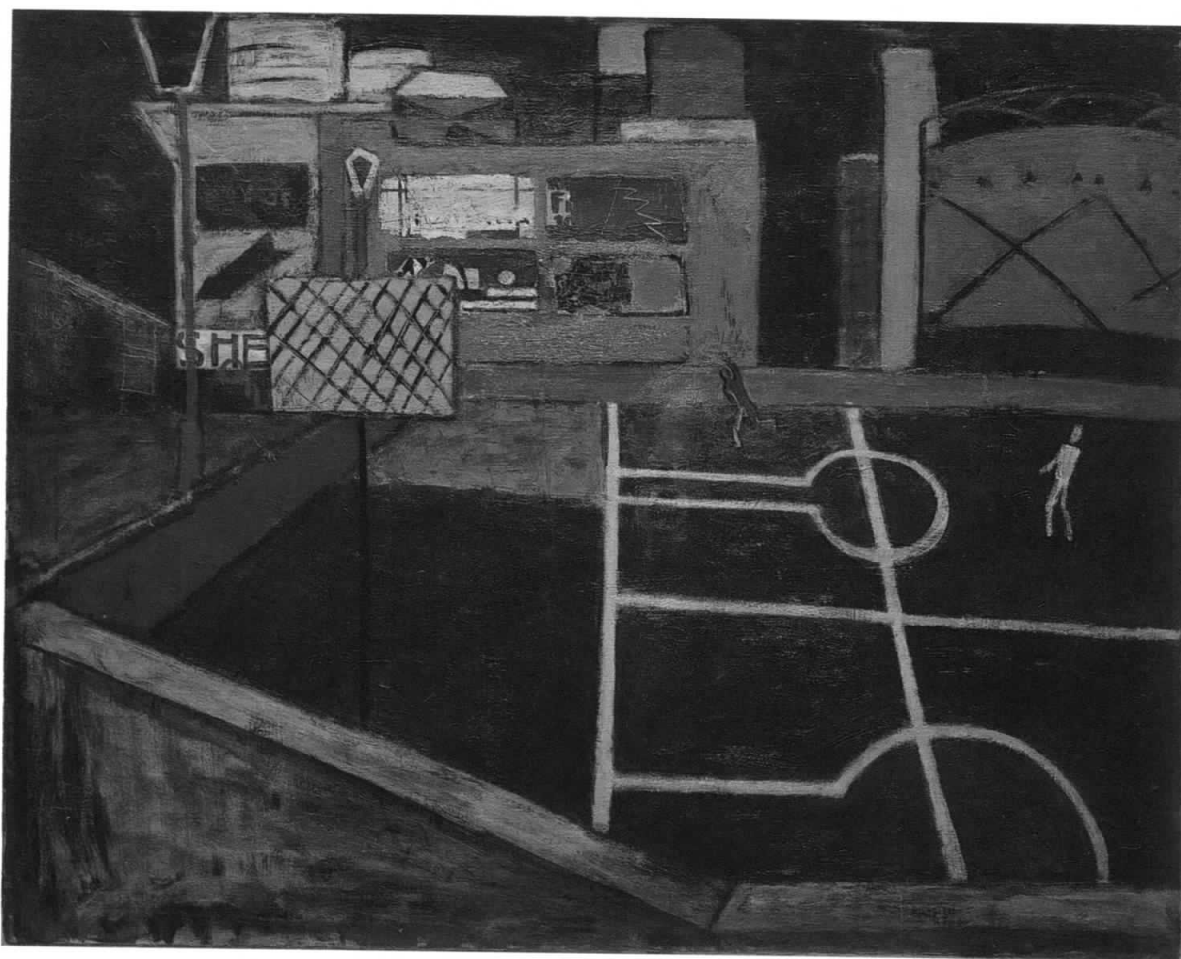
92 Henry Billings, *Arrest No. 2*, 1937, oil and tempera on cardboard, whereabouts unknown.



93 O. Louis Guglielmi, *American Dream*, 1935, oil on canvas, $21\frac{5}{8} \times 54\frac{1}{8}$ in., whereabouts unknown.

showed an uncharacteristically militant canvas titled *Workers Armed*; private collection), and in the same category belongs Harriton's genre scene, *Lower Harlem*. References to the object of the organisation were present in works such as Refregier's Surrealistic panel *Fascism over Spain* and Ribak's *The Family in Flight*, while

Henry Billings's *Arrest No. 2* (fig. 92), Guglielmi's canvas *American Dream* (fig. 93) and Ishigaki's *Ku Klux Klan* (Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama) indicated that fascism was a domestic problem too. But such works seem to have been completely overwhelmed by politically non-committal or more equivocal images.



Among artists whose work was overtly engaged with modernism the Expressionists were a distinct presence, noted by all the left-wing critics. Solman's *City Playground* (fig. 94), Ben-Zion's *In the Barn*, Tschachbasov's *Penthouse* and Max Weber's *Oarsman* (Collection Maynard J. Weber) were among the works that seem to have particularly stood out from this category. Solman's almost oneiric image of two figures playing handball in a desolate-looking city lot dominated by a gasometer, Tschachbasov's cramped tenement family and Weber's bulky proletarian all seemed to exemplify the much anticipated attempt to address the contemporary social scene in a modernist idiom. But there was also a substantial cohort of abstractionists, including Bolotowsky, Byron Browne, Francis Criss, Davis, Werner Drewes, Graham, Irene Rice Pereira and Vaclav Vytlačil.²⁷ The work from this tendency that attracted most attention was Davis's *Red Cart* (fig. 95), partly perhaps because of its vibrant colour and partly because it was not really an abstract painting at all. It is in fact one of Davis's numerous Gloucester compositions, and had been painted about four years earlier.²⁸ Unlike some of his other

works from this period such as *The Terminal* (1937; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden), *Red Cart* makes no concessions to the idea of social art, and either Davis had nothing else on hand to show (he worked slowly and was much absorbed with organising at this time) or he chose the painting as a programmatic gesture to illustrate his belief that modernist form, conceived rightly, had a progressive import in and of itself.

The same contrast of aesthetics was evident in the forty-six sculptures on display, among which a mawkish carving of a girl and dog by William Zorach and a slick primitivising head by Jose de Creeft mingled with works in a range of idioms by left-wingers such as Cronbach, Glickman (fig. 96), Goodelman, Harkavy, Werner and Wolff, all of whom – with the exception of Glickman – had shown with the John Reed Club.

While reviewers in both the left-wing and mainstream press agreed that the first Annual Membership exhibition was impressive, it mainly illustrated the Congress's lack of aesthetic programme and a new-found spirit of tolerance or 'geniality' among competing artistic camps.²⁹ Other shows at least attempted a thematic



unity. *War and Fascism* consisted of 219 cartoons, drawings and prints by an international selection of artists, from historical figures such as Callot and Goya, down to the well-known twentieth-century artists Grosz, Masereel and Orozco, and also encompassed contemporary Americans like Burck, Dehn and Limbach. *An Exhibition in Defense of World Democracy*, which accompanied the second national conference in December 1937, was restricted to Congress members, with the exception of Picasso's etching series *The Dream and Lie of Franco* and a group of anti-fascist drawings by Madrid school children. Although abstractionists such as Bolotowsky, Browne, Drewes, Holty and Pereira exhibited, their contributions were entirely outweighed by artists working in more readily legible modes, and the titles of even their works in most instances (*Air-Raid*, *War-Torn City*, *Fascism*) indicate an attempt to amplify the programmatic effect.

By 1939 members of the New York Executive were complaining that the exhibitions were declining, even that the third membership exhibition was 'lousy'.³⁰ There are indications that not all contributors sent in



95 (above) Stuart Davis, *Red Cart*, 1932, oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 50 in., 1946.15, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, museum purchase. © Estate of Stuart Davis/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.

96 (left) Maurice Glickman, *Asturian Miner and Family*, from *New Masses*, 11 May 1937, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University.

94 (facing page) Joseph Solman, *City Playground*, 1937, oil on canvas, 30 × 38 in., Collection of Paul Solman.

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'

their best works to the annual shows, which were, after all, partly ritual displays of solidarity. For this reason, they could not supersede the various regular exhibitions of contemporary art put on by the museums in securing an artist's reputation. Neither could they substitute for the one-person show at the dealer's gallery in this regard.

Artists' Union Exhibitions and Other Initiatives

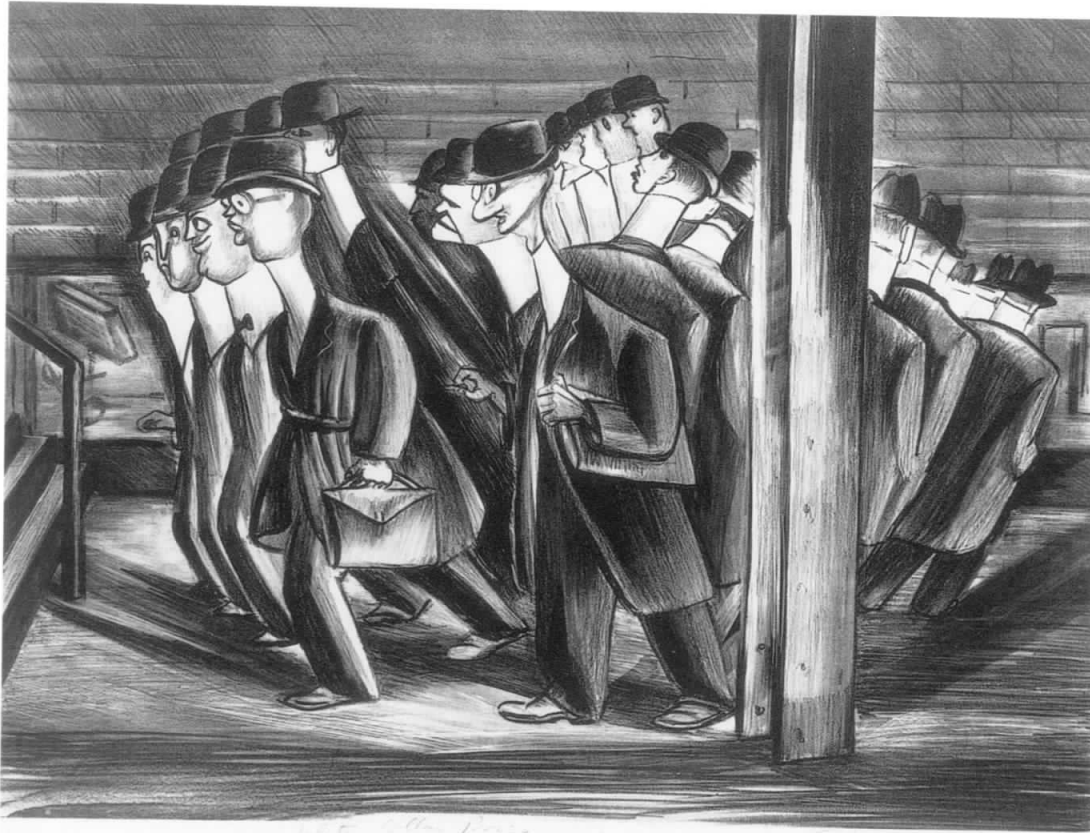
My main account of the Artists' Union will be resumed in the next chapter in relation to the federal art projects, which were its primary *raison d'être*. However, artist-run exhibitions were listed as part of 'The Purpose of the Organization' in an undated flier, and matched its general ethos. In Chicago, the Union managed to set up a permanent gallery, and the unions in Baltimore and Washington put on a joint exhibition in 1939.³¹ In March 1934 the New York Union had inaugurated its move to new quarters with an exhibition, and in 1935 a whole succession of small shows of work in different media was put on there.³² A group show by the membership held at the ACA Gallery in February 1936 appears to have been conceived as a continuation of the John Reed Club strategy, in that of the fifty or so exhibitors many had shown with the Club, and images of workers and anti-bourgeois satires dominated the display.³³ The first national exhibition of the Artists' Union was held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1938, and comprised 224 works from Union branches in eleven cities and states. However, this seems to have been a museum show rather than a cooperative effort. The average age of the exhibitors was twenty-seven, and although well established talents such as Cikovsky, Evergood, Gottlieb, Gross and Ribak were included, it was presented as 'an exposition of what the more radical new generation is doing.'³⁴

The absence of regular membership shows in the years 1937-9 suggests that the better-known artists in the Union were concentrating on the Artists' Congress exhibitions or on the more select milieu of those arranged by An American Group.³⁵ The Union itself did not put on a national membership exhibition until 1940. Displayed in the Associated Press Building in Rockefeller Plaza and the ACA and Hudson D. Walker Galleries, this was a massive non-jury show, open to all members in good standing and comprising 344 works by 301 artists. It seems likely that the decision to put on such an exhibition was motivated both by the embattled state of the federal art projects and the need to demonstrate unity in the face of the divisions within the Democratic Front caused by Soviet foreign policy.³⁶

One reason why the Artists' Union may not have been much concerned with arranging membership exhibitions in the later 1930s is because its leadership was attracted by more radical strategies of reaching a popular audience, strategies in line with the artists' identification with organised labour. At a convention of Artists' Unions from the eastern states held at the Hotel New Yorker in May 1936 much emphasis was placed on the public use of art, and Meyer Schapiro delivered a remarkable paper on the topic subsequently published in *Art Front*. While acknowledging that the federal arts projects were 'an immense step toward a public art and the security of the artist's profession', Schapiro also stressed their limitations and warned his audience that the 'temporary ease and opportunity for work' they offered should not cloak 'the harsh realities of class government'. Given that the administration would inevitably seek to provide 'conventional images of peace, justice, social harmony, [and] productive labour', of little interest to workers, artists must 'demand the extension of the program to reach a wider public' through 'collaboration with working class groups'.³⁷

97 Elizabeth Olds, complete study for porcelain enamel mural, nd, crayon on cardboard, dimensions unknown, whereabouts unknown. From Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Subway Art* (1938).





98 Elizabeth Olds, *White Collar Boys*, 1936, lithograph, $11\frac{1}{8} \times 14\frac{13}{16}$ in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., Transfer from Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

In the aftermath of this conference, the union set up a Public Use of Art committee with around ten members, among whom were such committed leftists as Ida Abelman, Paul Block, Robert Cronbach and Joseph Solman. With what has been described as the 'guarded approval' of the FAP, trade unions were approached and asked what Project art-work they might wish to borrow and their preferred subject matter. The committee received specific suggestions from the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), the Transport Workers' Union, the Ministers' Union and Labor Temple, the Union of Dining Car Employees and the Sign Writers' Union.³⁸ The contact with the Transport Workers' Union led to an ambitious plan to decorate New York subway stations with sculptures and murals in ceramic tiles, enamel panels, silicon ester and even sgraffito on black cement. In connection with this an exhibition of designs by thirty-three artists was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in February–March 1938 and drew an estimated 35,000 visitors, but the scheme eventually foundered due to opposition within the City Council and the cutback in WPA funding in 1939.³⁹

Some of the art conceived in connection with the Public Use of Arts committee certainly signified a more critical and militant outlook than most public art of the FAP. Thus Elizabeth Olds conceived a design for a porcelain enamel mural (fig. 97) that incorporated elements of her 1936 caricature of middle-class subway riders, *White Collar Boys* (fig. 98), set against the heroic working-class type of her *Miner Joe* (see fig. 146), who is positioned next to implements of labour. On the right a group of workers and office girls stride purposefully towards the centre of the image. This contrast between an indecisive (and potentially fascistic) middle class and heroic labour is basic to Olds's imagery at this time.⁴⁰ It is not surprising that the City Council found such an imagery of social typology, with its modernist space and Orozco-like grotesques, unacceptable.

Ida Abelman's large lithograph *My Father Reminisces* (fig. 99) was illustrated in *Art Front* in May 1937 with an explanatory text that revealed that the print was produced under the FAP for trade union distribution. Effectively, Abelman took all the themes that had been suggested to the Committee by the ILGWU and compressed them within one image. An extraordinary com-



99 Ida Abelman, *My Father Reminisces*, 1937, lithograph, 15 × 18¹/₄ in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., Transfer from D.C. Public Library.

posite of immigrant life and labour struggles, it uses collage devices to describe a complex historical narrative stretching from left to right through the passage and arrival of immigrants, the exploitation of the sweatshops, the formation of the ILGWU, the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and successful strike activity, which is set against the trio of the callous manufacturer, the jobber and the contractor. Liberty is reduced to a ghostly form silhouetted on deep blacks, and the sewing machine dominates all like a mill in which piece-workers are crushed. As will be evident by now, Abelman's fusion of Expressionist and Surrealist devices represents a widespread idiom of the period. How far it was successful with the union audiences at which it was aimed is not known, but in late 1938 the United American Printmakers within the recently renamed United American Artists launched a campaign to distribute such mass-produced prints through the union movement.⁴¹

The American Artists School

An announcement in *Art Front* of February 1936 declared that the John Reed Club School of Art had been dissolved at the end of January, and a group of 'nationally known artists' were organising an independent school that would take over its quarters and equipment. The new school, symptomatically renamed the American Artists School, opened in April on three floors of a 'modern loft building' at 131 West 14th Street. As well as studios and offices, there were a library, lecture room and large gallery.⁴² In 1936 its total registration was more than five hundred students. However, the School experienced the familiar problems of such voluntary bodies in sporadic attendance at meetings and shortage of funds.⁴³ It was partly because of the latter problem that it put on a whole sequence of exhibitions and issued two portfolios of prints.

The stated aims of the School – set out in its 1936 brochure under the questions ‘What Is America? What Is American Art? How Can We Achieve It?’ – sought to distinguish the pedagogy it offered by characterising the training of other art schools, whether traditional or modern, as ‘concentrated on technical efficiency’. By contrast, ‘[t]he American Artists School eschews this sterile approach and establishes as its fundamental premise that the student must be developed as an independent thinker at the same time he is trained to be a competent artist.’ This was essentially the same argument that had been used to distinguish between revolutionary art and modernism, but couched in a new language of Americanism, with the faculty described as ‘progressive’ rather than ‘revolutionary’ or ‘proletarian’ artists. In a statement for the School published in *Art Front*, Evergood described the task of present-day art as ‘to deal with our lives in a way that adds to them and still not be propaganda in the derogatory sense of the word as attacked by those who advocate an art devoid of thought and content.’ In the pursuit of such an art, students would be given the opportunity ‘to study the best of every form of art from the abstract to expressionism, to surrealism, to American genre, to experiments in painting revolving around American thought and content.’⁴⁴ This variety was reflected in the teaching staff, who in 1936–7 ranged from naturalists such as Harriton and Moses Soyler to the Social Surrealist Quirt and the modernists Criss and Schanker.

The School offered courses in a wide range of media, and there was also a criticism and discussion class. Students were promised the collaboration of ‘psychologists, social commentators and outstandingly progressive artists, to give . . . [them] a living background for the aesthetic interpretation of America’. The intellectual range the School fostered is suggested by a 1938 lecture programme, which among regular artistic topics also advertised talks on contemporary dance (by Martha Graham), swing music, music and the people, stage design, housing, photomontage and American folk art.⁴⁵

As Virginia Marquardt has observed, the School functioned as something like the ‘educational “arm”’ of the Artists’ Congress, and although there was no official connection between the two bodies, many of the same figures were involved in both. The close connection between the School and Communist cultural movement is evinced by the extensive publicity for its activities in the pages of *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*. Among these were many benefit shows put on by the faculty and students, usually selling works at very low prices.⁴⁶ In April 1937 what seems to have been a more ambitious thematic exhibition with the title of *The Social Scene*

was put on. This comprised sixty-eight works by fifty-eight artists, and was accompanied by a symposium on ‘New Forms and Content for American Art’, at which Samuel Putnam and Charmion von Wiegand spoke, with Lozowick in the chair.⁴⁷ Like the two portfolios of prints the school issued in 1936, these exhibitions were both fund-raising devices and didactic displays. Doubtless they illustrated the pluralism of social art, at the same time as they showed the continuing kernel of proletarianism within it.⁴⁸

An American Group, Inc.

An American Group, Inc. was set up by six artists in the summer of 1931 to address the problems of exhibition faced by ‘younger, less well known artists’, the founders being Stuart Edie, Robert Phillip, Frederic Knight, Anatol Shulkin, Jacob Getlar Smith and Chuzo Tamotzu. Initially they had their own gallery in a 1930 skyscraper, the Barbizon Plaza Hotel on Sixth Avenue and West 58th Street, but after three years of running exhibitions they handed over this side of their programme to a sequence of commercial galleries. From that point on they focussed primarily on annual membership exhibitions. New members of the group were elected every year, and by 1938 there were fifty-two in all. In fact, by then many of the members were relatively well-known figures. Like the American Artists’ Congress, An American Group stood for an ‘esthetic united front’.⁴⁹

According to the ‘Constitution and By-Laws’ of 1941 An American Group was ‘essentially cultural and non-political in character’ but its domination by the left is unquestionable. Of the six founders, four were signatories of ‘The Call’ for an Artists’ Congress and another had joined by the Congress’s first annual membership exhibition. All the offices in 1939 were occupied by leftists, excepting the presidency which was held by Kuniyoshi, and the committees were similarly packed.⁵⁰ While non-leftists such as Cadmus and Bishop were members and showed in the annual exhibitions, they were entirely overwhelmed by stalwarts of the Communist cultural movement such as Criss, Dehn, Evergood, Goodelman, Gropper, Harkavy, Harriton, Lozowick, Olds, Quirt, Refregier, Ribak and the Soyers. One might wonder why these artists needed another exhibition body alongside the Artists’ Congress or a welfare body beyond the Artists’ Union, and I surmise that it was because the Congress was not sufficiently concerned with professional interests, and the Union was too focussed around the FAP. Both may also have been too politically inclusive in their membership.⁵¹

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'

The annual membership shows of An American Group were certainly smaller than those of the Artists' Congress. Thus, the 1937 exhibition at the Montross Gallery consisted of only 39 works,⁵² that of 1938 at Delphic Studios had 75 and that of 1939 at Associated American Artists' Gallery had 58. To judge from the exhibition catalogues, the works by modernists (represented by Davis and Criss) and Social Surrealists (Quirt) were entirely outnumbered by the social art, landscapes, portraits and still-lives on show. However, while the membership shows of An American Group may have been more selective than those of the Artists' Congress and more uniformly naturalistic, they functioned mainly as manifestations of artists' new-found spirit of collectivism and 'progressive' Americanism.

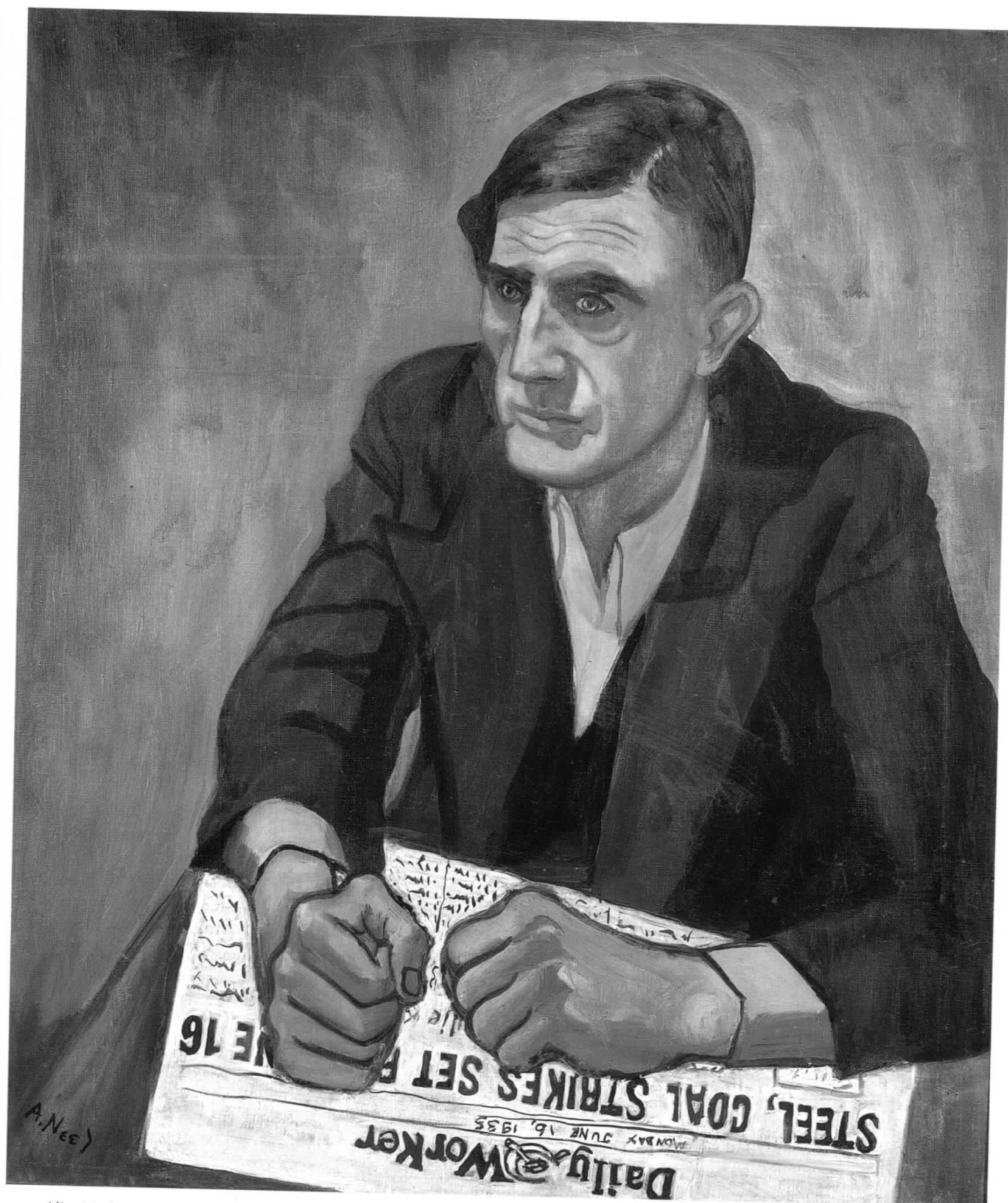
Much more interesting are the two thematic exhibitions organised by the Group: the *Waterfront Art Show* it co-sponsored with the Marine Workers Committee, held at the New School for Social Research in February 1937; and *Roofs for Forty Million* shown at Rockefeller Center from 15 April to 1 May of the following year. The former was the sequel to a more modest benefit exhibition put on in late 1935 at the Italian Workers' Club on Bleeker Street.⁵³ According to a review in *New Masses*, the core of exhibitors was made up of artists who had 'trained in the tough three-mornings-a-week schedule of the waterfront units of the Communist Party', and who knew the longshoremen at first hand. The context of this involvement was provided by the Communists' strength in the maritime unions, and more particularly perhaps, by the numerous strikes the International Longshoremen's Association launched in 1936, directed mainly against the corrupt AFL leadership, which culminated in actions by the rank and file seamen and longshoremen in the autumn that shut down nearly all ports in the country for more than three months.⁵⁴

The 1937 exhibition comprised 126 works by 107 artists, made up of oils, watercolours, and drawings, prints and photographs in relatively equal numbers, together with sculptures by Cronbach, Goodelman and Werner. In addition to the three last named, there was a solid presence of established leftists, such as Ault, Cikovsky, Davis, Dehn, Evergood, Gottlieb, Gropper, Guy, Harriton, Ishigaki, Lozowick, Morley, Olds and Ribak. Modernists such as Bolotowsky, Davis and Adolph Gottlieb were very much in a minority and, according to the *New Masses* reviewer, Davis's exhibit was at first unappreciated by the worker visitors.⁵⁵ To judge from their titles, a few of the pictures and prints were of strikes and labour, but these were apparently

swamped by 'pictures of lounging bums, absolutely beautiful marine blues, [and] chugging tug boats.' Evergood's *Strikers in the Snow* is likely to have been the painting *Warming Up* now in the Hirshhorn Museum, and he also contributed the powerful drawing *North River Jungle* in the same collection – both the fruit of an evening spent with unemployed men on a vacant lot in Greenwich Village in 1933.⁵⁶

We can probably identify Alice Neel's *Marine Worker* with her impressive portrait of the Communist waterfront organiser Pat Whalen (fig. 100). Neel later described the sitter as 'an ordinary Irishman' but one driven by an absolute faith in Communist principles. In fact, Whalen was an archetypal working-class intellectual and activist, who led the seamen in the violent Baltimore dock strike of 1936 and subsequently became the first president of the Baltimore branch of the NMU after that union was established as a CIO affiliate in May of the following year. Although only just over five feet tall and weighing around 120 pounds, Whalen had a well-earned reputation for personal bravery and was an eloquent speaker in a working-class idiom that was liberally peppered with cuss words. Like Neel herself he was fiercely committed to the Party's struggle against racism, and like her he was an independent-thinking radical, who had problems with Party discipline. In the portrait Whalen's lack of tie and rough haircut serve to define him as a working man, and the protruding left ear gives him a homely appearance. Neel flags his beliefs through the copy of the *Daily Worker*, with its banner strike headline, but also signifies resolution through the clenched fists, furrowed brow and set visionary look of the eyes. This is one of the few individually credible images of a Communist as such from the period, and it is perhaps significant that reviews in the Communist press passed over it in silence, since Whalen looks almost like a saint consumed by the sufferings of the world – his fists substituting for hands in prayer and at the same time intimating the Communist salute and the will to struggle.⁵⁷ Such an image was perhaps out of step with the image of normalcy that the Party sought to project at this time, epitomised by numerous photographs of Earl Browder in suit and tie, often with a pipe in his mouth. At the same time, the Expressionist style may have seemed incongruous with the documentary claims implicit in the portrait genre.

In any case, given the preponderance of genre images and port views, the *Daily Worker's* claim that the *Waterfront Art Show* was 'the first important mass art exhibition in this country with the definite aim of supporting the rank and file of labor' must refer mainly to the symbolic display of solidarity, rather than to the art itself.⁵⁸



100 Alice Neel, *Pat Whalen*, 1935, oil on canvas, 27 × 23 in., Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Gift of Dr Hartley Neel, 81.12. © Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy of Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'

Roofs for 40 Million was shown in the galleries of La Maison Française and consisted of nearly 200 works by more than 100 artists. The title is evocative of the 'One Third of a Nation' of Roosevelt's Second Inaugural Address, and of the Federal Theater production of that name, which was playing to packed audiences in New York at the time of the exhibition. Considering, too, that the city had some of the most appalling urban slums in the nation, the theme was also particularly apt.⁵⁹ In fact, the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act that the President signed into law in 1937 was inadequate to the problem, and although the CP supported the bill – as it supported the Social Security provisions of the New Deal – it also stressed its limitations. Correspondingly, *Roofs for 40 Million* was not simply an endorsement of the New Deal. The pictorial report of the exhibition in *New Masses* was accompanied by a critique of the 1937 Act and the Federal Housing Administration by the left-wing architect Sidney Hill, and that in the *Daily Worker* presented it as an indictment of 'the government'.⁶⁰

The presentation of *Roofs for 40 Million* made it a more didactic display than the *Waterfront Art Show*, the artists' works being supplemented by a photographic section in a separate room, which illustrated both the horrors of slum housing and model dwellings built by both federal and municipal authorities. In her review, McCausland wanted works that would move the viewer to action rather than prompt contemplation of the 'morbid beauty' of decay, and while she found the exhibits generally did not fall into this trap, she still preferred the photographs to the paintings, drawings and prints. This points to a fundamental problem with the notion of art as documentary: as with that of art as a weapon, all the emphasis was on utility. One might argue, indeed, that there was an even more fundamental confusion of categories, in that while the latter (in the abstract at least) permitted formal flexibility, the former implicitly forced art into competition with a photographic mode which had all the authority of unmediated veracity, however illusory its foundations. This authority it simply could not match. Yet the thematic exhibition could hardly escape the documentary burden.⁶¹

The ACA Gallery

As I have noted, Herman Baron's ACA Gallery had played a major role in advancing proletarian art. In the later 1930s it provided the venue for a sequence of benefit and programmatic shows that were effectively manifestations of the Democratic Front. It also became

the main forum for one-person and group shows of social art, for which its proprietor was a tireless publicist.

GROUP SHOWS

There were four main exhibitions of the first type: *Pink Slips Over Culture* (July 1937), 1938: *Dedicated to the New Deal* (August–September 1938), *Exhibition for the Ben Leider Memorial Fund* (October 1938) and *We Like America* (November 1938).⁶² In addition there were annual group exhibitions on 'social themes', such as *Paintings by 17 Artists on Social Themes* (January 1939).⁶³ The most important programmatic exhibition at the ACA in this period was 1938: *Dedicated to the New Deal*, both because it emphatically marked the turn to support of the administration and also because it inadvertently revealed the ambiguities of the Democratic Front. Opening the 1938 season, it was a small show consisting of only twenty-one works, accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. The 'original idea' had been to have uniform mural panels, 5 × 3 feet, showing 'some phase of the New Deal and its effect in improving the conditions of the people.' In the catalogue Baron claimed the exhibitors had come together 'to give voice to the people's protest and desire for progressive action', and altogether the show demonstrated that artists had 'definitely aligned themselves with the forces grouped around the New Deal.'⁶⁴ Yet, in fact, reviewers in the mainstream press were struck by the mixed ideological message of the display. Thus the *New York Sun* observed that while the exhibition was supposed to demonstrate approval of the 'Great Experiment', 'to the one who approaches it from the outside it seems at most approval with reservations.' Referring to Weber's *The Forgotten Man* (which depicted a demonstrating worker with clenched fist), this reviewer suggested that several of the artists appeared to have been 'caught unawares', and 'simply sent what they chanced to have on hand'.⁶⁵ In actuality, Weber's picture had been painted in 1934, and both Biddle and Lozowick showed lithographs that were not done for the occasion. Biddle's *Death on the Plains* (fig. 101) hardly looks like a tribute to New Deal agricultural policy, while Sternberg's *Filibuster over the Senate* was a reworking of his 1935 *Southern Holiday* (see fig. 50), which could not really be read as a tribute to the administration either, since the president, while condemning lynching, had not endorsed the 1938 Anti-Lynching Bill.

Several of the canvases were essentially caricatures of reactionary forces. Gropper's *The Market* showed



101 George Biddle, *Death on the Plains*, 1936, lithograph, 10 × 13¹⁵/₁₆ in., Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



102 Elizabeth Olds, *The Middle Class*, 1936, lithograph, 10 × 14 in., Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., Transfer from Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

frantic capitalists responding to the Wall Street Crash by turning on the workers; Tschacbasov's *Roots of Decay* pilloried a whole cast of reactionary types including Coughlin, Ford and Hearst; and Gottlieb's *Strength through Joy* linked some of the same figures with Chamberlain, Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini all dancing hand in hand in front of a war-torn landscape led by a skeleton.⁶⁶ Olds exhibited a painted variant of her 1936 lithograph *The Middle Class* (fig. 102), which represented them as an unstable group torn between the appeals of fascist demagoguery and an alliance with organised

labour. As the *Sun* observed, such images hardly seemed 'paean in praise of the existing regime.'

If the aim of 1938: *Dedicated to the New Deal* had been to reach beyond those already converted, then to judge by the critical response it failed. Further, as with *Roofs for 40 Million*, the exhibition seems to have defeated its own ends both aesthetically and politically. In relation to the former, the critical response revealed that form signified more strongly than political symbolism within the artistic field, and in relation to the latter it showed that the social critique advanced by the New Deal's would-be allies in the Communist movement was far to the left of any element within the administration.

ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

Although the ACA was not the only gallery where social art could be seen in the later 1930s, its pre-eminence in this area was indisputable. Many of the most prominent artists we have encountered had one-person shows there, including Evergood, Gottlieb, Gropper, Harriton, Jones, Olds, Refregier, Ribak, Sternberg and Tschacbasov. Of these, Baron singled out Jones, Gropper and Evergood for special treatment in his history of the gallery, and more than any others they stood for social art and its problems. The responses to them thus merit separate consideration.

JOE JONES

Jones's early career and reactions to his first New York show were considered in Chapter Two. Baron claimed that this exhibition effectively won the battle for social art, leading to an immediate increase in the number of gallery visitors, and making Jones a success 'overnight'. By contrast, he described Jones's second exhibition, *Paintings of Wheat Fields*, as far less successful, a view that may be partly explained by the fact it was shown at the Maynard Walker Gallery in the art world enclave on 57th Street with only the cooperation of the ACA. The opening was reportedly a fancy affair, attended by Edward G. Robinson and Katherine Hepburn among others, and the fourteen exhibits were predominantly Midwestern landscapes, very different from the politically engaged canvases Jones had shown in 1935. Critics generally praised the authenticity of the works but also complained of their technical immaturity.⁶⁷

The change in Jones's subject matter was partly occasioned by his employment by the Resettlement Administration to paint social conditions in the Midwest in the autumn of 1935, as a result of which he began to work as a documentarist. (Photographs he made at this time



103 Joe Jones, *Wheat Threshing Scene in St. Charles County*, formerly Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

served as the basis for some of his later paintings.) In 1936 he was back living in Saint Louis, sharing a studio with the writer Jack Conroy, and in the following year he was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship 'to paint the life of the present day Middle-West.' His engagement with Midwestern themes was not accompanied by any diminution in his political commitments, which were reinforced by his spell at Commonwealth College, and he publicly endorsed the Communist presidential candidates in the 1936 elections.⁶⁸ His 1937 ACA exhibition was seen by the critics as marking a return to the form of his first exhibition, and in the catalogue Baron presented him again as a proletarian artist and realist: 'His realism stems from the old masters and is as fundamentally vital as theirs. He could not paint in any other style and be effective. He is a son of the people whose collective experience he is expressing.' Kainen, however, who had praised the 1936 exhibit, found in Jones's new works a laboured technique, which marked a falling off from the vitality of his earlier proletarianism.⁶⁹

Marling has made much of the series of murals of Missouri agriculture that Jones made for a Saint Louis bar-room at the end of 1936 (Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee), which suggest an essentially benign vision of the region. However, it is not clear that Jones took these very seriously,⁷⁰ and in New York the artist was best known for images of abandoned dustbowl farms, dispossessed farmers and impoverished children – images that suggested precisely those aspects of the Midwest with no place in Regionalist art. The painting *Wheat Threshing Scene in St. Charles County*

(fig. 103), which the Metropolitan Museum bought for \$1,000 in 1937, was described as 'one of a series on the relationship of the worker to his job', and is emphatically a scene of modern collective labour unlike the owner-occupier homesteads of Wood's pictorial Iowa. (In 1935, Archibald MacLeish had found a political significance in the expression on the nearmost worker's face and the positioning of his left fist.⁷¹) While Jones told a newspaper reporter in 1938 that his 'active political life' was 'almost negligible', this was prefaced by the assertion that he was 'still a Communist'.⁷²

Yet particularly after his move to New York in 1937, Jones was increasingly concerned with making a career as an artist. In a letter of that year he observed of his friends Arnold Blanch and Doris Lee that they were 'the only ones I have been able to find who had time for art – everyone else finds time only for political thought & activity, which should be a part of every artist but never his whole interest' (*sic*).⁷³ Jones certainly gave up revolutionary art after 1935, and his work of the ensuing years can be seen as a transition to the documentary mode of social art that McCausland recommended, and one that accorded with the ideal of a left-wing Regionalism advanced by the Popular Front magazine *Midwest*.⁷⁴ Gallery success was matched by a sequence of five commissions to decorate post offices from the Treasury Section of Fine Arts, which culminated in Jones's winning a prize in the Section's Forty-Eight States mural competition of 1940. In the same year, one of his paintings came second in a poll to determine the most popular picture at the New York World's Fair exhibition of contemporary art. However, the idea that Jones compromised his political ideals in the later 1930s is questionable, and against the Democratic Front Americanism of his post office murals should be set the images of workers and derelicts that filled his 1939 and 1940 shows at the ACA. Both exhibitions were favourably reviewed in the *Daily Worker*, and the catalogue to the latter quoted statements by the artist to the effect that his work was grounded in a progressive politics.⁷⁵ A further sign of his continuing commitment is the introduction he wrote for Gropper's 1940 exhibition at the ACA, which contained a sharp attack on the Regionalists, entirely in line with the CP's current anti-nationalist, anti-war stance.⁷⁶ In fact, Jones's turn from political art was not to come until 1942–3.

WILLIAM GROPPER

By 1940 Gropper was one of the Communist movement's most popular celebrities. In addition to his work as staff cartoonist for the *Morning Freiheit* and regular

contributions to other Communist publications, he was a well-known book illustrator and his cartoons had appeared widely in mainstream magazines and newspapers such as *Pearson's*, *The Nation*, *New Republic* and *New York Post*. Indeed, a caricature of Emperor Hirohito by him published in *Vanity Fair* in 1935 led to a minor diplomatic incident. Although he insisted that he was not a Party member, Gropper was an open Communist whose commitment to the Party's political positions was unequivocal, and much of his work for the movement was done gratis. It is indicative of Gropper's stature that in 1938 he was the subject of the ACA Gallery's first book.⁷⁷ His 1940 exhibition (which was attended by 10,000 people) was marked by a gala celebration to 'mark his twentieth year as a people's artist', and a dinner in his honour in 1944 was addressed by Carl Sandburg and Dorothy Parker among others, and commemorated in a large album of personal tributes.⁷⁸

Gropper had been painting since at least 1921 and already had a reputation as a mural painter by the time of his first solo show. However, his three one-man exhibitions in 1936, coming in the same year as his first mural commission from the Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture, marked his increasing ambition to be recognised as a painter. At this time he also bought a lithographic press and began to produce limited edition prints. Over the next few years Gropper achieved a significant reputation as a painter, large numbers of visitors crowded his exhibitions and major museums began to buy his work. In 1937 Lewis Mumford claimed that his 'dynamic feeling for form' was only matched by that of such established figures as Orozco, Benton and Marin among contemporary American artists. That August he was also the subject of a special feature in the *Magazine of Art*.⁷⁹

Given Gropper's public status, the danger was that his work would be over-valued by Communist critics, and in 1940 *New Masses* acclaimed him 'the master of revolutionary painting in America'.⁸⁰ Yet in fact enthusiasm for his work was generally matched by recognition, more or less acute, of its limitations. In 1936 his showing of twenty-seven paintings and an unspecified number of drawings at the ACA Gallery was hailed by Harold Rosenberg in *Art Front* as a kind of coming of age of revolutionary art. Responding to the variety of Gropper's subjects Rosenberg claimed:

It is no longer a question of crudely conceived 'left-wing' pictures of bread-lines, pickets, mounted police; everything of value in the art of painting is becoming the property of the revolutionary movement. It will



104 William Gropper, *The Last Cow*, 1937, oil on canvas, 24 x 34 in., private collection.

soon be possible to speak of a revolutionary landscape, of a revolutionary still-life.

Commitment to art as propaganda did not mean that every individual work had to 'contain in itself a complete argument leading toward a revolutionary conclusion', rather the value of Gropper's show lay in its cumulative effect. Although this demonstrated that the revolutionary painter was 'precisely the major discoverer of new pictorial possibilities as well as of new uses for old', Rosenberg acknowledged that Gropper's work might be criticised on two grounds: firstly, 'that he has discovered no new formal or technical approach to the problem of revolutionary painting', and secondly, that the very 'facility' and 'virtuosity' of his technique made his work seem 'lacking in profundity'. He sought to justify the artist on the first count by claiming that there was a necessary continuity in pictorial evolution, and on the second by pointing out that Gropper's urgent engagement with contemporary events and the press of his commitments left him no time to 'stop and grow heavy over a painting'.⁸¹

Other left-wing commentators also felt the need to defend the eclectic character of Gropper's style or excuse the superficiality of his technique. Thus while Stephen Alexander found that some paintings in his 1938 exhibition which came out of a trip through the West in the previous year (fig. 104) 'expressed profound tragedy with a stark simplicity that is deeply moving', he also complained that the display as a whole did not show 'as much of an advance' on its predecessors 'as we might wish for and reasonably expect'.⁸² Many of Gropper's



105 William Gropper, *The Defenders*, 1937, oil on plywood, 21³/₈ × 39¹³/₁₆ in., Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Vincent Price.

paintings were imaginative fantasies on topical concerns such as the Spanish Civil War (fig. 105),⁸³ strikes and Southern racism, or even generalised Goyaesque images of violence and devastation that were little more than coloured cartoons. While Lozowick tried to defend the 'violence to natural appearance' and anti-naturalistic colour in Gropper's work as a kind of heightened realism, 'in a true sense objective', this was not how it signified to most critics of the left. Writing in 1941, Milton Brown claimed that Gropper was 'more and more the outstanding personality on the American art scene'. But it was the artist's lithographs that he praised unequivocally, and he criticised the figures in his paintings as often looking like studio portraiture and the 'still too many isolated areas of virtuosity in paint unrelated to the central content of his art.'⁸⁴ In fact the criticisms of Gropper's paintings by all these writers were acute, and the promise they discerned in them was never fulfilled.

PHILIP EVERGOOD

According to Baron, Evergood was not 'cradled by left-wing groups' and his work passed unmentioned in the Communist press until 1937. However, he played an active role in the American Artists School, Artists' Union and Artists' Congress in the later 1930s, achieving prominence partly through his gifts as a public speaker, which made him sought after as a lecturer,

speechmaker and radio performer. (On occasion his appearance and English accent got him mistaken for Charles Laughton.) His statements about art were vivid and emotive, although for some tastes they seemed dangerously anti-intellectual.⁸⁵ These activities contributed to make Evergood figure as one of the leading social artists of the period, even if he was not entirely happy with the label.

Evergood had eight one-man exhibitions under his belt by the time of his 1938 show at ACA, and Baron had thus made a catch. In a catalogue note, he explained that Evergood, 'like many other artists, finds it necessary to distort the human form to intensify the contradictions or traits imposed upon the individual by the complexities of society.' However, while this device resembled that of a cartoonist, the artist avoided the 'pitfalls' that the cartoon form held for painters. Indeed, Evergood himself was careful to distance his work from cartooning, stressing in a statement of 1943 that his aim was 'to paint a good picture – a work of art', although one permeated by a 'sound ideology' arrived at through individual experience and conviction. In a later interview he said that he did not believe in 'leaflet' painting and social art had to strive for 'the greatest sensitivities and the greatest refinements' – a position that is distinctly different from that of exponents of proletarian art, who had not generally made much distinction between their art

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'



107 Philip Evergood, *My Forebears Were Pioneers*, 1940, oil on canvas, 50 × 36 in. (sight), Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, University Purchase. GMOA 1974.3190.

within what are essentially modernised bacchanals. It says something of the rigidity of Marsh's imaginative categories that the men in his New York street scenes are generally bums and down and outs, while in his burlesque images they are lascivious grotesques. Evergood, by contrast, depicts self-possessed working men moving among what appear to be more middle-class types, as well as hustlers and a prostitute fixing her suspender.⁸⁹

While Evergood regarded Marsh as 'a good friend' in the 1930s, he later characterised Marsh's 'bums' as projecting a kind of 'tragic hopelessness' which implied their condition was inevitable; his own bums, by contrast, were 'dangerous bums, discontented bums' who had 'not accepted their lot.'⁹⁰ More generally, Marsh returned obsessively to certain themes that made up a kind of urban theatre of New York, whereas Evergood ranged widely seeking to make compelling symbols for

contemporary political and social issues. That which was seen by critics to distinguish his work from revolutionary art, however, was the absence of direct political references and the element of humour.⁹¹ Indeed, critics did not know what to make of paintings such as the artist's image of a slum child feeding birds from a tenement window, *Lily and the Sparrows* (1939; Whitney Museum of American Art), which Edward Alden Jewell described as 'strange serio-comic and surrealist'. Similarly, *My Forebears Were Pioneers* (fig. 107), which depicts an old lady sitting in a rocking chair before a landscape devastated by hurricane, while understood as some kind of sardonic comment on bourgeois pretensions, was not generally interpreted as displaying 'the hearty contempt for social dry rot' that Jerome Klein found in it.⁹²

The most troubling painting in the 1940 show for mainstream critics, and the one that has come particularly to symbolise Social Realism, was *American Tragedy* (fig. 108). Although the title evokes Dreiser (a Communist literary icon), in fact the work makes no reference to the narrative of Clyde Griffiths but depicts the Memorial Day Massacre at the South Chicago plant of Republic Steel on 30 May 1937. This episode was part of the offensive by Republic Steel to break the CIO-Steel Workers Organizing Committee, by force of arms if necessary. On a blazing hot day, more than two thousand strikers and their supporters gathered for a meeting a few blocks from the shut-down plant to protest against police restrictions on picketing. There were children present and the occasion had something of the atmosphere of a family picnic. 'Vendors were doing a good business in ice-cream bars and popsicles', according to the *New Masses* report. After the speeches an impromptu parade towards the factory across 'the vast stretch of prairie' was met by four platoons of Chicago police two blocks away from the gates. There a scuffle occurred, tear-gas grenades were hurled and the police began firing into the crowd at point-blank range. They continued to fire at the backs of those who fled and beat the wounded after they had fallen. They also refused first aid to the victims, two of whom bled to death in patrol wagons. In all, at least ten people died from their wounds. The incident was denounced by the Chicago police commissioner as a Communist provocation, a charge predictably echoed in the reactionary press. For the left, the massacre became a symbol of the ruthless abuse of legal authorities by corporate power.⁹³

Evergood's picture partly derived from news photographs of the event, published to illustrate an eye witness account by the left-wing Chicago writer Meyer Levin, who later wrote a novel around his experiences.



108 Philip Evergood, *American Tragedy*, 1937, oil on canvas, 29½ × 39½ in., private collection.

The artist himself linked the image with his own beating by the police during an Artists' Union occupation of WPA offices in December of the previous year.⁹⁴ However, what interests me here is not the genesis of *American Tragedy* so much as the critical responses to it, and what these tell us about the project of social art. Both leftists like McCausland and the liberal Emily Genauer regarded the painting as a major statement, and the former used it to exemplify the modernity of Evergood's 'plastic organization'. She defended the high horizon and schematic treatment of the upper part, and emphasised the way in which the blue police uniforms of the foreground figures performed a signifying function, and were formally balanced by the brilliant red of the steel mills above. By contrast, Edward Alden Jewell acknowledged the picture had 'much to recommend it in the way of painting', but found it 'cheap and unconvincing'

as 'social comment'. Even John Baur, writing in 1960, while praising the painting's formal qualities, complained of a theatrical aspect that brought it 'perilously close to the boundary between art and propaganda'. The fact that all history paintings have a theatrical quality and many a propaganda function does not seem to have occurred to him.⁹⁵ What I suspect disturbed both Jewell and Baur (although neither said so directly) was the pregnant Latina woman, at whose distended belly the revolver of the foremost officer is pointing. Indeed, the policeman's aggression seems directed towards the woman as much as the man, who seeks to deflect him by grabbing his tunic. As with Grosz, all of Evergood's figures, good and evil, verge on the grotesque. And thus even when they are invested with the pathos of victims as they are here, it was hard for Communist critics to see them as proletarian ideal types.

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'

It is worth noting, too, that the very characteristics that brought the picture into the realm of modern painting, and thus social art as opposed to revolutionary art, caused a little unease in the Communist press. While it was reproduced several times in the *Daily Worker*, the paper's main review of the show liked it less than Evergood's other exhibits, and found the 'industrial background, in bright vermilion . . . a little hard to take.'⁹⁶ It is difficult to see why the landscape of *American Tragedy* was more formally challenging than say *Lilly and the Sparrows*, which the same reviewer approved, and it may be that like Jewell and Baur, whatever the differences in their politics, he found the treatment of an actual historical event in an Expressionist mode too incongruous. From a different perspective, one can see the uncomfortable artifice and pathos of the drama as precisely the picture's strength.⁹⁷

Taken together, these responses suggest that social art was a hybrid and unstable mode. It had to carry the imperative to be an art equal in formal achievement to both the great art of the past and the modern tradition. At the same time it had to suggest a political orientation without becoming overt revolutionary propaganda. Evergood himself felt the 'incompleteness of our endeavour' and its limitations from 'a formal and expressive point of view.'⁹⁸ Yet his work was well-suited to fulfill this role partly because of its knowing departures from standard naturalism and the elements of fantasy it contained. However, at times these features also rubbed against the basic functionalist imperative of Communist thinking on the arts.

Social Art at the Whitney Museum

As I showed in Chapter Three, *Art Front's* judgement on the Whitney's Second Biennial of Watercolours and Pastels in February–March 1936 was damning. However, the third Painting Biennial in November–December of the same year seemed to mark something of a turning point in terms of the representation of social art, instances of which included Gropper's *The Senate* (see fig. 88), Guglielmi's *Phoenix* (see fig. 26) and Tschacbasov's *Deportation* (see fig. 84), all of which had unmistakable political connotations. For Jerome Klein, it was the contrast between these works and those of artists 'who persist in painting social life without trying to clarify attitudes or meanings' that was crucial, among the latter being Cadmus,⁹⁹ French, Marsh and Miller. This position was logical, since while 'the abstractionists' (in the form of Davis, Gorky, Graham and Matulka)

were a presence in the display, they were as Klein put it 'a minor party', and the key concern of Marxian critique was necessarily to claim the superiority of Social Realism over other contending varieties.¹⁰⁰ The recognition that inclusion implied was reinforced by the museum's purchases from the show, among them being Jones's *Our American Farms*, a heavy-handed comment on the condition of the farmer in the Dust Bowl. The unemployed were represented by a marginal figure in Raphael Soyer's *Office Girls* and more centrally in *Home Relief Station* (see fig. 80) by Louis Ribak – an artist with a longstanding commitment to *New Masses* and the John Reed Club but also one who, like Soyer, had been a member of the Whitney Studio Club in the 1920s.¹⁰¹

The Social Realists were again strongly in evidence at the 1937 Painting Biennial, where a whole range of works relating to unemployment were on show including Evergood's *The Pink Dismissal Slip* (Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University), Harriton's *6th Ave Employment Agency*, Isaac Soyer's *Employment Agency* and Katherine Schmidt's *Mr Broe Waits his Turn* (University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson).¹⁰² Gropper was represented by *The Last Cow* (see fig. 104), another Dust Bowl picture, and the young Jack Levine made his Whitney debut with *String Quartet* – which although not a 'social' subject demonstrated the arrival of a major new talent among the Expressionists and was bought by the Metropolitan Museum. The Whitney acquired Soyer's picture.¹⁰³

Nor was the success of social art confined to paintings. The exhibitions of sculptures, drawings and prints were well stocked with contributions by left-wingers in both 1938 and 1939, when Dehn, Gottlieb, Harriton, Schreiber,¹⁰⁴ Shahn and Turnbull were among the exhibitors of watercolours. In 1936 the museum added Schreiber's drawing *Second Balcony* to its collection, and in 1938 Shahn's powerful gouache *Scott's Run, West Virginia*. Although in 1936 'social' themes were definitely a minority in the sculpture show, Harkavy's *American Miner's Family* (fig. 109) and Werner's carving *Lynching* (fig. 110) were singled out for special attention by Benson in the *Magazine of Art*.¹⁰⁵ Sculptors continued to use the Whitney for political statements throughout the decade, however isolated their contributions. Werner showed a bronze *The Boy David (A Tribute to the Abraham Lincoln Battalion)* in 1938, and the following year a work suggestively titled 'Let My People Go'. In 1939 Goodelman was represented by *Cotton Picker* and Harkavy by *New England Farm Woman*. The exhibition, which ran from 24 January to 17 February,



109 Minna R. Harkavy, *American Miner's Family*, 1931, bronze, 27 × 31³/₄ × 24 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York.

took place in the month before the final collapse of the Spanish Republic, and the international portrait sculptor Jo Davidson pointedly exhibited a bronze of the Communist leader La Passionara. In 1940 he showed *France 1939*, while Goodelman showed the wood and iron *Kultur* and Werner a carving titled *Organizer*.¹⁰⁶

It would be a mistake to think that the work of the social sculptors was technically regressive. (Davidson should not be numbered among them.) Indeed, when the modernist critic James Johnson Sweeney reviewed the 1939 exhibition he criticised sculptors such as Archipenko, Noguchi and Zorach for showing exhibits that did not advance from the experiments of twenty years previous, at the same time as he found Harkavy's sculpture 'very successfully incorporates the portrait elements without compromising itself plastically in their favour.' In fact the work he preferred to any at the Whitney was David Smith's steel *Suspended Figure*, concurrently on show in an exhibition of the United American Sculptors at the New School for Social Research. No less than Harkavy's exhibit, this should be considered as social sculpture.¹⁰⁷



110 Nat Werner, *Lynching*, c. 1936, wood, 48 × 20 × 24 in., Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The problem with all the Whitney Museum's exhibitions in the later 1930s from the point of view of social art was that the very inclusiveness that allowed it to be shown and even purchased also reduced it to just one item in the panorama of American painting. Even powerful anti-fascist pictures such as Philip Guston's *Bombardment* (shown in 1938; private collection) and Blume's *Eternal City* (shown in 1940; see fig. 86) suffered from this effect.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the stylistic variety of social art weakened its cumulative impact when there was no common subject. Thus McCausland observed of the 1938 Painting Annual that while there was 'much competent and some excellent painting', 'the uncoordinated quality of the exhibition as a whole may be taken as ammunition by those who argue for "theme" exhibitions.'¹⁰⁹

Such responses suggest both the limits of social art's penetration of museum culture and the inability of its exponents and defenders to define a distinctive and coherent aesthetic that would distinguish it within the usual exhibition array. The aesthetic pluralism associated with the Democratic Front might work well enough symbolically in the artist-run collective shows, but it left no traces in the museum display where the formal

II The Popular Front and the Transition to 'People's Art'

kinship between paintings by Davis and those of Gorky, Graham or Browne (for example) was strikingly evident, while its author's political affiliations with the Social Realists were invisible. Moreover, museums themselves, with their plutocratic trustees, were suspect institutions, unaccountable to either artists or the public. To accept the conditions of the annual survey was to collude with the artist's servitude to bourgeois patronage, and it also reduced him or her to an individual competitor in the cultural marketplace.¹¹⁰

In survey exhibitions, the aesthetic of the easel painting and domestic sculpture prevailed. To show in them meant tacitly accepting a different aesthetic from that of New Deal public art (which had effectively superseded that of proletarianism), an aesthetic grounded in the individual apprehension of quality rather than in an ideological recognition that affirmed collective class experience and revolutionary will. For all the depth and sincerity of their political commitment, artists such as Evergood, Gwathmey and Toney – the stars of the Communist cultural movement in the postwar period – accepted this situation and key aspects of the aesthetic that went with it. In the absence of the New Deal art projects they had little choice, since galleries and museums were the only public spaces left to them.

Gropper wrote to Rockwell Kent in 1942 bemoaning the difficulties he found in selling his paintings to the 'rich bastards who are supposed to buy art', at the same time as insisting that he was still a 'People's artist'. To which Kent replied: 'The proper place for your pictures and mine, and everybody's, is not on gallery walls, but on bill boards and sides of buildings.'¹¹¹ This was effectively a plea for Gropper to concentrate his energies on cartoons and posters. However, the whole weight of the cultural value system militated against this tactic. To make an impression in the cultural field meant precisely to achieve recognition from galleries, patrons and museums. To balance this kind of success with more ephemeral work of the kind Kent recommended proved impossible for most artists, partly because increasingly the dominant value system excluded a fine artist from doing both. The artist who came closest to achieving this in the 1930s and 1940s was Ben Shahn, ironically not a Communist but a social democrat. While Shahn garnered considerable critical success in the short term, it was at the cost of his long-term reputation. But that was the result of later shifts in the cultural field that erected a nearly impermeable barrier between the political, popular and topical and the notion of quality – a development I shall have to consider later in my story.

- 59 Ben-Zion Weinman painted under his forename only. See Jewish Museum, *Painting a Place in America*, 161, and National Jewish Museum, *Ben-Zion: In Search of Oneself* (catalogue by Tabita Shalem and Ori Z. Soltes; Washington, D.C., 1997). His output of the 1930s included both Biblical and political themes, such as the 'abstraction' with collage from the *Daily Worker* he showed at an Artists' Union exhibition in 1934 – see Alexander, 'Without Benefit of Ritz', *NM* 13, no. 13 (25 December 1934): 27. A photograph of *Lynching* (now lost) is reproduced in Dervaux, 'The Ten', 16. I am grateful to Lillian Ben-Zion for her hospitality and for discussing her late husband's work with me.
- 60 Jacob Kainen, 'Our Expressionists', *AF* 3, no. 1 (February 1937): 14–15.
- 61 Wolff *et al.*, *Joseph Solman*, plates 38, 39, 42.
- 62 Solman, 'Chirico – Father of Surrealism'.
- 63 Joseph Solman to Jacob Kainen, 26 February 1939 (Jacob Kainen Papers, AAA, 565:171–2). Cf. Kainen on 'American Abstract Artists', *AF* 3, nos 3–4 (May 1937): 25–6. For an extremely negative view of the American Abstract Artists, see O. Frank, 'New Forces in American Art', *NM* 28, no. 3 (12 July 1938): 24.
- 64 Elizabeth Noble [McCausland], 'Social Intentions and Good Paintings', *NM* 26, no. 6 (1 February 1938): 30–31. Kainen had already appraised Tschacbasov in 'Painter of Savage Irony', *DW*, 20 January 1937. Jacob Kainen, 'Communist Party Branch Gets Noted Hunger Mural', *DW*, 14 May 1936.
- 65 Jewish Museum, *Painting a Place in America*, 197–8; letters from Tschacbasov, 'Editor's Letters', *AN* 44, no. 3 (15–31 March 1945): 4; *AN* 44, no. 6 (1–14 May 1945): 4; letter from Louis Schanker *et al.*, *AN* 44, no. 4 (1–14 April 1945): 4. According to Solman, his 'brashness and opportunism' alienated the others and he was frozen out – O'Connor (ed.), *New Deal Art Projects*, 125.
- 66 "'Art Front" Temporarily Silent', *MA* 31, no. 2 (February 1938): 119.
- 67 Monroe, 'Art Front', 19.
- 68 'The Newspaper for the Entire Family', *DW*, 12 December 1935. Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). On Americanism, see Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914–1960* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5–15.
- 69 Kainen was invited to write for the paper by Sender Garlin – Jacob Kainen, interview with the author, 8 October 1993.
- 70 Jacob Kainen, 'Abstract Art Exhibit Barely Comprehensible', *DW*, 25 February 1938.
- 71 Jacob Kainen, 'Development of a True Artist', *DW*, 9 July 1937.
- 72 Kainen, 'Abstract Art Exhibit Barely Comprehensible'. Kainen was emphatic that modern sculpture, even more than painting, required an engagement with the plastic qualities of the medium. See 'Proletarian Sculpture Show', *DW*, 13 April 1935. For the AAA, see George McNeil, 'American Abstractionists Venerable at Twenty', *AN* 55, no. 3 (May 1956): 34–5, 64–6; Lane and Larsen, *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America 1927–1944*, 15–44. For Smith and the CP, see Paula Wisotzki, 'Strategic Shifts: David Smith's China Medal Commission', *Oxford Art Journal* 17, no. 2 (1994): 63–77.
- 73 Jacob Kainen, 'Joe Jones' One-Man Exhibition', *DW*, 27 January 1936.
- 74 Jacob Kainen, 'Accomplished Craftsman and Younger Painter on View', *DW*, 5 March 1938; 'Gropper's Paintings', *DW*, 13 February 1936.
- 75 Jacob Kainen, 'Max Weber, Dean of American Modernists, on Exhibition', *DW*, 6 November 1937; 'The Ten', *DW*, 6 May 1937; 'Monster Shows of Picasso and Rouault Top Art Week' (on Ben-Zion; cf. on Jennings Tofel in this review), *DW*, 13 November 1937; 'Exhibition of New Paintings by "The Ten" Lacks Social Themes', *DW*, 21 May 1938; 'Friends of Jewish Culture Hold Fine Arts Exhibit', *DW*, 4 March 1938.
- 76 Jacob Kainen, 'The Capitalist Crisis in Art', *DW*, 3 December 1935; 'Revolutionary Surrealism', *DW*, 26 February 1936; 'Anti-Fascist Painting on Display by Guggenheim Winner', *DW*, 2 December 1937.
- 77 E.g., Jacob Kainen, "'Departure" Proves an Exciting and Revolutionary Painting' (on Max Beckmann), *DW*, 15 January 1938.
- 78 For these developments, see Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), chs 3–5.
- 79 E.g., Oliver F. Mason: 'Leading Artists Open Exhibitions This Week', *DW*, 24 October 1939; 'Honor Work of Eakins After Artist is Dead', *DW*, 7 November 1939. 'Artists Give Hoover "Relief" Cold Shoulder', *DW*, 23 January 1940; 'Cuss Words Take Place of Criticism in Art Magazine', *DW*, 6 February 1940.
- 80 'ACA Exhibit Hits Hearst Art Slanders', *DW*, 25 September 1939 (there is a copy of the catalogue in the Toney Papers, SU, Box 2, 'Memorabilia II'); Oliver F. Mason, 'Critics Walk Tight Rope on Picasso Show', *DW*, 21 November 1939; Ray King, 'The Incredible Picasso', *DW*, 2 December 1939.
- 81 Ray King: 'New Evergood Works Unique in US Art', *SW*, 31 March 1940; 'Barbaric Splendor in Tschacbasov Paintings', *DW*, 26 April 1940; 'Solman's Exhibit Puts Him In Front Ranks of Artists', *SW*, 3 November 1940. S. N., 'Direct Vigorous Approach In Jacob Kainen's Paintings', *DW*, 1 November 1940.
- 82 Ray King, "'New York Realists" Depict Social Theme', *DW*, 29 December 1939.
- 83 Frank, 'New Forces in American Art', 23. See also Margaret Lieberman, 'Two Art Exhibits', *NM* 31, no. 7 (9 May 1939): 31.
- 84 Stuart Davis, 'Jan. 27, 1937' (Davis Papers, HU).
- 85 Stuart Davis to George Biddle, 1 July 1940 (Biddle Papers, AAA P17:536); 'Jan. 10, 1938' (Davis Papers, HU).

6 Social Art on Display

- 1 Gerald M. Monroe, 'The American Artists Congress and the Invasion of Finland', *AAAJ* 15, no. 1 (1975): 14; Matthew

- Baigell and Julia Williams, 'The American Artists' Congress: Its Context and History', in *American Artists' Congress, Artists Against War and Fascism*, 5-7; Garnett McCoy, 'The Rise and Fall of the American Artists' Congress', *Prospects* 15 (1990): 286.
- 2 Ottanelli, *Communist Party of the United States*, ch. 3.
 - 3 Baron, 'Unpublished History of the ACA Gallery', 71-4; Baigell and Williams, 'The American Artists' Congress', 8-10.
 - 4 Cf. the complaint of sectarianism among the organisers, in 'Bill' [Groppe] to unidentified correspondent [Louis Lozowick?], nd (Lozowick Papers, AAA 1333:87).
 - 5 For a sampling of core support, see also the exhibitors in the ACA Gallery's fund-raiser *Exhibition, American Artists Congress* (New York, 10-23 November 1935; AAA D343:89-91).
 - 6 American Artists' Congress, *Artists Against War and Fascism*, 53. Ault joined the CP in 1935 and Billings was involved in a succession of front organisations into the 1940s. See Louise Ault, 'George Ault: A Biography' (MS), 27 (Artist's File, Smithsonian American Art Museum). A profile of Billings from 1946 describes him somewhat euphemistically as 'a militant liberal' - R. F. [Rosamund Frost], 'Billings: Machines & Life', *AN* 44, no. 20 (February 1946): 88. Both came from affluent backgrounds.
 - 7 'American Artists' Congress', *NM* 17, no. 1 (1 October 1935): 33 (107 signatories). Cf. 'A Call to Arms: The Artists' Congress', *MA* 28, no. 12 (December 1935): 752. The call also circulated as a handbill with 110 signatories. Significantly the 'Call' omitted two paragraphs from an earlier version drafted by Lozowick (Lozowick Papers, AAA 1333:88), which appealed to artists to align themselves with the militant working class as the only 'bulwark against Fascism', and to recognise that their interests lay with the Soviet Union where '[a]ll creative workers' were 'free from the deadening threat of economic insecurity and all art trends are encouraged.' (The latter claim was clearly contradicted by reports in the Communist press.)
- In the event, the AAC's main contacts were with the London-based Artists International Association, and the Mexican League of Revolutionary Artists and Writers. For the former, see Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, *AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933-1953* (catalogue by Lynda Morris and Robert Radford; Oxford, 1983), 16, 55. For the latter, see the reports of Orozco and Siqueiros, in *American Artists' Congress, Artists Against War and Fascism*, 203-6, 208-12.
- 8 American Artists' Congress, *Artists Against War and Fascism*, 85-6, 162-4, 92-7. (Gorman's paper was not in fact read - see 94n.) For Broun and Gorman, see Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 235, 226-7, 452 n. 10. For Biddle's very positive view of the Congress, see George Biddle to Edward Bruce, nd (AAA D82:953-5).
 - 9 'Report of the American Artists' Congress, to the Membership, by the editorial committee. March 15, 1936' (Lozowick Papers, AAA, unfiled); Joseph Freeman, 'The Battle for Art', *NM* 18, no. 9 (25 February 1936): 8; Stuart Davis to Rockwell Kent, 29 January 1936 (Kent Papers, AAA, unfiled, Box 1).
 - 10 The papers were edited by a committee of five chaired by Klein. Of these, Klein, Duroc and Lozowick were Communists or fellow-travellers, while the other two, E. M. Benson and Ralph Pearson, were probably independent socialists.
 - 11 American Artists' Congress, *Artists Against War and Fascism*, 78-84, 103-20. For Schapiro, see Andrew Hemingway, 'Meyer Schapiro and Marxism in the 1930s', *Oxford Art Journal* 17, no. 1 (1994): 13-29.
 - 12 Papers by Max Weber, Gilbert Wilson, John Groth, Harry Sternberg and Ralph M. Pearson - American Artists' Congress, *Artists Against War and Fascism*, 121-47.
 - 13 'The Policy of the American Artists' Congress, Inc.' (Rockwell Kent Papers, AAA, unfiled, Box 1, file 2).
 - 14 Circular letter from Philip Reisman, Fraction Secretary, 20 October 1938 (Lozowick Papers, AAA 1333:1029).
 - 15 'Report of the American Artists' Congress, to the Membership, by the Editorial Committee. March 15, 1936'; American Artists' Congress, Inc., 'Report to Membership, November 1, 1936' (Lozowick Papers, AAA, unfiled); 'News from the Branches', *American Artist* 2, no. 1 (spring 1938): 4-6. For the programme of the YAA, see AAA 429:1294.
 - 16 One of the main records of the Congress is its quarterly news bulletin *American Artist* (AAA RD343:93-100 and 4466:1273-86). For a fuller account of Congress activities, see Baigell and Williams, in *American Artists' Congress, Artists Against War and Fascism*, 24-8. Picasso's message is printed as 'Picasso and Spain', *AF* 3, no. 7 (October 1937): 11. For materials relating to the 1937 Congress, see Lozowick Papers, AAA 1335:680-720.
 - 17 Baron, 'Unpublished History of the ACA Gallery', 88.
 - 18 Kutulas, *Long War*, ch. 6.
 - 19 '17 Members Bolt Artists' Congress', *NYT*, 17 April 1940; 'Red Issue Splits Artists' Congress', *NYT*, 15 April 1940; 'Artists' Group Split by Row on War and Russia', *NYHT*, 15 April 1940; Oliver F. Mason, 'Disruption Will Fail in Artists' Congress', *DW*, 16 April 1940. For the executive board's response, see H. Glintenkamp, 'A Statement Clarifying the Policy of the American Artists' Congress', undated press release (AAA 141:1192); and unheaded mimeo of 27 April 1940 (Rockwell Kent Papers, AAA, unfiled, Box 1, AAC file).
 - 20 'Artists Congress Holds "Golden Gloves" Show', unattributed clipping and clipping from *Direction* 3, no. 5 (May 1940) (AAA 429:1408). Cf. Robert Coates, 'The Art Galleries', *New Yorker*, 18 February 1939, 64-5.
 - 21 Louis Lozowick to Ryan Lugins, 8 May 1938 (copy); Arthur Emptage to Branch Secretaries, 23 May 1938; 'To the Chairmen or Secretary of each Branch of the AAC', 1 October 1938; Ralph M. Pearson to Louis Lozowick, postcard, nd, and 2 June 1939 (Lozowick Papers, AAA 1333:1006, 1011, 1022-3, 1069-70). There is an extensive record of discussion around the problems of the AAC in the Minutes of the New York executive board meetings of 9 March 1939 (AAA 1335:751-7). For the financial crisis, see Minutes of the Membership Meeting of the New York Branch, 15 May 1939; and Minutes of the New York Executive Board, 25 May 1939 (AAA 1335:763-6).

- 22 American Artists' Congress, *Artists Against War and Fascism*, 277–8; Charmion von Wiegand, 'The Fine Arts', *NM* 24, no. 1 (29 June 1937): 29–30.
- 23 Alexander R. Stavenitz, *America Today: A Nationwide Exhibition of Contemporary American Graphic Art* (nd); American Artists' Congress, *America Today: A Book of 100 Prints* (New York: Equinox Co-operative Press, 1936); O. Frank, 'America in Art', *NM* 22, no. 9 (23 February 1937): 24–5.
- 24 Baron, 'Unpublished History of the ACA Gallery', 85. For the planning and budgeting of the third membership show, see minutes of New York Branch Executive Board Meeting, 22 December 1938 (Lozowick Papers, AAA 1335:743–5).
- 25 Jacob Kainen, 'Liberty-Loving Artists in Momentous Exhibition', *DW*, 24 April 1937; Jerome Klein, 'Artist Congress Members Exhibit "For Democracy"', *NYP*, 17 April 1937. Cf. Elizabeth McCausland: 'Artists Congress's Third Annual Show', *SSUR*, 12 February 1939; 'Fourth Annual Show by Artists' Congress', *SSUR*, 14 April 1940.
- 26 Emily Genauer, 'Artists' Show', *NYWT*, 17 April 1937.
- 27 For Bolotowsky, Browne, Drewes and Vytlačil, see Lane and Larsen (ed.), *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America*, 51–5, 56–8, 74–5, 231–2.
- 28 Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Stuart Davis: American Painter*, 224–5.
- 29 The term 'geniality' is Genauer's. For another fairly favourable review from a mainstream critic, see Edward Alden Jewell, 'American Artists Congress', *NYT*, 25 April 1937.
- 30 Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 9 March 1939 (Lozowick Papers, AAA 1335:755).
- 31 'Artists Join the Artists Union' (Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA D343:442); 'Why An Artists Union' (D343:446–9); 'Baltimore and Washington Artists' Unions', *Washington Star*, 5 February 1939.
- 32 'Artists Union in Opening of New Quarters Exhibit', *DW*, 24 March 1934; 'Between Ourselves', *NM* 14, no. 10 (5 March 1935): 30; Stephen Alexander, 'Art', *NM* 15, no. 1 (2 April 1935); Stephen Alexander, 'Current Art', *NM* 16, no. 5 (30 July 1935): 27; 'Current Art', *NM* (12 November 1935): 30; Jacob Kainen, 'PWA Artists' Exhibit Is Best Answer to Hearst's Hobohemian Slander', *DW*, 3 October 1935.
- 33 E. M. Benson, 'The Artists' Union Hits a New High', *MA* 29, no. 2 (February 1936): 113–14. See also Charles Humboldt, 'The Union Show', *AF* 2, no. 3 (February 1936): 9; Jacob Kainen, 'Artists' Union Group Show', *DW*, 2 January 1936. Cf. the exhibition held in the rooms of the *Daily Worker* chorus, reported in 'del', 'A Significant Art Show', *DW*, 12 December 1934.
- 34 Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, *Artists' Union National Exhibition*, 4–30 October 1938 (my thanks to the Springfield Museums for supplying me with a copy of this). Five works from the show are illustrated in 'Living Art in a Museum', *NM* 29, no. 4 (18 October 1938): 16.
- 35 Membership exhibitions held in 1940 and 1941 were essentially youth shows. ACA Gallery and Hudson Walker Gallery, 2 *Gallery Exhibit: A Jury Selected Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures, and Prints by Members of United American Artists* (27 May–15 June, 1940); ACA Gallery, *United American Artists Membership Exhibition* (16–29 November 1941) (Anthony Toney Papers, su, Box 2).
- 36 'Meritorious Work in Show by Local 60', *AN* 38, no. 36 (8 June 1940): 12; Ray King, 'United American Artists on Show', *DW*, 3 June 1940; Elizabeth McCausland, 'Militant Group on Parade, Union Artists Show in Three Galleries', *SSUR*, 26 May 1940. Five works from the exhibition are illustrated in *NM* 35, no. 11 (4 June 1940): 29.
- 37 'The Artists Again', *NM* 19, no. 7 (12 May 1936): 4; Russell T. Limbach, 'Artists' Union Convention', *NM* 19, no. 8 (19 May 1936): 28; Meyer Schapiro, 'Public Use of Art', *AF* 2, no. 10 (November 1936): 4–6.
- 38 Helen Harrison, 'Subway Art and the Public Use of Arts Committee', *AAAJ* 21, no. 2 (1981): 4; Clarence Weinstock [Charles Humboldt], 'Public Art in Practice', *AF* 2, no. 11 (December 1936): 8–10; Robert Godsoe, 'A Project for the People', *AF* 3, nos 3–4 (May 1937): 10–11. Suggestions were also promised by the Cafeteria Workers', Pharmacists', Amalgamated Clothing Workers', Musicians', and Marine Firemen and Oilworkers' Unions. See 'Report of the Public Use of Art Committee (Harry Gottlieb Papers, AAA D343: 1243). See also 'A Written Request from the Pullman Porters Union' (1127) and 'Suggestions for Art Subjects for Pullman Porters' (1010).
- 39 Louise Mitchell, 'Art to Go Underground in New York', *DW*, 10 February 1938; 'Transport Union Approves Art for New York Subway Stations', *DW*, 10 April 1938.
- 40 Elizabeth Olds, 'Explaining Subway Art', *NYT*, 20 January 1938.
- 41 Ida Abelman, 'My Father Reminisces', *AF* 3, nos 3–4 (April–May 1937): 11; Marcia Minor, 'Artistic Prints by Machinery', *DW*, 1 December 1938. Cf. 'Two and United Artists Join in Mass Art Movement', *DW*, 13 July 1939. Minna Bromberg, Ida Abelman's granddaughter, has confirmed to me that Abelman was a CP member.
- 42 *AF* 2, no. 3 (February 1936): 11; *AF* 2, no. 5 (April 1936): 16; Ruth Allen, 'New School of Art', *DW*, 14 February 1936. See also Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, 'The American Artists School: Radical Heritage and Social Content Art', *AAAJ* 26, no. 4 (1986): 17–23.
- 43 Circular letter on paper of American Artists School, signed Walter Quirt, 9 December 1936 (Anton Refregier Papers, AAA, unfiled, Box 8).
- 44 *American Artists School, September 21, 1936–June 12, 1937* (AAA 429:1128–31); Philip Evergood, 'Building a New Art School', *AF* 3, no. 3 (April 1937): 21.
- 45 *American Artists School, September 21, 1936–June 12, 1937*; 'Through Social Research', *MA* 29, no. 10 (October 1936): 758, 763.
- 46 E.g., 'Sights and Sounds', *NM* 21, no. 13 (22 December 1936): 29; 'Sights and Sounds', *NM* 25, no. 11 (7 December 1937): 27; 'American Artists School Gallery', *NM* 27, no. 1 (29 March 1938): 31; 'Between Ourselves', *NM* 29, no. 4 (18 October 1938): 2; Ray King, 'American Artists School Faculty Puts on Group Show', *DW*, 14 September 1939.

- 47 'Between Ourselves', *NM* 23, no. 2 (6 April 1937): 2; Jacob Kainen, 'The Social Scene', *DW*, 7 April 1937.
- 48 For the portfolios, see Marquardt, 'The American Artists School', 19.
- 49 Ernest Brace, 'An American Group, Inc.', *MA* 31, no. 5 (May 1938): 271–5; 'Ninth Anniversary Exhibit by American Artist Group' (*sic*), *DW*, 18 September 1939; 'Sixty Artists Exhibit Work in Anniversary', *DW*, 9 September 1940; Oliver F. Mason, '10 Exhibits Open New Art Season', *DW*, 17 September 1940.
- 50 'Constitution and By-Laws of An American Group, Inc., November 1941', An American Group, Inc., 'Report of Activities, December 6th 1939' (mimeo; Lozowick Papers, AAA, unfiled, file 'Organizations #1').
- 51 There was certainly concern about the overlap between the Group and the AAC. See Minutes of New York Branch Executive Board Meeting, 22 December 1938 (AAA 1335:743–5).
- 52 Kainen remarked that several of the exhibits had been shown before, 'some of them quite often', in 'The American Group Annual', *DW*, 26 April 1937.
- 53 'Waterfront Art', *DW*, 6 December 1935; Jacob Kainen, 'Waterfront Art Show', *DW*, 19 December 1935; Leonard Sparks, 'Waterfront Art Show', *NM* 22, no. 8 (16 February 1937): 17. Cf. 'Longshoremen are Critics at Waterfront Art Exhibit', *DW*, 16 February 1937.
- 54 Louis Adamic, *My America, 1928–1938* (New York & London: Harper, 1938), 373–7. The CP was more successful among seamen than among longshoremen in New York, although there were nuclei in some docks. See Max Steinberg, 'Problems of Party Growth in the New York District', *The Communist* 15, no. 7 (July 1936): 648–9.
- 55 Sparks, 'Waterfront Art Show'. Sparks refers to Davis's 'Coffee Pot', but he was probably talking about an exhibit at the 1935 show, since Davis showed a watercolour titled *Waterfront Demonstration* in 1937.
- 56 Taylor, *Philip Evergood*, 87–9. *North River Jungle* is not listed in the catalogue, but Evergood noted on his own copy that it was included (AAA 429:1158).
- 57 Patricia Hills, *Alice Neel* (New York: Abrams, 1983), 63–4; Pamela Allara, *Pictures of People: Alice Neel's American Portrait Gallery* (Hanover, N.H., & London: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 83–5. For Whalen, see Vernon L. Pedersen, *The Communist Party in Maryland, 1919–57* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 94, 96–101, 119, 121; and the vivid recollection in I. Duke Avnet, 'Pat Whalen', *Phylon* 12, no. 3 (September 1951), 249–54. Whalen was killed in the Pacific in June 1942. A Liberty Ship was named after him. The presence of newsprint under the painted *Daily Worker* raises the possibility the picture was originally exhibited with a collage element.
- 58 'Marine Art', *DW*, 28 February 1937. The Marine Workers' Committee divided the proceeds with the artists.
- 59 Federal Writers' Project, *New York Panorama: A Companion to the WPA Guide to New York City* (1938; New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), ch. 22.
- 60 Sidney Hill, 'Homes for the One-Third', *NM* 27, no. 5 (26 April 1938): 19–20; Lydia Paul, 'Roofs for Forty Millions – An Exhibition on Housing', *DW*, 16 April 1938. Hill received a prize in the Palace of the Soviets Competition in 1932 and was in the USSR in 1934. He published several articles in *New Masses* and International Publishers also issued a pamphlet by him on *Housing Under Capitalism*. See also: 'The Housing Question – 1937', *The Communist* 16, no. 6 (June 1937): 555–68.
- 61 Elizabeth Noble [McCausland], 'Housing Exhibit and Harriton's Art', *NM* 27, no. 4 (19 April 1938): 26. See also 'Roofs for 40 Million', *NM* 27, no. 5 (26 April 1938): 17–18; 'Roofs for Forty Million', *DW*, 19 April 1938.
- 62 See e.g. Charmion von Wiegand, 'The Fine Arts', *NM* 24, no. 5 (27 July 1937): 29–30; Elizabeth Noble [McCausland], '"We Like America"', *NM* 29, no. 9 (22 November 1938): 27.
- 63 The 1939 exhibition is described as the seventh such annual in reviews by Jerome Klein (*NYP*, 14 January 1939) and Henry McBride (*NYS*, 21 January 1939). It consisted of only twenty-seven works. See the catalogue in the Evergood Papers, AAA 429:1310.
- 64 ACA Gallery, 1938: *Dedicated to the New Deal*, 15 August – 11 September 1938; Jacob Kainen, 'ACA Show on New Deal', *DW*, 5 September 1938.
- 65 M. U., 'Artists Toying with New Deal', *NYS*, 20 August 1938.
- 66 Gottlieb's work had again been produced earlier – see Charles Edward Smith, *The Bookplate* 1, no. 1 (November 1938) (Evergood Papers, AAA 429:1273).
- 67 Baron, 'Unpublished History of the ACA Gallery', 34–6; E. M. Benson, 'Two Proletarian Artists: Joe Jones and Gropper', *MA* 29, no. 3 (March 1936): 188–9; 'Joe Jones Paints Wheat', *NYT*, 26 January 1936.
- 68 'Joe Jones–Guggenheim Fellow', *SLPD*, 30 March 1937; Jacob Kainen, 'Murals of Joe Jones', *DW*, 2 February 1936; 'Writers and Artists Aid Browder, Ford', *DW*, 2 September 1936.
- 69 Carlyle Burrows, 'Notes and Comment on Events in Art', *NYHT*, 31 October, 1937; Emily Genauer, 'Joe Jones Takes Rank with the Masters', *NYHT*, nd, 1937 (Green Papers, MHS, Box 4); ACA Gallery, *Paintings by Joe Jones*, (New York, 24 October – 13 November 1937); Jacob Kainen, 'Joe Jones on Show at ACA Galleries', *DW*, 3 November 1937.
- 70 Jones's friend Turnbull, who also produced murals for the '9-0-5' liquor store chain, included a hammer and sickle in one of his – pointed out by Frank Peters, '"9-0-5 Murals" Find a Second Beertown Home', *SLPD*, 15 February 1987.
- 71 MacLeish, 'US Art 1935', 69.
- 72 'Metropolitan Buys Joe Jones Painting', *SLPD*, 10 May 1937; John Selby, 'Joe Jones, Artist, Began as a House Painter'. For an instance of Jones's continuing engagement, see his exchange with Benton: 'To Thomas Benton', *NM* 28, no. 3 (12 July 1938): 22; 'Two Artists', *NM* 28, no. 6 (2 August 1938): 21.
- 73 Joe Jones to Elizabeth Green, 18 March 1938 (Green Papers, MHS, Box 4).
- 74 See e.g. B. A. Botkin, 'Regionalism: Cult or Culture?', *Midwest – A Review* 1, no. 1 (November 1936): 4, 32. For

- Botkin, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 132–4; and Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal*, 263, 265, 269–73, 275–8.
- 75 ACA Gallery, *Recent Paintings: Joe Jones* (New York, 12 November–2 December, 1939); ACA Gallery, *Joe Jones* (New York, 10–30 November, 1940). For reviews, see Ray King, 'Mr Jones Goes to Town', *DW*, 17 November 1939; Oliver F. Mason, '20 New Canvases by Joe Jones at ACA', *DW*, 15 November 1940; Ray King, 'New Joe Jones Exhibition a Challenge to Status Quo', *DW*, 20 November 1940.
- 76 ACA Gallery, *Gropper 1940* (New York, 1940), repr. in Shapiro, *Social Realism*, 206–9. For Jones's closeness to Gropper at this time, see J[ames] D[ugan], 'Gropper's Harvest', *NM* 34, no. 11 (5 March 1940): 30.
- 77 ACA Galleries, *Gropper* (New York, 1938).
- 78 Oliver F. Mason, '10,000 Visit Gropper Exhibit', *DW*, 5 March 1940; 'To Bill Gropper from his Friends, December 4, 1944' (Gropper Papers, su).
- 79 August L. Freundlich, *William Gropper: Retrospective* (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press in conjunction with Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, University of Miami, 1968) refers to an exhibition at the Dinghy Gallery and two at the ACA in this year (16–17). Lewis Mumford, 'Satirist into Painter', *NY* (27 March 1937): 41–3; Ernest Brace, 'William Gropper', *MA* 30, no. 8 (August 1937): 467–71.
- 80 Dugan, 'Gropper's Harvest'.
- 81 Harold Rosenberg, 'The Wit of William Gropper', *AF* 2, no. 3 (March 1936): 7–8.
- 82 Stephen Alexander, 'The Art of William Gropper', *NM* 26, no. 13 (22 March 1938): 22. Cf. E. M. Benson, 'Two Proletarian Artists: Joe Jones and Gropper', 189; Jacob Kainen, 'The Magic of William Gropper', *DW*, 15 March 1937.
- 83 *The Defenders* was bought by Vincent Price from the 1937 exhibition.
- 84 Lozowick in ACA Gallery, *Paintings by William Gropper* (New York, 7–21 March 1937); Milton Brown, 'William Gropper', *P* 13, no. 4 (April 1941): 156. Cf. Ray King, 'Gropper Exhibit is a "Must" for Everyone', *DW*, 23 February 1940.
- 85 ACA Gallery, *20 Years Evergood* (New York, 1946). This major catalogue contains a useful chronology, together with lists of writings, talks and broadcasts, and reviews. His friend McCausland complained about his 'anti-intellectualism' in a letter to Oliver Larkin, 8 February 1944 (copy; McCausland Papers, AAA, unfiled).
- 86 Philip Evergood, 'Sure I'm a Social Painter', *MA* 36, no. 7 (November 1943): 258–9; Beth McHenry, 'Evergood's Chosen Audience: The American Working Class', *DW*, 3 May 1946; Elizabeth McCausland, 'The Plastic Organization of Philip Evergood', *P* 11, no. 3 (March 1939): 19–21.
- 87 E.g., 'Current in Other Galleries', *NYS*, 26 February 1938; 'Art and Artists of Today', *Time* 31, no. 10 (7 March 1938): 39. Cf. Jacob Kainen, 'Philip Evergood Holds One-Man Show at ACA', *DW*, 2 March 1938.
- 88 Philip Evergood, 'Social Art Today: II', *American Contemporary Art* 1, no. 10 (December 1944): 4–8.
- 89 The importance Evergood attached to this work is suggested by the fact he showed it at the Carnegie International in 1938 and again at the Saint Louis Annual in 1939.
- 90 'There is a Difference in Bums' (AAA D304:315), quoted in Taylor, *Philip Evergood*, 91. See also Evergood to Herman Baron, 26 July 1954 (D304:91).
- 91 E.g., Edward Alden Jewell, 'Philip Evergood Shows Paintings', *NYT*, 27 March 1940; Melville Upton, 'Wide Variety in Half a Score of Art Exhibitions', *NYS*, 30 March 1940.
- 92 Jerome Klein, 'Evergood's Stand', *NYP*, 30 March 1940. Both paintings were based on observed experience – see Baur, *Philip Evergood*, 56–7, 77–8.
- 93 George Robbins, 'Chicago's Memorial Day Massacre', *NM* 23, no. 12 (15 June 1937): 11–12; Milton, *The Politics of U.S. Labor*, 108; Patricia Hills, 'Evergood's American Tragedy: The Poetics of Ugliness, the Politics of Anger', *Arts* 54 (February 1980): 138–42.
- 94 Taylor, *Philip Evergood*, 172, 174; Meyer Levin, *Citizens* (New York: Viking Press, 1940); Morris Neuwirth, '219', *AF* 2, no. 12 (January 1937): 4. A photograph with a fallen African American figure which provided one of Evergood's motifs was reproduced in the *Daily Worker* on both 1 and 19 June 1937.
- 95 Emily Genauer, 'Evergood Works Among New Displays', *NYWT*, 30 March 1940; Elizabeth McCausland, 'Picturing the People: Philip Evergood Shows his Recent Paintings', *SSUR*, 24 March 1940; Elizabeth McCausland, 'Exhibitions in New York', *P* 12, no. 4 (April 1940): 34, 36–7; Jewell, 'Philip Evergood Shows Paintings'; Baur, *Philip Evergood*, 52, 54.
- 96 Oliver F. Mason, 'Evergood Exhibit at the ACA Gallery', *DW* 26 March 1940; Roy King, 'New Evergood Works Unique in U.S. Art', *DW*, 31 March 1940.
- 97 Evergood himself emphasised this aspect – see Taylor, *Philip Evergood*, 172. The event was also the subject of a painting by Harriton, *Memorial Day, Chicago 1937*, shown at the ACA Gallery's *Paintings by 17 Artists on Social Themes* in January 1939 (no. 10); there is a photograph of it in a scrapbook in the Harriton Papers, Box 1 (su).
- 98 Evergood, 'Social Art Today: II', 7.
- 99 Cadmus showed *Venus and Adonis* (Forbes Magazine Collection, New York) in which Adonis, a bronzed youth in trunks, is restrained by a corpulent suburbanite as he leaves to play tennis. Cadmus's moral satire centred on a critique of social mores grounded in a generalised revulsion from lust, rather than a model of political propaganda. See Cadmus's 1937 'Credo', in Whitney Museum of American Art, *Paul Cadmus: The Sailor Trilogy* (New York, 1996), np. Cadmus's art was so widely unpopular that it posed no challenge to Social Realism, and was generally ignored by the left.
- 100 Jerome Klein, 'Art Comment', *NYP*, 14 November 1936. A change was also noted by F. A. Whiting, Jr, 'Two Versions of American Art, Chicago and Manhattan', *MA* 29, no. 12 (December 1936): 819.
- 101 For Ribak, see Jewish Museum, *Painting a Place in America*, 187–8. Ribak made his first contribution to *New Masses* in

- July 1926, and was a contributing editor from 1930 to 1933.
- 102 For the last work, see Boston Museum & Bread and Roses, *Social Concern and Urban Realism*, 79.
- 103 Kainen praised the show as reflecting a 'new policy' of including new talents, but the works he singled out were Davis's *Composition* and Tschachbasov's *Clinic*: 'Whitney Museum Opens Doors to Varied Artists', *DW*, 20 November 1937.
- 104 For Schreiber, see 'Panorama of America', *NM* 33, no. 11 (5 December 1939): 17.
- 105 E. M. Benson, 'The Whitney Sweepstakes', *MA* 29, no. 3 (March 1936): 188. Both were also praised in 'Whitney Museum Exhibition', *DW*, 8 February 1936.
- 106 For Davidson and the Spanish Republic, see Jo Davidson, *Between Sittings: An Informal Autobiography of Jo Davidson* (New York: Dial Press, 1951), 307-16. The leftists Gross, Glickman and Ahron Ben-Shmuel also showed in these years, but it is not clear that their exhibits had any clear political references.
- 107 James Johnson Sweeney, 'Exhibitions in New York', *P* 11, no. 2 (February 1939): 19-22; 'United Sculptors', *NM* 30, no. 3 (10 January 1939): 19.
- 108 See Boston Museum & Bread and Roses, *Social Concern and Urban Realism*, 54-5; Isidor Schneider, 'A Notable Anti-Fascist Painting', *IL* no. 1 (January 1938): 99-102; Fort, 'American Social Surrealism', 15-16.
- 109 Elizabeth Noble [McCausland], 'Progressive Sculptors', *NM* 29, no. 8 (15 November 1938): 31.
- 110 For the critique of museums, see esp. James Swanson, 'J. P. Morgan, Art Racketeer', *NM* 18, no. 6 (4 February 1936): 19-20; Jacob Kainen, 'Mellon Chisels into Art Control', *DW*, 8 March 1937; Clarence Weinstock [Charles Humboldt], 'The Frick Formula', *AF* 2, no. 3 (February 1936): 10-11; and Stuart Davis, in O'Connor (ed.), *Art for the Millions*, 122n. However, the Whitney was seen as a liberal institution, and its support of artists on the rental issue earned it respect.
- 111 William Gropper to Rockwell Kent, 30 April 1942; Rockwell Kent to William Gropper, 2 May 1942 (copy; Kent Papers, AAA, unfiled, Box 24).
- Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1968* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 3.
- 5 Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 228-31; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 155-8, Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal*, ch. 8. Flanagan's testimony is reprinted in Bentley (ed.), *Thirty Years of Treason*, 6-47. For earlier accusations of this type, see Ralph M. Easley of the National Civic Federation to President Franklin Roosevelt, 16 July 1937 (AAA DC89:721-6). For a deeply hostile retrospect of the Workers Alliance from the Cleveland FAP director, see Clarence Holbrook Carter, 'I Paint as I Please', *MA* 38, no. 2 (February 1945): 47.
- 6 Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 297-304; Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 88-95.
- 7 Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 231-43; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 158-62.
- 8 Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 260-64; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 163-6; Gerald M. Monroe, 'Mural Burning by the New York City WPA', *AAAJ* 16, no. 3 (1976): 8-11. The threat to Henkel's mural made the front page of the *Daily Worker* (9 July 1940), and the UAA's campaign against Somervell's 'Hitler Technique' was reported extensively in the paper between early July and early September. See also 'Vandals on WPA', *NM* 36, no. 5 (23 July 1940): 17. Somervell's obsession with Communists on the projects went back at least to early 1937: see Memorandum from Lawrence Morris to Ellen Woodward, 4 March 1937 (AAA DC89:422-3).
- 9 'Election Campaign Outline for 1936', *The Communist* 15, no. 9 (September 1936): 822. For the CP campaign for unemployment insurance, see Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 283-9.
- 10 Charles E. Dexter, 'The Federal Arts Projects Face an Uncertain Future', *DW*, 18 November 1936; 'Roosevelt's WPA Double Cross', *DW*, 27 January 1937; Harrison George, 'No American Shall Starve', *SW*, 2 May 1937.
- 11 'Not by Bread Alone', *NM* 22, no. 1 (29 December 1936): 20; Theodore Draper, 'Roosevelt and the WPA', *NM* 21, no. 13 (22 December 1936): 14-16; 'The Pink Blight', *NM* 24, no. 2 (6 July 1937): 8; 'Art, The WPA Record', *DW*, 15 June 1937.
- 12 'Social Insurance and the Artist', *AF* 1, no. 2 (January 1935): 3; 'For a Permanent Art Project', *AF* 1, no. 1 (November 1934): 3; 'Artists' Union Federal Art Bill', *AF* 1, no. 2 (January 1935): 2.
- 13 'The 40,000 Lay-off Threat', *AF* 2, no. 5 (April 1936): 3-4; 'For a Farmer-Labor Party', *AF* 2, no. 6 (May 1936): 6.
- 14 Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 101-5; Boris Gorelick, 'The Artist Begins to Fight', *AF* 2, no. 12 (January 1937): 5-6.
- 15 'The Union Applies for an AFL Charter', *AF* 1, no. 6 (July 1935): 2; 'For a Permanent Art Project', *AF* 2, no. 3 (February 1936): 3; see also 'July 1st 1936', in the same issue (3-4). Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 53-7.
- 16 'The Artists' Unions: Builders of a Democratic Culture', *AF* 3, nos 3-4 (May 1937): 3.
- 17 'The Public Use of Art', and JS [Joseph Solman?], 'Exhibitions', *AF* 2, no. 4 (March 1936): 14-15; Elizabeth

7 Communist Artists and the New Deal (2)

- 1 Barbara Blumberg, *The New Deal and the Unemployed: The View from New York City* (Cranbury, N.J., & London: Associated University Presses, 1979), 221-8, 300.
- 2 Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 86-94, 101-8; McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 96-102; McMahon in O'Connor (ed.), *New Deal Arts Project*, 57. Jacob Kainen describes the process of re-hiring in his memoir of the Graphic Arts Division, *ibid.*, 164.
- 3 McKinzie, *New Deal for Artists*, 151-5.
- 4 Thomas quoted in Blumberg, *New Deal and the Unemployed*, 228; Dies quoted in Eric Bentley (ed.), *Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from the Hearings of the House*