

Art and the New Deal- a personal statement

The New Deal Art Projects were a phenomenon in our time. Although they are now history, every impartial observer recognizes their supreme importance for the development of American art.

For myself, I can say they provided the opportunity to fulfill three main goals- to develop certain skills, to paint large-scale murals and to reach an audience.

That word 'audience' is the clue. It was nationwide. For the first time the arts reached into all the population centers; people who formerly had little or no contact with serious art- High art, if you will, were now made aware of all of them. It was an exhilarating experience for both artist and audience. We see the results even today in the enormous activity taking place in the arts all over the country...activity which would be inconceivable without the support given by Government in the 1930's and 40's through the Federal Art Projects.

In retrospect, the difficulties of the time- the occasional harassments from hostile critics, from Congressmen who were always trying to abolish the Projects, the lay-offs, etc., fade away and the essential values come to the fore, namely: artists, formerly ignored by Government, achieved a place in society they never could have done, <sup>otherwise-</sup> due to active Government support for the arts- all the arts.

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