

Art Front

Gerald M. Monroe

During the bleak days of the Great Depression the Roosevelt Administration resorted to large-scale work-relief projects as a partial response to the severe economic crisis. A traumatized Congress gave the president a relatively free hand to innovate programs in the hope that he might turn the economy around and relieve the suffering of the unemployed. One of the more innovative—and controversial—programs was massive employment of artists by the government. In an effort to gain and expand government patronage, a group of militant artists formed a trade union of painters, sculptors, and print-makers, many of whom were close to or influenced by the Communist Party. The dynamic, colorful Artists Union soon became known for its aggressive tactics—engaging in mass picketing, strikes, and sit-ins. For three years, the union published *Art Front*, probably the liveliest art periodical of the time.

In the fall of 1934, Hugo Gellert invited Herman Baron, who exhibited many of the left-wing artists in his American Contemporary Artists gallery, to join the executive board of the Artists Committee of Action, a loose confederation of artists organized to protest the destruction of the Diego Rivera mural at Rockefeller Center which had included a portrait of Lenin. Subsequent to the demonstration, the artists decided to continue working as a group to agitate for a municipally-supported but artist-operated gallery. Gellert, well known as a left-wing artist, was elected chairman, Lionel Reiss became secretary, and Zoltan Hecht was chosen as treasurer. It was a more or less “paper” organization controlled by Gellert who was able to attract large numbers of artists to demonstrations and to solicit the support of distinguished public figures. Baron, a former

writer and editor of trade magazines, published an art bulletin under the aegis of his gallery. He offered Gellert the use of the bulletin; Gellert suggested to the executive board of the Artists Union that an official journal would be useful to both organizations—the board agreed.

The first item of business at the meeting was the selection of a name for the proposed publication. After several unsuccessful proposals the word “front” seemed to be in the air. The Russians had a literary magazine called *On Guard*, and Mayakovsky edited a magazine called *Left Front*. New York artists were more likely to be familiar with the organ of the Chicago Reed Club, also known as *Left Front* and published in 1933 and 1934. Herb Kruckman suggested *Art Front* as the title and it was immediately adopted. An editorial committee was formed with Baron as managing editor, and the first issue was planned to appear in time to publicize a mass demonstration to be held at City Hall on October 27, 1934. The readers of *Art Front* were assured it would be unlike any other art magazine:

Without one exception, however, these periodicals support outworn economic concepts as a basis for the support of art which victimize and destroy art. The urgent need for a publication which speaks for the artist, battles for his economic security and guides him in his artistic efforts is self-evident.¹

The magazine sold for five cents a copy with a yearly subscription rate of sixty cents. The intention clearly was to publish monthly, but the first volume of seven issues appeared intermittently over a period of thirteen months (November 1934, and January, February, April, May, July, and November 1935), printed in an awkward, oversize eleven-by-sixteen-inch format, each issue consisting of eight pages. The generous size of the magazine was appropriate for street sales during demonstrations; the posterlike covers were broadly designed and highly visible. The February 1935 issue had several photographs of a street demonstration in which members of the Artists Union can be seen hawking *Art Front*.

During the founding of the magazine, tensions had developed between the Artists Committee of Action, with its primarily professional goals, and the Artists Union, with its primarily economic goals. The first issue was almost exclusively devoted to promoting the programs of both groups, but there was heated debate about the eventual thrust of the magazine as well as the ability of the two organizations to work together. The resolution of these problems, resolved with the assistance of V. J. Jerome,

a Communist functionary with responsibility in cultural matters, placed the magazine under the direct control of the union, and the split editorial committee was abandoned in favor of a single editorial board. The April 1935 issue declared that *Art Front* was the “official publication of the Artists Union.” The combined logos of the Artists Committee of Action and the Artists Union continued to appear on the masthead until December 1936, although the magazine had been truly cosponsored only for the first two issues.

The demise of the Artists Committee of Action did not completely remove conflicting attitudes regarding the proper role for the publication. The editorial board was in agreement on the need to stress the economic goals of the union, to publicize grievances, and to report activities related to the struggle for economic and professional security. The board disdained “those arty magazines which normally ignore anything outside the gallery world.”² Conflicts arose pertaining to the extent art essays, critiques, and reviews would be included. Although the social realists were in the vast majority, the entire range of art styles existed within the rank and file and the leadership. The leaders, highly motivated by their political involvement, were generally committed to the Marxist doctrine of “art as propaganda.” They believed the official publication of the union had a responsibility to guide its members in their role as revolutionary artists, and there was always pressure within the editorial board to interpret that role in the narrowest social-realist sense. The editors and writers of *Art Front* were committed to social change and concerned about the correct role of art and the artist in a changing society; much of the vitality of this spunky little magazine derived from the struggle of a minority of the editors to extend the range of revolutionary art beyond propaganda.

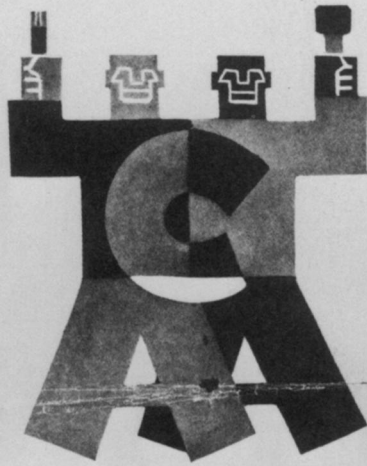
In the Artists Union section of the first issue of *Art Front*, considerable space was devoted to a proposal for a permanent federal art project; it was to remain a major editorial theme and it was a rare issue that did not have an editorial or an article concerning the plan.

Stuart Davis functioned as editor-in-chief for the second through the tenth issue, although the masthead did not indicate an editorial board until the seventh issue, or an editor-in-chief until the eighth issue. Davis was able to maintain a close personal relationship with Hugo Gellert and the social realists on the board, while encouraging a more open attitude toward art content in the magazine. He asked John Graham to review *Eight Modes of Modern Painting* at the Julien Levy Gallery and Davis, himself,

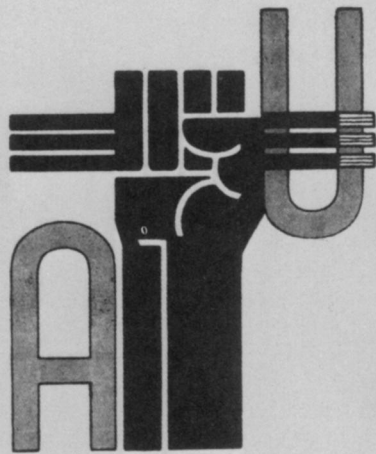
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ART FRONT

NOVEMBER 1934



ARTISTS COMMITTEE OF ACTION



ARTISTS UNION

5¢

reviewed favorably the painting by Salvador Dali at the same gallery.

Clarence Weinstock, writer, board member, and later managing editor, joined *Art Front* when the second issue was being prepared. Weinstock, an expatriate art student in Paris, gave up his studies for a life of intellectual bohemianism, and became a Marxist literary and art critic. A gifted writer and a devout Communist, he became editor of *Masses and Mainstream* after World War II, using the name Charles Humbolet. On October 27, 1934, the day of the artists' large demonstration at City Hall, Weinstock returned to the United States. Strolling the streets of lower Manhattan, he wandered into the demonstration, met some of the artists he had known in Europe, and was swept into the activities of the day. Learning about *Art Front*, he immediately volunteered to help and soon became the magazine's most active contributor.

Probably no one enjoyed working on *Art Front* as much as Weinstock; he was completely devoted to it. Nothing delighted him more than crossing literary swords with other critics and he maintained a voluminous correspondence with Marxist critics in this country and in Europe, many of whom were induced by him to contribute articles to the magazine. In the February issue of *Art Front*, Weinstock attacked Stuart Davis' favorable review of Dali, charging the Surrealist with being merely a "sophisticated illustrator." Dali's paintings, according to Weinstock, were in the reactionary tradition that was forced to psychological portrayal because "the facts of the world made it ashamed to show its face on any other plane."³ In the same issue, Jerome Klein, who regularly wrote art criticism for the *New York Post*, also attacked Dali and the Surrealists, who, being "neurotically incapable of giving their effort a point of leverage in the real world, have dodged the issue of revolutionary art."⁴

The art style that the editors could agree upon was the so-called American Scene painting; they detested it. When *Time* magazine declared that the works of Thomas Benton, Grant Wood, Charles Burchfield, Reginald Marsh, John Stewart Curry, and other American Scene painters were "destined to turn the tide of artistic taste in the United States,"⁵ *Art Front* launched an attack against the movement. Stuart Davis charged that Benton's "gross caricature of Negroes" was a "third-rate vaudeville character cliché with the humor omitted" and, commenting on the Benton self-portrait

on *Time*'s cover, Davis cruelly added, "We must at least give him credit for not making any exception in his general underestimation of the human race."⁶ As for John Stewart Curry, Davis asks, "How can a man . . . who willfully or through ignorance ignores the discoveries of Monet, Seurat, Cezanne and Picasso and proceeds as though painting were a jolly lark for amateurs to be exhibited in county fairs . . . be considered an asset to American art?"⁷

In the same issue, Moses Soyer wrote a review of his own exhibition at Klee-mann's Galleries. Soyer, a member of the Artists Union, used the article to endorse the "important, ever-growing group of artists that has chosen the American scene for its theme." Soyer had no difficulty denouncing "Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism and all the other artificial schools of painting," but he is apologetic about the "lack of class consciousness on the part of Moses Soyer," which he attributes to "an uncertainty in his own powers, an almost unconscious reluctance to tackle such serious themes."⁸

Curry's reply in the April issue of *Art Front* politely defended his work, inferring that social realist and American Scene concepts were not so far apart, and drawing a parallel between the "viciousness of life" portrayed by Jacob Burck, an avowed Communist, and the "subtle characterization" of Thomas Benton.⁹

Benton, on the other hand, bluntly declared that Davis' motives were plain—"no verbiage can disguise the squawks of the defeated and the impotent."¹⁰ He asked the editors to submit ten questions to him and give him space in which to respond. Benton's reply to the questions appeared in the April issue. He made some uncomplimentary references to Communism which the editors declined to answer because the magazine was "non-political" and non-sectarian. Jacob Burck, "one of the outstanding revolutionary artists,"¹¹ was asked to reply. Benton continued the controversy with a long letter in the May *Art Front*. He, too, believed in a "better consumption-production economy" but preferred to "work pragmatically with actual American forces to that end [and with] democratic procedures . . . without the need of armed forces installing and protecting a dictatorship . . . however idealistic its aims."¹² In a letter to the editor, *Art Front* editor Jacob Kainen suggested, "If Benton wants a better society, he can help by being an artist of the social revolution."

The alliance against the American Scene artists did not deter the somewhat more polite but no less lively debate between Davis and the proselytizers of social realism on the magazine. Davis' introduction to the catalog of the Whit-

ney Museum exhibition, *Abstract Painting in America*, and the exhibition itself were both attacked by Weinstock in the April issue. Abstract art, declared Weinstock, "is founded on a limited definition of painting. . . . Form becomes like so much monopoly capital in which the society of art is sacrificed."¹³ Davis defended abstract art: "In the materialism of abstract art in general, is implicit a negation of many ideals dear to the bourgeois heart . . . the result of a revolutionary struggle relative to bourgeois academic associations." Davis then asks Weinstock not to equate the "abstract tendencies in painting and the fascist tendencies of the American Scene school of Benton, etc., . . . because they are both within the bourgeois scheme."¹⁴

Although Davis continued to write occasional articles for *Art Front*, he no longer did any reviews or argued on the pages of the magazine with the advocates of the general theory of dialectal materialism. He wrote a spirited denunciation of the Municipal Art Commission for rejecting a mural by Ben Shahn and Lou Block for the penitentiary on Rikers Island.¹⁵ In November, Davis made a blistering attack on Forbes Watson, the technical director of the Section of Painting and Sculpture of the Treasury Department, for having an elitist attitude toward federal patronage.¹⁶

During the fall of 1935, some members of the union—Joseph Solmon, Ilya Bolotowsky, Balcomb Greene, Mark Rothkowitz, Byron Browne, George McNeil, and others—began to grumble about the narrow esthetic line monopolizing the magazine. The group met informally to discuss the need for a broader viewpoint. Joe Solmon drew up a manifesto for presentation at a union meeting, arguing that a magazine representing a mass organization of artists should encourage diverse views. The editors, he charged, were apparently unaware of the educational value of the Museum of Modern Art. Solmon also believed *Art Front* should look like an art magazine as well as a union journal.

The statement hit the meeting like a bombshell and was followed by spirited debate. The meeting was chaired by Phil Bard, a solid adherent of the social realists. One of his cartoons appeared in the May 1935 *Art Front* satirizing the abstract artist as Don Quixote on a rocking horse. He and Solmon had differed in ideological and esthetic discussion at union meetings, but they respected each other and later became close friends. Convinced that Solmon's complaint had merit, Bard suggested that he be invited onto the magazine's editorial board. These were the early days of the Popular Front and it is possible that Bard was reflecting a general desire by the knowl-

edgeable left wing to open its ranks esthetically, as well as politically. Solmon joined the editorial board for the December 1935 issue, the first of Volume II; the changes were immediate and apparent.

The masthead of the first three issues of the second volume listed Stuart Davis as managing editor, but he was now devoting his energies to the American Artists Congress and was no longer as interested in the official publication of the Artists Union. Davis wrote an article on the American Artists Congress for the December 1935 issue; it was the last piece by him to appear in *Art Front*.

With the December issue, the dimensions of the journal changed from the eleven-by-sixteen-inch format to the nine-by-twelve-inch format. The size of the issues varied between sixteen and thirty-two pages. Almost all the art work reproduced in the first volume was political cartoons by brilliant practitioners: William Gropper, George Grosz, Ben

Shahn, Otto Dehn, and others. Very few reproductions of paintings, graphics, or sculpture appeared in the first seven issues. With the publication of the December issue, *Art Front* began to look like an art journal. Solmon set the new tone by selecting for the cover illustration a Jansen woodcut borrowed from the New Art Circle gallery. The theme of the woodcut, a contemporary Horsemen of the Apocalypse, was rendered in a harsh mystical style in the manner of the German Expressionists. Inside, along with political cartoons by Hugo Gellert and Boris Gorelick, was a full-page reproduction of a Léger drawing. The text of a lecture given by Léger at the Museum of Modern Art accompanied the reproduction; the translation was made by Harold Rosenberg who, a decade later, became one of the nation's leading art critics. He had been among the first group of artists hired for WPA art projects and was assigned as a mural assistant to Max Spivak, a member of the editorial board of

Art Front. Rosenberg, as well as Spivak and Solmon, annoyed other board members who preferred a publication that emphasized political and economic issues. Rosenberg made no effort to disguise his disdain for his critics on the board and in the leadership; he considered most of them intellectually shallow and boring. At any time, such an attitude would have created personal problems; in this particular time of great crisis, when the need for unity seemed so essential, it was considered subversive. It was probably Solmon who was most influential in liberalizing *Art Front's* policy, but it was the activities of Rosenberg and Spivak that proved to be a greater annoyance to the union's leadership. The two friends were concerned by what they perceived to be the narrow mechanical line of their colleagues on the editorial board, but their somewhat flippant personal style exacerbated the suspicion that they were conspiratorial and self-serving. Weinstock attempted to play the

Fig. 2. Artists Union Demonstration, 1936 (the front page of *Art Front* for January 1937).



role of harmonizer at the lengthy board meetings and often voted with the dissidents; his attitude perplexed and angered most of the editorial board who interpreted his actions as opportunistic.

The conflict erupted at a Wednesday night meeting. Joe Jones rose to charge that *Art Front* had failed to fulfill its essential function as the organizing and informational instrument of the union. Jones was a handsome, articulate man given to "left-patriotic" speeches denouncing modern art, which impressed the rank and file. He was cheered when he declared that he was speaking for the artists of the Midwest; Rosenberg angered the crowd when he shot back, "Who the hell made you the representative of the artists of the Midwest?"

Wednesday night meetings were always well attended because, among other, more important, reasons, they were a source of entertainment. This particular evening, attendance was especially large and the "show" was surely not disappointing. Rosenberg, in reply to the charge that his clique frustrated the will of the majority of the board, shouted "We put out the magazine; they are a bunch of dummies!" Cries of "elitism" filled the hall as he continued to demean the union's leadership. Unable to find a chair, Weinstock perched on a window sill and quietly observed the proceedings. Someone in the crowd shouted, "Weinstock is a Robespierre!" so taking him by surprise that he fell from the sill.

A motion was made to expel the "clique" from the editorial board, but Bard, who was chairing the meeting, declared that the motion was out of order and would be referred to the executive board of the union. Bard's decision came as a shock since expulsion would have been carried by the membership. Here again, it is likely that Bard, better informed politically than the rank and file, was anxious to avoid any charge of sectarianism. In early 1936, the impact of the new policy on Party cadre was clear; cooperation with socialists and liberals on short-range goals was not only acceptable, it was desirable.

No change was made in the editorial board and the conflict remained unsettled. A meeting was called for Party members and fellow travelers on the editorial board to be held at the office of Alexander Trachtenberg, the head of International Publishers. Neither Rosenberg or Solmon was present, but there was a special guest, a French official of the Comintern, visiting the United States. The guest recommended the broader concept of the magazine, but also suggested, in view of the bitter feelings generated by the disagreement, that Spivak resign from the editorial board. Spivak raised no objections; he resigned in

January as did Davis, Gellert, Baron, and H. Glintenkamp. The other four board members probably quit because of their involvement with the more prestigious American Artists Congress, which was preparing for its first national meeting at Town Hall on February 14, 1936.

Solmon was elected managing editor and he brought in Balcomb Greene, one of the union's few abstractionists. Prior to his official appointment as managing editor, Solmon had already changed the concept of *Art Front*. Of the sixteen pages in the January 1936 issue, one was used for the cover, two for advertising, three for Artists Union editorial matter, and the ten remaining pages were devoted to essays, critiques, reviews, and reproductions. A Jacques Lipchitz sculpture is reproduced on the cover, and of the six reproductions in the magazine, not one is a cartoon. This issue is probably the one that precipitated the charges by Joe Jones. Solmon wrote admiringly of the early surrealist paintings of De Chirico, and Lincoln Kirstein contributed an article on scenery for theatrical dancing. Greene and Weinstock had a lively debate about the work of Léger, in which Greene asserted "the complete revolutionist, assuming he is healthy and capable of requisite sensory comprehension, will also welcome a new art which has, because of its functional purpose, rejected literal translation."¹⁷ Weinstock argued in turn that painting cannot free art from subject matter until "subject matter itself is free, that is, when objects no longer need be seen in relationships that in turn enslave the artist and then us."¹⁸ Margaret Duroc's review of an exhibition at the John Reed Club is rooted almost entirely in the examination of content: ". . . the meaning and composition in Grunbaum's painting are impaired by representing the Negro with his head bowed passively . . . it falsely suggests the Negro relies on the white worker alone for his freedom."¹⁹

The range of esthetic attitudes expressed in the January *Art Front* reflected the new liberal editorial policy. Without exception, however, all the writers were concerned with the problem of creating a revolutionary art. In a review of the Lipchitz exhibition at the Brummer Gallery, Martin Craig argued that an art which obviously resembled nature could no longer be meaningful. Discussing the distorted figures of the sculpture, he asserted, "If there is to be a vital revolutionary art in the future, then this is the road it will take."²⁰

Art Front was, in effect, an esthetic dialogue on the left. American Scene artists and the academicians were roundly condemned, but a lively debate evolved among the social realists, the expressionists, the surrealists, and the abstraction-

ists. Often the discussion was formal and direct in side by side articles or in lengthy letters to the editor and rebuttals. Meyer Shapiro, Isamu Noguchi, Louis Aragon, Lynd Ward, Elizabeth McCausland, Frederick Kiesler, and Bernice Abbott were some of the notables whose work appeared in the magazines, usually at the behest of Weinstock or Solmon. No one, of course, was ever paid a fee. Sometimes a writer who was employed by the "bourgeois" press would use a pseudonym; Elizabeth McCausland, art critic for the *Springfield Republican*, wrote for *Art Front* under the name of Elizabeth Noble.

One regular contributor to the magazine was Jacob Kainen who usually reviewed exhibitions. His articles generally manifested a social realist bias, but were written with the intelligence one would expect of the fine art historian that he was. Kainen's highly critical review of Hendrik Van Loon's book, *The Arts*, was eliminated by the editorial board because Van Loon had publicly endorsed the art project!

Another outstanding artist-critic for *Art Front* was Charmion Von Weigand, the wife of *New Masses* editor, Joseph Freeman. She, too, was a fine art historian, partial to work of social content. In a review of surrealist art at the Museum of Modern Art, she astutely analyzed the evolution of surrealism, praised the exhibition, and concluded that the art of the future which ". . . will strive for a new humanism on a social basis . . . will find uses for the technical innovations of the modern escapists."²¹

Undoubtedly a substantial minority in the union looked forward to each issue of *Art Front*, welcoming it as a lively forum for stimulating esthetic discussion. The Artists Union, however, was a mass organization and the majority was relatively unsophisticated; many resented the scholarly tone of the magazine and considered it an indulgence of a clique of intellectuals. In his review of Salvadore Dali's book, *Conquest of the Irrational*, in the April 1936 *Art Front*, Rosenberg warned that the book is ". . . not recommended to those readers of *Art Front* who have complained of the obscurity of some of the articles in these volumes." At a union meeting, Solmon had to defend the reproduction of an El Lissitzky nonobjective painting by pointing out that the Russian artist was a celebrated designer of posters in the USSR.

The magazine was produced by a printer who worked for many unions and left-wing organizations. The quality of printing did not meet the standards of an art magazine, but the cost of better reproduction was out of the question. During the first year of publication, Ben Shahn recommended the purchase of a multilith printer capable of producing

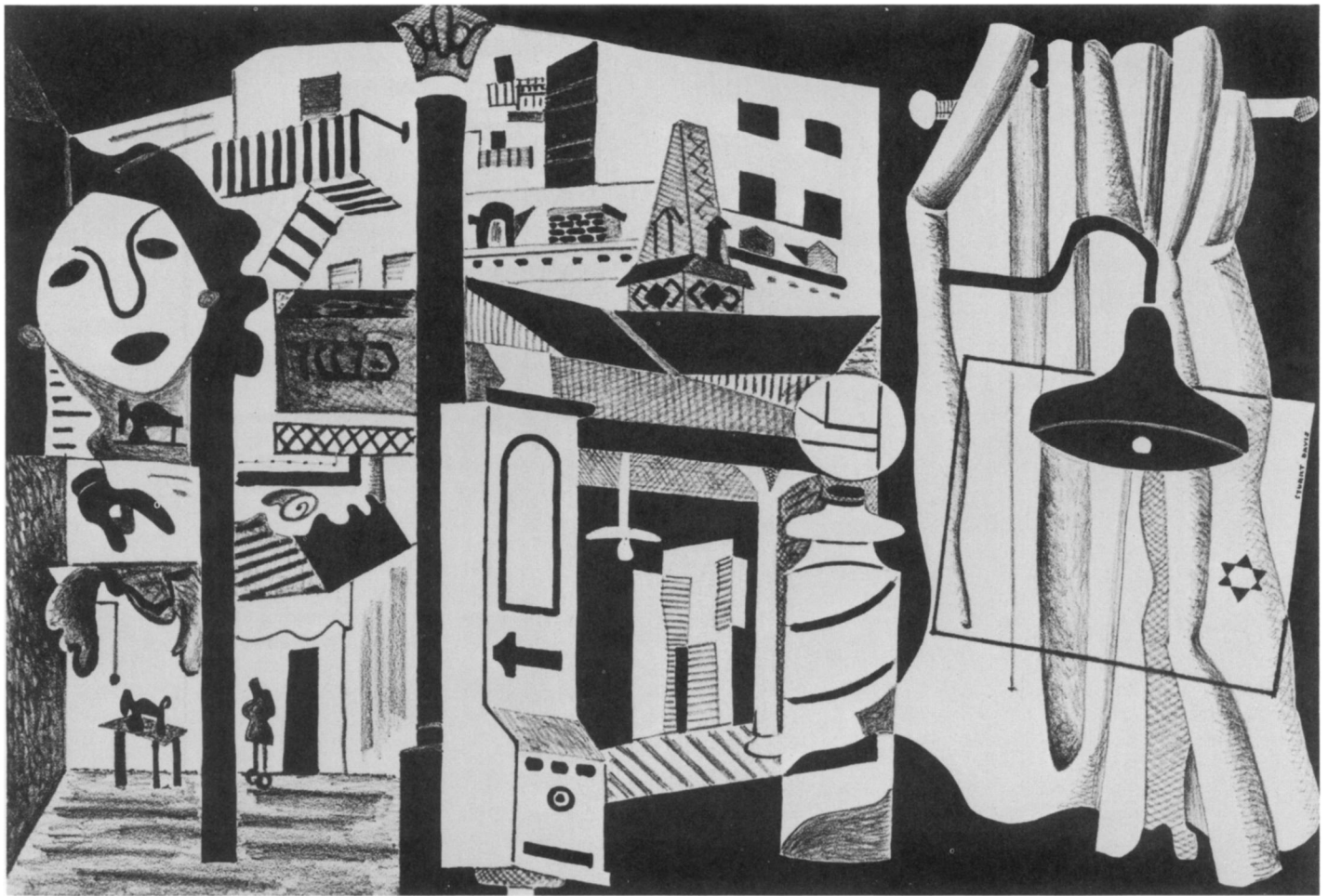


Fig. 3. Stuart Davis, *Sixth Avenue El*, 1932, lithograph. Used as an illustration in *Art Front*. Photo: Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York.

Art Front's short printing run in color, but the suggestion was rejected. Some board members feared that, because of Shahn's interest in exploring the use of the multicolor printer, the magazine might become his personal showcase.

After a year as the managing editor, Solmon decided the demands made upon him by the magazine were too time-consuming. In addition to his obligations to the WPA, he was a leading member of an exhibition group known as the Ten which had been receiving some recognition. The December 1936 issue was the last in which Solmon functioned as the managing editor, although he remained on the board for the January 1937 *Art Front* when Weinstock succeeded him. The last article Solmon contributed to the magazine was a laudatory review of an exhibition by the Mexican painter Rufino Tamayo. Solmon's statement that the paintings of Tamayo "soared above the work of most of his compatriots" caused a furor among a clique of Sequeiros admirers and during the "good and welfare" portion of a membership meeting, Solmon was charged with insulting the Mexican muralist. A. J. Schneider, who worked in the Sequeiros workshop, wrote a letter of complaint to be printed in the next issue, in which he proclaimed

that Orozco and Sequeiros were at the nucleus of the Mexican League of Revolutionary Artists and Writers and that it was therefore incumbent upon "our own organ of publicity [not to publicize individuals] to the detriment or harm of any union engaged in a struggle common to all of us."²²

Solmon's broad policy lost some momentum when Weinstock became managing editor. However, Weinstock did enjoy provoking vigorous debates for which *Art Front* was the forum. He published a speech by Louis Aragon, the French Communist poet who had been a surrealist, asserting that the new style "will be a socialistic realism or it will cease to exist."²³ Dali agreed to write a rebuttal, accusing Aragon of being a leftist opportunist.²⁴ Weinstock then leaped into the fray, labeling Dali as a counter-revolutionary artist who pleases the bourgeois "with his slimy watches."²⁵

The change of emphasis was subtle when control of the magazine shifted from Solmon to Weinstock. The new managing editor relied less on the union's artist-critics and was more apt to use Marxist analysts like A. L. Lloyd, F. D. Klingender, and Samuel Putnam, whose esthetic views admitted the technical achievements of the School of

Paris, but maintained that contemporary art could only be significant when it employed social content. The magazine continued to include articles of general interest to the members—project news, union matters, educational and technical data, political comment, listings of current exhibitions, and so on. Artwork was liberally reproduced, especially that which had been completed on the art project.

Members of the union's executive board were always represented on the editorial board to assure that *Art Front* remained an instrument of the union's economic policy and to control publication costs. It was assumed by some within the leadership that the magazine was an expensive indulgence, but it is likely that *Art Front* actually was self-supporting. Union financing was generally casual and the magazine's finances were apparently not separated from general funds. In addition to sales and advertising income, which was little enough, the magazine relied upon funds from an *Art Front* Ball that was held on Thanksgiving at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. For the six-month period ending December 31, 1936, total income for *Art Front* was \$939.35, while printing expenses were only \$737.14. Granting that a twelve-

month statement might not be so favorable, the magazine could not realistically be deemed a financial burden to the union that used *Art Front's* income for general expenses while it failed to meet the printing obligations.

The feeling persisted that *Art Front* had to be made financially responsible, so when Naum Tschacbasov, in December 1936, suggested the magazine could become a source of income for the union, he was appointed business manager. Tschacbasov was a dynamic and ambitious man who had the reputation of being vain, self-serving, and even ruthless.

He immediately rented office space at 41 Union Square, purchased office furniture and equipment, and hired a pretty but totally incompetent secretary. Weinstock and Rothman thought the move ridiculous but nevertheless thoroughly enjoyed the new, luxurious environment; they even had a room with a long table for board meetings. The idyll lasted about three months—until the furniture was repossessed for nonpayment.

Weinstock informed Rothman that he was the new business manager when Tschacbasov quit, and Chet LaMore joined the board in an effort by the leadership to strengthen its control of the magazine. LaMore was reputed to be tough and efficient; Weinstock and Rothman welcomed the help. By his own admission a poor businessman, Rothman was unaware that the magazine's advertising salesman was pocketing the revenue. The "sloppy" finances infuriated the leadership. Former president Harry Gottlieb was added to the editorial board and Rothman was brought up on charges. Weinstock ran to V. J. Jerome to complain and he assigned Tim Holmes to help adjudicate.

Although there was a question of misappropriated funds, it is likely that older dissatisfactions with the magazine became a dominant factor; a segment of the leadership believed the magazine inadequately represented the goals of the union and resented Weinstock's control. The charges against Rothman may have been leveled to discredit Weinstock indirectly. Holmes repeatedly referred to Weinstock as a Trotskyite even though no one had made those charges. Weinstock continued as managing editor through December 1937, the date of the magazine's last issue.

Art Front went out of existence without warning; the last issue was still soliciting subscriptions and requesting notification to the circulation department of change of address. Of the persons interviewed for this study, none can recall why the magazine ceased so suddenly though some speculated that it may have been an economy measure by the executive board. The union contin-

ued to produce mimeographed newsletters and bulletins of various kinds, and from time to time, there was talk of sponsoring another publication. There was one serious attempt in 1940 when the union published *New York Artist*, a pocket-size magazine that only lasted for four issues. The avowed purpose of the new magazine was not "to print an arty publication, but . . . to develop unity among artists . . . to advance their interests."²⁶ It was, on the whole, rather dull.

Perhaps because it was the journal of a unique organization—a trade union of fine artists—there has never again been a magazine quite like *Art Front*. The professional art journals like the *Art Digest* and the *Magazine of Art* were conservative and stuffy, while left-wing journals with an interest in the arts like *New Masses* were primarily literary. For anyone wishing to investigate the tensions between art and politics during the 1930s, *Art Front* is an invaluable document. Only the Archives of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art Library have complete sets of the magazine available for study.

Notes

1. *Art Front*, November 1934, p. 3.
2. Ethyl Olenikov, "In Answer to *Art News*," *Art Front*, November 1934, p. 5.
3. Clarence Weinstock, "A Letter on Salvador Dali," *Art Front*, February 1935, p. 8.
4. Jerome Klein, "Dada for Propaganda," *Art Front*, February 1935, p. 8.
5. "The U. S. Scene in Art," *Time*, December 24, 1934, p. 24.
6. Stuart Davis, "The New York American Scene in Art," *Art Front*, February 1935, p. 6.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Moses Soyer, "About Moses Soyer," *Art Front*, February 1935, p. 6.
9. John Stewart Curry, "A Letter from Curry," *Art Front*, April 1935, p. 6.
10. Thomas Benton, "Why Mr. Benton," *Art Front*, April 1935, p. 4.
11. Jacob Burck, "Benton Sees Red," *Art Front*, April 1935, p. 6.
12. Correspondence, *Art Front*, May 1935, p. 7.
13. Clarence Weinstock, "Contradictions in Abstractions," *Art Front*, April 1935, p. 5.
14. Stuart Davis, "A Medium of Two Dimensions," *Art Front*, May 1935, p. 6.
15. Stuart Davis, "We Reject—The Art Commission," *Art Front*, July 1935, p. 4.
16. Stuart Davis, "Some Chance," *Art Front*, November 1935, pp. 4-7.
17. Balcomb Greene, "The Function of Léger," *Art Front*, January 1936, p. 9.
18. Clarence Weinstock, "Freedom in Painting," *Art Front*, January 1936, p. 10.
19. Margaret Duroc, "Critique from the Left," *Art Front*, January 1936, p. 8.
20. Martin Craig, "Jacques Lipchitz," *Art Front*, January 1936, pp. 10-11.
21. Charnion Von Weigand, "The Surrealists," *Art Front*, January 1937, pp. 12-15.
22. A. J. Schneider, *Art Front*, March 1937, p. 15; also Joseph Solmon, "Tamayo," *Art Front*, February 1937, p. 17.
23. Louis Aragon, "Painting and Reality," *Art Front*, January 1937, p. 7.
24. Salvador Dali, "I Defy Aragon," *Art Front*, March 1937, p. 7.
25. Clarence Weinstock, "The Man in the Balloon," *Art Front*, March 1937, p. 8.
26. *New York Artist*, March 1940, p. 2.

The Curator's Report

Arthur Breton

During the period January through September 1973, papers or microfilms of the following persons or organizations were received in the Washington office of the Archives. This list includes both gifts and loans.

Samuel Adler
Larry Aldrich
Architectural League of New York
Clifford W. Ashley
Associated American Artists Gallery,
New York

Peggy Bacon
Thomas Badger
Ruth Jonas Bardin
William Baziotos
Michel Benisovich
Eugene Berman
Karl Bitter
Edwin Howland Blashfield
Louis Bouché
Paul Bransom
Margaret Brown Gallery, Boston

Louise Bruner
Lawrence Calcagno
William Christopher
Alphaeus Cole

Bruce Conner
Paul Cummings
Ben Cunningham
Lily Cushing
Charles Daniel
Morris Davidson
John Day
Julian Delbos
Downtown Gallery

Paula Eliasoph
Raphael Ellender
Stephen Morgan Etnier
Ralph Fabri
Clara Fasano
Paul Feeley
Hamilton Easter Field
Mary Fife
Edward Fitzgerald

John R. Frazier
Augustus Fuller
George Fuller
Albert Eugene Gallatin
Oronzo Gasparo
Jan Gelb

Charles H. Gifford
William Glackens
Fay Gold
Mike Goldberg
Chaim Gross
Karl Gruppe
William Preston Harrison
Abraham Harriton
Marsden Hartley
Cleo Hartwig