The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture

Victoria Grieve

Art for everyone—the Federal Art Project’s drive for middlebrow visual culture and identity

University of Michigan. Museum of Art 1985


Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner—Ines Engelmann 2007

For more than a decade, Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner devoted their lives to each other, serving in turn as muse, critic, companion, lover, friend and alter ego. Their romance was stormy - their raucous arguments are the stuff of legend - but their talents were prodigious. This book is packed with examples of the contributions both artists made to the world of modern art. Readers will learn how Pollock and Krasners artistry evolved and how they influenced each others success. Recent developments, such as a revealing biopic and the art worlds elevation of Pollock to the status of being the most expensive artist in the world, bring their portrait fully up-to-date. While the author acknowledges histories sensationalisation of their lives, it is the paintings themselves - revolutionary, innovative and daring - that tell the most compelling story.

Democratic Art—Sharon Ann Musher 2015-05-04

Throughout the Great Recession American artists and public art endowments had to fight for government support to keep themselves afloat. It wasn’t always this way. At its height in 1935, the New Deal devoted $27 million—roughly $461 million today—to supporting tens of thousands of needy artists, who used that support to create more than 100,000 works. Why did the government become so involved with these artists, and why weren’t these projects considered a frivolous waste of funds, as surely many would be today? In Democratic Art, Sharon Musher explores these questions and uses them as a springboard for an examination of the role art can and should play in contemporary society. Drawing on close readings of government-funded architecture, murals, plays, writing, and photographs, Democratic Art examines the New Deal’s diverse cultural initiatives and outlines five perspectives on art that are prominent at the time: art as grandeur, enrichment, weapon, experience, and subversion. Musher argues that those engaged in New Deal art were part of an explicitly cultural agenda that sought not just to create art but to democratize and Americanize it as well. By tracing a range of aesthetical visions that flourished during the 1930s, this highly original book outlines the successes, shortcomings, and lessons of the golden age of government funding for the arts.

WPA Artwork in Non-Federal Repositories—George J. Mavigliano 1990

An inventory of works of art produced under the Works Progress Administration, 1933-1943, located in non-Federal depositories, initiated by the Fine Arts Program of GSA.


Started “because people were hungry,” by the time the project ended, it had given artists the opportunity to study art, to meet other artists, to develop disciplined work habits, to manage their production with some business sense, and most importantly, to work without interruption. The authors include 32 photographs of Illinois Art Project artwork, locations, and personnel.

Posters for the People—Ennis Carter 2017-02-14

This lavishly illustrated volume amasses nearly 500 of the best and most striking posters designed by artists working in the 1930s and early 1940s for the government-sponsored Works Progress Administration, or WPA. Posters for the People presents these works for what they truly are—highly accomplished and powerful examples of American art. All are iconic and eye-catching, some are humorous and educational, and many combine modern art trends with commercial techniques of advertising. More than 100 posters have never been published or catalogued in federal records; they are included here to ensure their place in the history of American art and graphic design. The story of these posters is a fascinating journey, capturing the complex objectives of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal reform program. Through their distinct imagery and clear and simple messages, the WPA posters provide a snapshot of an important era when the U.S. government employed hundreds of artists to create millions of posters promoting positive social ideals and programs and a uniquely American way of life. The resulting artworks now form a significant historical record. More than a mere conveyer of government information, they stand as timeless images of beauty and artistic accomplishment.

Modernism for the Masses—Jody Patterson 2020-11-17

A mural renaissance swept the United States in the 1930s, propelled by the New Deal Federal Art Project and the popularity of Mexican muralism. Perhaps nowhere more than in New York City, murals became a crucial site for the development of abstract painting. Artists such as Stuart Davis, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, and Lee Krasner created ambitious works for the Williamsburg Housing Project, Floyd Bennett Field Airport, and the 1939 World’s Fair. Modernism for the Masses examines the public murals (realized and unrealized) of these and other abstract painters and the aesthetic controversy, political influence, and ideological warfare that surrounded them. Jody Patterson transforms standard narratives of modernism by reasserting the significance of the 1930s and explores the reasons for the omission of the mural’s history from chronicles of American art. Beautifully illustrated with the artists’ murals and little-known archival photographs, this book recovers the radical idea that modernist art was a vital part of everyday life.

Art for the Millions—Francis V. O’Connor 1975-01-01

These posters were designed for other federal agencies, and as travel posters, education and civic activity posters, health and safety posters, and propaganda posters for World War II.

Art in Democracy—Federal Art Project 1938

1934—Ann Prentice Wagner 2009

Feature fifty-six paintings from the Smithsonian’s collection created for the...
The Muralist - B. A. Shapiro 2016-10-11 Don't miss B. A. Shapiro's new novel, The Collector's Apprentice, available now! "Vibrant and suspenseful . . . Like The Art Forger, this new story takes us into the heart of what means to be an artist." —The Washington Post "B. A. Shapiro captivated us in 2012 with her 'addictive novel The Art Forger. Now, she's back with another thrilling tale from the art world." —Entertainment Weekly When Alizée Benoit, an American painter working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), vanishes in New York City in 1940, no one knows what happened to her. Not her Jewish family living in German-occupied France. Not her artistic patron and political compatriot, Eleanor Roosevelt. Not her close-knit group of friends, including Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and Lee Krasner. And, some seventy years later, not her great-niece, Danielle Abrams, who while working at Christie's auction house uncovers enigmatic paintings hidden behind works by those now famous Abstract Expressionist artists. Do they hold answers to the questions surrounding her missing aunt?

Prints by Artists of the Federal Art Project, Works Progress Administration --United States. Works Progress Administration (New York, N.Y.) 1937

Federal Art and National Culture - Jonathan Harris 1995 Examines the role of the visual arts in the United States during the 1930s.

Labor's Canvas - Laura Hapke 2009-03-26 At an unprecedented and probably unique American moment, laboring people were indivisible from the art of the 1930s. By far the most recognizable New Deal art employed an endless frieze of white or racially ambiguous machine proletarians, from solo drillers to identical assembly line toilers. Even today such paintings, particularly those with work themes, are almost instantly recognizable. Happening on a Depression-era picture, one can see from a distance the often simplified figures, the intense or bold colors, the frozen motion or flattened perspective, and the uniformity of laboring bodies within an often naive realism or naturalism of treatment. In a kind of Social Realist dance, the FAP's imagined drillers, haulers, construction workers, welders, miners, and steel mill workers make up a rugged industrial army. In an unusual synthesis of art and working-class history, Labor's Canvas argues that however simplified this golden age of American worker art appears from a post-modern perspective, The New Deal's Federal Art Project (FAP), under the aegis of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), revealed important tensions. Artists saw themselves as cultural workers who had much in common with the blue-collar workforce. Yet they struggled to reconcile social protest and aesthetic distance. Their canvases, prints, and drawings registered attitudes toward laborers as bodies without minds often shared by the wider culture. In choosing a visual language to reconnect workers to the larger society, they tried to tell the worker from the work with varying success. Drawing on a wealth of social documents and visual narratives, Labor's Canvas engages in a bold revisionism. Hapke examines how FAP iconography both chronicles and reframes working-class history. She demonstrates how the New Deal's artistically rendered workforce history reveals the cultural contradictions about laboring people evident even in the depths of the Great Depression, not the least in the imaginations of the FAP artists themselves.

Guide to the Federal Art Project Gallery - Federal Art Project. Gallery 197?

The Art of the National Parks (Fifty-Nine Parks)-Weldon Owen 2021-07-20 Explore the majesty of the National Parks through the eyes of contemporary artists. ART OF THE NATIONAL PARKS is a beautiful art book that displays the unique beauty of each U.S. National Park, as captured by the Fifty-Nine Parks Print Series. Fifty-Nine Parks collaborated with some of the world's foremost contemporary artists and designers to create original posters that celebrate the unique beauty of the U.S. National Park system. The wildly popular poster art that resulted is now available as a collection for the first time in this gorgeous art book. A contemporary take on the W.P.A. posters of the 1930s, each poster is a unique and original reflection of the talent and perspective of the contemporary artist who created it, resulting in a one-of-a-kind tribute to the majesty of the national parks.

Includes art of the Top Ten Most Visited National Parks as rated by the National Park Service: (1) Great Smoky Mountains, (2) Grand Canyon, (3) Rocky Mountain, (4) Zion, (5) Yosemite, (6) Yellowstone, (7) Acadia, (8) Grand Teton, (9) Olympic, and (10) Glacier. Filled with Facts: Includes a comprehensive history and overview of the flora, fauna, and best sights in each park. Travel Guide: With seasonality and travel tips, Our National Treasure: The Art of the National Parks can also be used as a guide for visiting the national parks. Gift for Nature Lovers: An ideal gift for armchair travelers, national park enthusiasts, and anyone who appreciates contemporary art and design. Each Book Gives Back: Sales benefit the National Park Service. "Highlights the unique beauty of each national park" --SierraClub.com

The African-American Mosaic - Library of Congress 1993 "This guide lists the numerous examples of government documents, manuscripts, books, photographs, recordings and films in the collections of the Library of Congress which examine African-American life. Works by and about African-Americans on the topics of slavery, music, art, literature, the military, sports, civil rights and other pertinent subjects are discussed--

The WPA Federal Art Project - Federal Art Project (New York, N.Y.) 1935

A New Deal for Native Art - Jennifer McLerran 2009 As the Great Depression touched every corner of America, the New Deal promoted indigenous arts and crafts as a means of bootstrapping Native American peoples. But New Deal administrators' romanticization of indigenous artists predisposed them to favor pre-industrial forms rather than art that responded to contemporary markets. In A New Deal for Native Art, Jennifer McLerran reveals how positioning the native artist as a pre-modern Other served the goals of New Deal programs and how this sometimes worked at cross-purposes with promoting native self-sufficiency. She describes federal policies of the 1930s and early 1940s that sought to generate an upscale market for Native American arts and crafts. And by unraveling the complex ways in which commodification was negotiated and the roles that producers, consumers, and New Deal administrators played in that process, she sheds new light on native art's commodity status and the artist's position as colonial subject. In this first book to address the ways in which New Deal Indian policy specifically advanced commodification and colonization, McLerran reviews its multi-pronged effort to improve the market for Indian art through the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, arts and crafts cooperatives, museums, museum exhibits, and Civilian Conservation Corps projects. Presenting nationwide case studies that demonstrate transcultural dynamics of production and reception, she argues for viewing Indian art as a commodity, as part of the national economy, and as part of national political trends and reform efforts. McLerran marks the contributions of key individuals, from John Collier and Rene d'OHannoncourt to Navajo artist Gerald Nailor, whose mural in the Navajo Nation Council House conveyed distinctly different messages to outsiders and tribal members. Featuring dozens of illustrations, A New Deal for Native Art offers a new look at the complexities of folk art (Orevialas) as it opens a new window on the Indian New Deal.

Legal Title to Art Produced Under the 1930s and 1940s New Deal Administration - 2005 Background information about the Depression-era art programs, general concepts of federal property ownership, details about the various conditions that determine legal title, and the impact this has on the parties that possess New Deal works of art.

The New Deal Art Projects - Francis V. O'Connor 1977

Triple-A Plowed Under - Arthur Arent 1937

The Federal Arts Project in Wisconsin 1936-1939 - Nancy Retson 1977
As the United States enters a new era of economic distress, political strife, and culture-industry turmoil, broad and inclusive self-portrait of America at a time when the nation's very identity and future were thrown into question. By way of these and other stories, Borchert illuminates an essentially noble enterprise that sought to create a chaotic New York City office on an upward career trajectory courtesy of the WPA. Meanwhile, Ralph Ellison, at their day jobs, including Nelson Algren, broke and smarting from the failure of his first novel; Zora Neale Hurston, the most widely published Black woman in the country; and Richard Wright, who arrived in the WFP’s chaotic New York City office on an upward career trajectory courtesy of the WPA. Meanwhile, Ralph Ellison, Studs Terkel, John Cheever, and other future literary stars found encouragement and security on the FWP payroll. Millions of listeners is also highlighted. Annotation copyright by Book News, Inc., Portland, OR.

The First Legion-Emmet Lavery 1937

Republic of Detours-Scott Borchert 2021-06-15 A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice An immersive account of the New Deal project that created state-by-state guidebooks to America, in the midst of the Great Depression—and employed some of the biggest names in American letters The plan was as idealistic as it was audacious—and utterly unprecedented. Take thousands of hard-up writers and put them to work charting a country on the brink of social and economic collapse, with the aim of producing a series of guidebooks to the then forty-eight states—along with hundreds of other publications dedicated to cities, regions, and towns—while also gathering reams of folklore, narratives of formerly enslaved people, and even recipes, all of varying quality, each revealing distinct sensibilities. All this was the singular purview of the Federal Writers’ Project, a division of the Works Progress Administration founded in 1935 to employ jobless writers, from once-bestselling novelists and acclaimed poets to the more dubiously qualified. The FWP took up the lofty goal of rediscovering America in words and soon found itself embroiled in the day’s most heated arguments regarding radical politics, racial inclusion, and the purpose of writing—forcing it to reckon with the promises and failures of both the New Deal and the American experiment itself. Scott Borchert’s Republic of Detours tells the story of this raucous and remarkable undertaking by delving into the experiences of key figures and tracing the FWP from its optimistic early days to its dismemberment by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. We observe notable writers at their day jobs, including Nelson Algren, broke and smarting from the failure of his first novel; Zora Neale Hurston, the most widely published Black woman in the country; and Richard Wright, who arrived in the WFP’s chaotic New York City office on an upward career trajectory courtesy of the WPA. Meanwhile, Ralph Ellison, Studs Terkel, John Cheever, and other future literary stars found encouragement and security on the FWP payroll. By way of these and other stories, Borchert illuminates an essentially noble enterprise that sought to create a broad and inclusive self-portrait of America at a time when the nation’s very identity and future were thrown into question. As the United States enters a new era of economic distress, political strife, and culture-industry turmoil, this book’s lessons are urgent and strong.

Drawing on America’s Past-2002 This book presents watercolor renderings along with a selection of the artifacts in the Index of American Design, a visual archive of decorative, folk, and popular arts made in America from the colonial period to about 1900. Three essays explore the history, operation, and ambitions of the Index of American Design, examine folk art collecting in America during the early decades of the twentieth century, and consider the Index’s role in the search for a national cultural identity in the early twentieth-century United States.

All of This Music Belongs to the Nation-Kenneth J. Bindas 2003-10 A historical study of the Federal Music Project (FMP) investigates the paradoxical mission of employing popular musicians during the depression and "raising" musical tastes by emphasizing European classical traditions. Bindas (history, Kent State U.) reveals the obvious tensions between FMP leadership and its musicians, particularly the racial and ethnic segregation perpetuated by its policies. However, in an even-handed treatment, the project’s successes in bringing music to millions of listeners is also highlighted. Annotation copyright by Book News, Inc., Portland, OR.

Program of the Federal Arts Projects for the City of New York, June 25-July 1, 1938-Federal art project. New York (City) 1938

Prints by Artists of the Federal Art Project, Works Progress Administration-Federal Art Project 1937

New Deal Art in North Carolina-Anita Price Davis 2008-10-29 *This volume provides the only one-volume record of all of the North Carolina towns and structures that received federal artwork under the New Deal program, as well as in-depth accounts of the works themselves and the artists who created them*—Provided by publisher.

U. S. One, Maine to Florida, Best Books on 1938 compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, with 30 photographs. Sponsored by the U.S. no. 1 Highway Association.

The First Legion-Emmet Lavery 1937

Territorial Hues-David Martin 2017-09-15 Territorial Hues: The Color Print and Washington State, 1920-1960 will consist of prints that display the cultural and stylistic influences used by Washington State artists to produce highly exceptional works that reflect the color, light, and atmosphere that is unique to this region. The book focuses on several mediums including color woodcut, intaglio, serigraphy, and lithography. The influences of Japanese prints and regional appropriations of international movements will be examined as well as the local production of white-line prints.

The WPA Federal Art Project-1937

Public Works of Art Project-United States. Department of the Treasury 1934