

The Federal Art Project in Illinois, 1935-1943, by George J. Mavigliano and Richard A. Lawson. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990. xxi, 258 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography. \$24.95 cloth.

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Each publication such as this one that looks in fine detail at the New Deal art programs gives us a deeper understanding and appreciation for what was accomplished when the federal government gave broad-based support to the arts. Considering the overall number of programs designed to alleviate the effects of the depression, the art programs were a small part of the picture—especially financially. But their return in creating a cultural legacy was significant. Not only was the work important in itself, but it also set the stage for the American dominance in the arts after World War II. After reading Mavigliano and Lawson's account, one is impressed by the simple hard work and dedication of the artists and other participants. They believed in what they were doing, and they generally worked as consistently and devotedly as they were given an opportunity to.

This book is a study of the Federal Art Project in one state—Illinois—from its beginnings in 1935 to the end of all Federal Art Projects of the Works Projects Administration in 1943. The Illinois Project was one of the largest in the country and certainly the largest in the Midwest, with 755 artists and administrators. It contained a full range of departments or divisions: easel paintings, sculpture, murals, graphic arts, various design divisions, and a section of the important Index of American Design. Most state projects could not support this many divisions. Iowa, for instance, did not have a separate sculpture division, although sculptural works were produced.

In eight appendixes, the authors detail the names of all artists and administrators, lists of works produced and job classifications, salaries, and hiring quotas for artists. In this data, they accomplish one of the stated purposes for their book: to aid the research of other New Deal art scholars. Their compilations document project activities of a number of significant artists such as Aaron Bohrod, Ivan Albright, Louis Lozowick, Dale Nichols, and June Wayne. They also reveal that several of the Illinois Project artists had Iowa connections: Andrene Kaufman painted the post office mural in Ida Grove; Edgar Britton painted two murals in Waterloo; and, most important, Mason City-born Francis Robert White produced murals in Algona and Missouri Valley. Before moving to Illinois to become Supervisor of Murals, White was head of the team that painted the now-destroyed mural cycle in the Cedar Rapids Court House (1936) and later

directed the Iowa Art Project (1937–1939). Perhaps the major accomplishment of his administration here was the establishment of what became the Sioux City Art Center.

The book also includes a four-chapter narrative of the Illinois Art Project organized around the sequence of the three state directors. This history draws on a variety of sources, most interestingly on correspondence and interviews with participants in the project such as John Walley (to whom the book is dedicated in part) and Aaron Bohrod. Such recollections substantiate and enliven accounts of the period and give us insight into the ideas and attitudes of the artists. The collection of their accounts and their fuller integration into histories of the period should certainly be encouraged. Aspects of these chapters deal with the Artists Union, the participation of Chicago's African-American community in the project, the relationship of Moholy-Nagy and the Chicago Bauhaus to project artists, and the furious effort to maintain the project with defense work after the outbreak of the war. These and other topics could be fruitful subjects for further research with the base the authors have provided.

The narrative concludes with a brief account of the fate of much of the art produced in the Illinois Art Project (and all the other state projects). When the works were allocated, there was little or no record kept of where they went. Some went to governmental or other institutional offices which eventually lost track of them, some found their way into private or commercial hands, and others were stored away, not to be seen or studied for decades. Most sadly, thousands of works and materials were destroyed, often intentionally. Of the 233 murals listed in Appendix B, the fates of 99 of them (about 43 percent) are described as unknown, destroyed, painted or covered over, or in storage. Mavigliano and Lawson's study of Illinois gives us some notion of what has been lost in our culture. It is a foundational work that will provide a sturdy base for further investigation.

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