

Myself and the New Deal Art Projects

The first New Deal art projects were launched in 1933. I was then in Los Angeles and had already worked with the famous Mexican muralist, D.A. Siqueiros- learning fresco technique and applying it to portable panels. So when the first mural project opened up I was ready for it. I worked on various assignments until 1935, when I came to New York.

Almost immediately I was accepted on the mural-project there, after showing some of my L.A. work to the mural supervisors. After designing some preliminary sketches for various sites I was asked to design a large mural for Riker's Island in N.Y. I had complete freedom to develop the design as I saw fit. But first I was asked to prepare a written proposal- a "Thesis"- for approval by:

- 1- the Project Director
- 2- the prison authorities
- 3- the Dept of Correction
- 4- the Municipal Art Commission

Having surmounted all these, I got to work on the mural itself. There was a lot of research to do and preliminary drawings. I haunted the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library (as did all the other muralists) and went into the field , doing direct observation, sketching and making notes. I was assigned two or three assistants to help with this. Also- I was given models to work from, sent from the Models' Project (yes, there was a Models' Project too) The Gov't was a generous provider. But not, of course, where money was concerned. We had to do everything and pay all bills on \$23.86 per week. And that was for Master Artists. Our assistants got less- about \$21.50!

There were always some in Congress trying to smash the Art Projects. To appease this group Congress was always harassing

