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Towards a Research Method into the Federal Art
Project, 1935-1943 from the Perspective of Cultural
Economics

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline my research approach, findings to date and issues raised thus far on what might be my dissertation in economics and historical studies at the New School for Social Research. I will start here in this Introduction with the broad theme of my research then narrow this research theme to the specific topics of this paper.

Every good economist needs to study the Great Depression (from the 1929 Stock Market Crash in the U.S.A. to the Second World War). My take on this study will be to view, through the art created under the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Administration's New Deal, how this period in economic history was captured during the time of its existence and how this period is captured in public memory today. This study will be under the rubric of cultural economics, or, economic analysis applied to arts and culture. The study of the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) is an opportunity to apply the methods of cultural economics specifically to an important period in history and will add to the existing research of both cultural economics and the study of the history of the Great Depression through applied analysis. It is anticipated that research into the WPA/FAP as a case study will generate both theoretical and empirical insights into the research program of cultural economics¹ and to our understanding of the Great Depression.

Martin R. Kalfatovic writes that 1969 to 1985 was a "major phase of New Deal art project scholarship, that of documenting the projects and locating works of art, documents, and artists involved on the various projects, exhibitions and monographs reintroduce the public to the 'art for the people.'" A second phase of New Deal art scholarship began in 1979, "that of interpreting, aesthetically, socially and semiotically, the meaning of the art works produced".² My project

¹ See Appendix 2., my Spring 2008 term paper for the New School for Social Research Seminar in Economic Methodology entitled "The *Value Difference* in Art Economics," for a survey of the research program in art economics.

² Martin R. Kalfatovic, *The New Deal Fine Arts Projects: A Bibliography, 1933-1992* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), pages xvi-xvii.

attempts to add to this scholarship in the Second Millennium through the method of cultural economics, using previous scholarship and additional archival research to bring new insight into the legacy of the Great Depression.

For my work on economics and the memory of the Great Depression I have chosen to use the lens of easel paintings (mostly oil paintings) as the ‘commodity’ from which to base analysis. Oil paintings are relatively inexpensive to produce, easily tradeable and moveable, considered highly collectable fine art by many,³ and paintings are the cornerstone of many museums and galleries (and homes), and thus highly significant cultural markers throughout the world. In addition, there has been substantial recent research into the value of paintings versus that of other financial investments in the economy⁴, some of which has highlighted what I call the *value difference* between art and other economic goods (see Appendix 1 for more on the *value difference* in cultural economics).

³ The most expensive work of art ever sold was Jackson Pollock’s *No. 5, 1948* (see below, image from www.telegraph.co.uk, accessed on 3/30/08) sold by David Geffen to David Martinez for \$140 million (New York Times, “A Pollock is Sold, Possibly for Record Price,” November 2, 2006). Jackson Pollock worked for the WPA/FAP (Tyler Cowen, *Good and Plenty* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, page 70) however the FAP was defunded in 1943 thus this painting was not produced while Pollock was under contract to the U.S. Government.



⁴ See Ruth Towse, ed., *Recent Developments in Cultural Economics* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2007) for some examples of recent research into art as investment.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section is on the WPA/FAP itself and will explain why I have chosen to study the WPA/FAP, what I have learned so far about the FAP, what further research is needed and will describe areas in which my research can add value to the study of political economy and history of the depression through further study of the WPA/FAP. The second section is on the relationship between the artists who worked for the WPA/FAP and the WPA/FAP itself. This could generically be called “supply-side analysis” in economics as will shed insight into the social and economics relations of production of the art, the artist and her times. The third and final section will be specifically on the art (easel paintings) created during the WPA/FAP. This section could be generically referred to as “market analysis” as will survey the value of this art today. However this research is also related to “public memory” as will include art that is available for viewing by the general public.

I. The Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project as Unit of Analysis

Why the WPA/FAP?

Through the process of introspection based on informal conversations with many people, both young and old, I have learned that when one thinks of the art produced in America under the Depression one thinks of the WPA. In fact, there were at least 8 different art programs⁵ under the Roosevelt Administration. I have chosen the Federal Art Project because it is 1) the most famous of these programs⁶, 2) the largest and longest lasting, and 3) specifically was designed as a “relief” program as opposed to a program which commissioned works to artists either employed or unemployed or based on “merit” alone.⁷

⁵ Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *New Deal for Art* (Hamilton, NY: Gallery Association of New York, 1977).

⁶ Tyler Cowen in his book on arts funding calls the WPA “the most acclaimed arts program in U.S. history,” page 12. Tyler Cowen, *Good & Plenty: The Creative Success of American Arts Funding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁷ In that there are more than 2,000 boxes of records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) on the WPA in College Park, MD (which I visited for four days during the week of April 17, 2008) I am using mostly cross-checked secondary sources to verify the policy differences between the New Deal art programs. I will focus my time on areas on which I can add value, specifically from a cultural economics perspective (which, my research has shown

The American government channeled its subsidies to artists through two agencies: the Section of Painting and Sculpture (later Section of Fine Arts in the Treasury Department), and the Federal Art Project in the Works Progress Administration. Both could be justified on grounds that they kept the skills of artists from deteriorating when there were few private commissions and sales. Both units also aspired to make art a larger part of American life and thereby improve the quality of that life. The Federal Art Project chief, Holger Cahill, operated under the assumption that large production and mass participation could bring the desired changes. He inclined to leave the judgment of the work to posterity. The Treasury's champion of art for the people, Edward Bruce, held that exposing the public to consistently good art would achieve the goal. Bruce had strong convictions about what constituted "good" art, and artists who worked for the Treasury had to meet his technical and artistic and aesthetic standards.

Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1979), page xi.

The *value difference* approach in art economics shows that the 'merit good' argument has been used as the most common justification for government intervention in the art. Merit goods are only consumed through subsidy because people are not educated enough to have their consumption preferences reflect the merit good and therefore not enough of a person's resources are used for consumption of the merit good. Art is something which contains value beyond the 'exchange value' (e.g. it contains 'intrinsic' or 'use value' outside or above or different than the value of the art bought and sold on the market). The merit good approach means that not enough (good) art is provided by the market. The approach taken by Edward Bruce in the Treasury Department's program would fall under the 'merit good' argument.⁸

However the merit good argument has become more or less discredited in the art economics literature and the notion of *intergenerational equity*, or art as something with 'heritage value' to be passed along to future generations, is now more the focus of the *value difference* in art economics in applied public policy. The

thus far, has not been done), rather than duplicate well-documented past efforts. Appendix 2 lists works written based on documents found in Record Group 69 on the WPA. These references were compiled from information contained on the NARA website, www.nara.gov, and the New Deal Preservation Society website, www.newdeallegacy.org.

⁸ The term 'merit good' was not used in economics until coined by economist Robert Musgrave in 1954, which is of course after the time of the New Deal. See Appendix 2., especially the section related to the aesthetic versus economic trade-offs in the public policy for the arts for a discussion on merit goods in the art economics literature.

approach to subsidizing the arts taken by Holger Cahill's Federal Art Project is more reflective of the heritage good argument and therefore more cogent to on-going cultural economic scholarship.⁹ In addition, the WPA/FAP was more needs-based than the Treasury program, which was based primarily on commissions for specific artworks and Treasury's definition of a "good artist."¹⁰ The study of the development of Federal relief to include the artist is also a focus of my project as will provide insight into the taxonomy of the definition of an artist and how the artist's pay scale was determined by the WPA/FAP, this offers a case study on how the artist's value is viewed in society.

What was the Federal Art Project?

The Federal Art Project was in existence between 1935 and 1943 and until 1939 was co-managed by the Federal government in conjunction with the states. There were 100 local art centers nationwide, employing approximately 6,000 artists during the life of the project. In 1939 management of the FAP (though not most of the funding) and artwork in possession of the Federal government was turned over to the states. According to Francis V. O'Connor¹¹ the WPA/FAP was funded for approximately \$35 million (\$35 million in 1943 is equal to \$428 million in 2008, from the www.bls.gov 'inflation calculator').¹² The FAP produced

⁹ This paper shows later that that the difference between the two programs may not have even been well-understood by the government-funded artists at the time. Lee Krasner says in her interviews archived at the Smithsonian Institution that she was funded by the WPA when in fact the programs she describes herself working on seem to be Treasury projects.

¹⁰ The WPA/FAP state art directors delegated with authority by Cahill also were asked to use their judgment on the "integrity" of the artists to be hired by the WPA/FAP. More research is need as to what is meant by this term to see if it relates to conforming to some FAP-defined norm expected of the paintings themselves, or reflecting a personal or political characteristic of the artist herself.

¹¹ The archivist at NARA responsible for the WPA/FAP, Gene Morris, recommended the work of Francis V. O'Connor. It is from O'Connor's *WPA: Art for the Millions; Essays from the 1930s by the Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1973), page 305 that I draw the \$35 million figure. I hope to improve upon this data as well as determine state-by-state WPA/FAP funding and relate state funding percentages to how extant works are displayed or in care of public arts institutions in each state today. Document 3. from the archives shows that the FAP kept state-by-state breakdowns of expenditures.

¹² The FAP was in existence for 8 years. For comparison the last 8 years of available data for the National Endowment for the Arts (1998-2006) shows approx. \$514 million in total funding for the period (source, nea.gov), or, slightly more than the FAP total of the inflation-adjusted \$428

approximately 108,000 easel paintings, including watercolors (note: I am not using watercolors in my classification of ‘paintings’ for this research). In addition there were around 2,500 murals, 17,500 sculptures, 11,000 fine prints, 22,000 design plates, and 35,000 poster designs (with 2,000,000 posters printed from these designs) funded with the FAP monies.

In October 1935 Holger Cahill, Director of the Federal Art Project, issued Letters of Authorization to the State Art Directors giving them authority to “approve or disapprove, on the basis of their artistic integrity and social desirability, projects calling for the employment of artists, craftsmen, etc....which will employ at least 90 per cent relief personnel” (see Document 2. from the archives for a sample listing of the State Art Directors and the authorization to Audrey McMahan for the state of New York). One of the key areas for further study pointed-out by the Letters of Authorization is the determination of criteria by which someone was defined by the FAP as eligible for relief as an artist. Was it schooling and/or professional qualifications? Previous income, work, as an artist? Membership in a union? Or, as referred to in the Authorization, “integrity” and “social desirability” and relatedly how are these terms defined by the WPA/FAP? Does this imply some type of political as opposed to artistic criteria for the Federal government’s definition of an artist as eligible for relief work for the FAP?¹³

In August 1936 Cahill put into place procedures for loaning FAP art in possession of the Federal government to local publically-funded institutions who did not receive taxpayer funds for the purchase of art (see Document 4. from the archives). Later in this paper I show how the Federal government allocated (as opposed to loaned) works of art to the states beginning in 1939, the allocation process is important for tracing the history of individual works of art from their creation through where they are today. The loan and allocation documents show that the FAP tried to be decentralized and nationwide, and perhaps gives some initial credence to philosopher Isaiah Berlin’s claim that Roosevelt’s “internal policy was

million. In 1943 the economy (Gross Domestic Product) was \$198.6 billion and in 2006 the economy was \$13,194.7 billion. Thus the 8 years of total funding for the FAP represented 17% of the economy during its last year of existence, or using an average as a rough estimate, the FAP represented 2% of the economy during each year of its existence. Whereas the NEA’s total 8 years of funding represents less than 4% of the economy, or using the same rough estimate, less than ½% of the economy (GDP data from bea.gov). In addition this technique underestimates the FAP’s share of the economy because the 1943 figure includes output growth due to military production since the US economy joined the Second World War in 1942.

¹³ The definition of who is an artist is a fundamental one in cultural economic analysis, see Appendix 2., “The *Value Difference* in Art Economics” for a discussion on the definition of an artist in cultural economics and how this relates to supply-side and market analysis.

plainly animated by a humanitarian purpose” and that his “government was highly personal.”¹⁴

Document 6. from the archives gives us insight into the bureaucracy of the WPA and FAP. In June 1936 the FAP worked with the Phillips Gallery in Washington, DC to present the work of 100 of its artists for “everyone interested in the white collar projects of the Works Program”. The three documents that make up this paper trail show the FAP Director Cahill was a good bureaucrat and knew how to gain support for his program,¹⁵ although the show is at a private gallery Cahill makes sure that “government officials” are to be especially invited. Perhaps Cahill felt a need to show that white collar workers e.g. artists were legitimate recipients of relief to his fellow WPA directors doing more traditional government infrastructure projects or to show solidarity with the other FAP “white collar” programs (the Writers, Photography, Historical Records, Music and Theatre projects)¹⁶. More research is needed in the WPA and FAP relief policy where it relates to relief provided to the artist versus relief given to others in need. For example, were other potential relief recipients judged on ‘integrity’ and ‘social desirability’? Was there some type of animosity amongst WPA directors because artists were “skilled” labor whereas most others were “unskilled”?

¹⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), pages 629 and 635.

¹⁵ One of the foundational areas for research in art economics is the public policy surrounding government funding of the arts. This includes “public choice economics”, for which James Buchanan won the Nobel Prize in 1986. Public choice economics shows how bureaucracies in government have the incentive to increase their power and funding and their support amongst the public and other government officials. The documents surrounding the FAP art exhibit at the Phillips Gallery are a good example of how government bureaucracies work.

An interesting point to notice is that Jacob Baker, the Assistant Administrator for the WPA to whom Cahill reported, crossed out in the letter of invitation to the exhibition, “should see” and replaced it with “will want to see”. This might show that, at least at this high level of administration, the WPA did not want to be seen as a ‘taste-maker’ for what others should consider ‘good’ art. This is counter-intuitive to the notion in cultural economics of ‘merit goods’ where experts are in the position to determine what is ‘good’ for the general public. In addition, this is counter-intuitive to the notion of bureaucrats seeking power in the “public choice” paradigm, Baker crossed out his name as the sender of the letter and added Cahill’s name. This shows good management and leadership.

¹⁶ The Writers and Theatre project in particular were seen as ‘leftist’ by cultural conservatives, see for example Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1973) which has many anecdotes involving the politics of the New Deal arts programs.

The WPA/FAP and Political Economy

In certain schools of economic thought, beginning with the classical economists of the 18th Century through the neo-Sraffians of today, labor which is not used for the reproduction of society is considered unproductive labor.¹⁷ However, under the WPA relief, artists were considered part of the workforce and thus eligible for relief. Who, when and why was the decision to fund artists as relief is an interesting question in the history of economic thought. William F. McDonald writes “The program [WPA/FAP] arose from the coincidence, fortuitous or providential, of two ideas: (1) that in time of need the artist, no less than the manual worker, is entitled to employment as an artist at the public expense; and (2) that the arts, no less than business, agriculture, and labor are, and should be the immediate concern of the ideal commonwealth,” William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1969), page iv.¹⁸

History is people and this is true with the development of the Federal Art Project. When Roosevelt was governor of New York the state had artists on its payroll, so the funding of artists at the Federal level may not have been that much of a leap for

¹⁷ Adam Smith wrote “The labor of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value, and does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject, or vendible commodity, which endures after that labor is past, and for which an equal quantity of labor could afterwards be procured. [...] In the same class must be ranked, some of the bravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous professions: churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players buffoons, musicians, opera singers, opera dancers, &c. [...] Like the declamation of the actor, the harangue of the orator, or the tune of the musician, the work of all of them perishes in the very instant of its production,” Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Random House, [1776] 1994), page. 361.

¹⁸ Note the intent of this research is not to evaluate the economic policies of the Roosevelt Administration and whether or not these policies were ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the economy, although as a follower of the Austrian School of economics I believe that Roosevelt’s attempts at centralized management of the economy (tariffs, quotas, production subsidies, income support, price and production controls) prolonged the Depression through making economic adjustment more difficult and costly in human terms. However in this his policies were not a radical departure from the ‘stabilization’ policies of the preceding Hoover Administration, see William J. Barber, *From New Era to New Deal: Herbert Hoover, the Economists, and American Economic Policy, 1921-1933* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1985). In addition Roosevelt was elected to office four times so it is perhaps futile and irrelevant to conjencturalize the past.

Roosevelt.¹⁹ The well-known main character in the story of the genesis of Federal arts funding is Roosevelt's classmate from the Groton School and Harvard University, George Biddle. Biddle was a successful international businessman and artist who convinced Roosevelt to use pre-existing Treasury Department authorization to decorate Federal buildings as a means to begin the Federal funding of art memorializing the Roosevelt Administration and what later became known as the Great Depression. Biddle first approached Roosevelt with the idea in May 1933 and by June 1934 the Federal Government had funded 3,700 artists.²⁰ Of course it is obvious that 1) people were not aware of how long the economic slump would last and 2) nor were people aware that Roosevelt would be elected to four consecutive terms of office. When Biddle wrote his letter to Roosevelt the latter had been in office for just three months and the economic slump had been going on for three years. There had been economic slumps before (which were more prevalent and deeper prior to the buildup of the welfare state since the Second World War) but none with 25% unemployment. Biddle believed that Federally-funded art would leave a lasting legacy to Roosevelt's "social ideals"²¹ and this can only be said to be highly prescient.

Unemployment relief first became 'federalized' under the Herbert Hoover Administration in 1932 under the Emergency Relief and Construction Act which authorized the American Red Cross to give in-kind Federally-owned surplus foodstuffs directly to the destitute. Then in 1933 Congress authorized the creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration which provided grants to the states for unemployment relief, the use of these relief monies was managed jointly between the states and the Federal government. (FERA set-up the Federal-state operating arrangements for what later became the Works Progress Administration.) FERA also marked a radical departure in public policy towards the poor. For the first time an employment program was used to provide relief categorically to the unemployed instead of those unable to work, FERA was to provide jobs in order to

¹⁹ Of course the funding of artists by the Federal government is not authorized in the U.S. Constitution. The only Federal bodies authorized in the constitution are the Department of War, the Department of State and the Department of the Treasury, yet there are twelve Congressionally-authorized cabinet-level Departments today. Adherence to the Constitution was perhaps not a concern for Roosevelt and the Depression-era Congress, just as it has not been for other governments.

²⁰ McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, pages 3-19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, page 5.

“conserve skills, work habits and morale.”²² In May 1935 the Works Progress Administration was created and in October 1935 the Federal Art Project was created.²³ Illustration 1. summarizes these events leading up to the Federal funding of the arts under the WPA.²⁴

²² Information on the public policy of relief is from U.S. Federal Works Agency, *Final Report on the WPA Program* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), pages. 1-6; quote from page 3.

²³ McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*, page 38.

²⁴ Data in Illustration 1. from WPA 1947, McKinzie 1973, Marlene Park and Gerard E. Markowitz, *New Deal for Art* (Hamilton, NY: Gallery Association of New York, 1977) and U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), *WPA Artwork in Non-Federal Repositories* (Washington, DC, 1999). Quotes about relief from WPA 1947 and about art from McKinzie 1973.

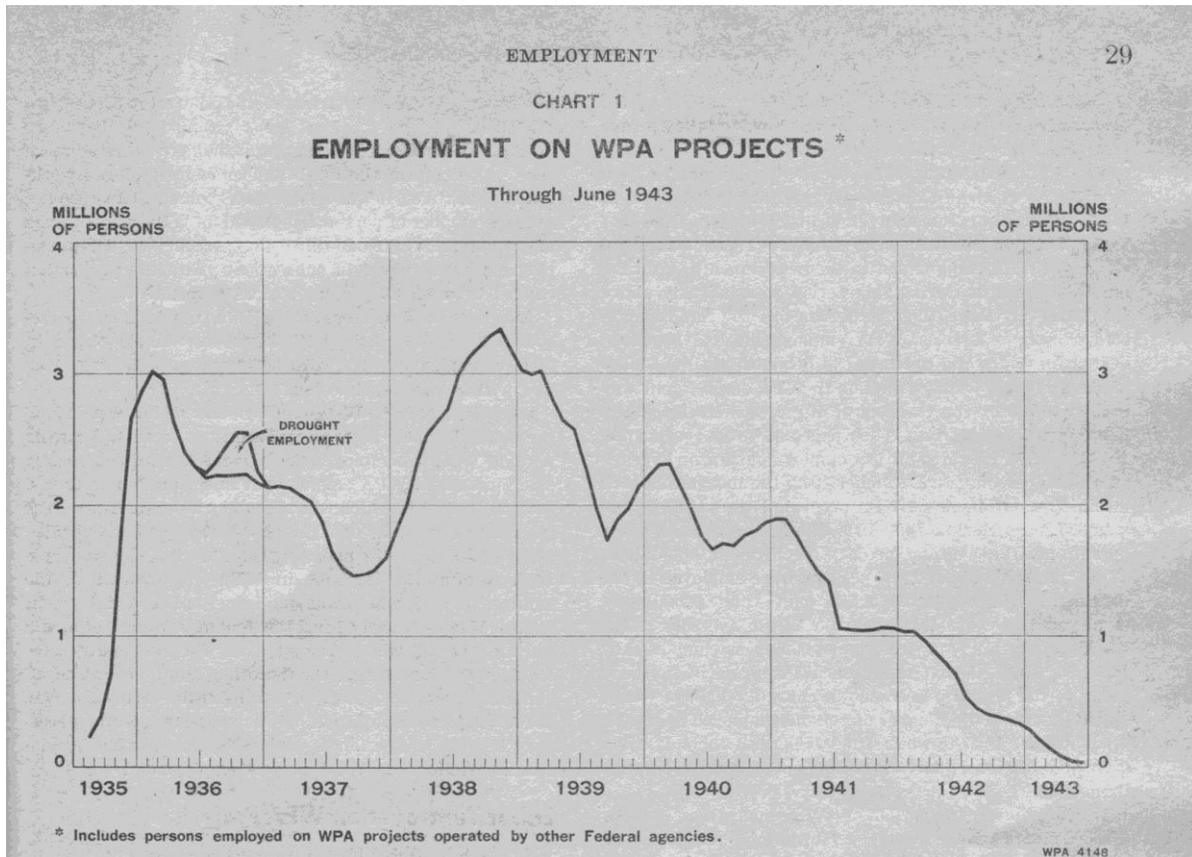
Illustration 1., Events Leading to Federal Funding for Artists in the Great Depression		
October 1929	Stock market crash	Market did not obtain pre-crash values until 1954
January 1930	4 million unemployed (10% of workforce)	States and local governments solely responsible for relief. Until 1930 state “categorical relief” did not include those unable to find work; employable persons were put on “woodpile” projects.
October 1930	Hoover creates President’s Emergency Committee for Employment	Committee encourages states to spend on relief and local infrastructure construction.
December 1930	7 million unemployed	Demand by states for Federal relief aid increases.
August 1931	Hoover creates President’s Organization on Employment Relief	
March 1932	Congress authorizes in-kind aid from Federal Farm Board to American Red Cross for distribution to “destitute”	Red Cross granted 40 million bushels of surplus wheat for distribution, later increased to 45 million bushels of wheat from Grain Stabilization Corporation and 500,000 bales of cotton from Cotton Stabilization Corporation.
July 1932	Congress passes Emergency Relief and Construction Act	Act represents “most significant departure from traditional concept of local responsibility for relief.” \$300 million loaned to states and local governments by Reconstruction Finance Corporation for relief, loans later forgiven to states.
November 1932	Roosevelt elected President	
March 1933	Roosevelt inaugurated	
May 1933	Congress authorizes creation of Federal Emergency Relief Administration	FERA creates partnership with states, establishing grant procedures to states for management of relief based on cash payments to meet “minimum needs”. Projects authorized for the employable to “conserve skills, work habits and morale.”
May 9, 1933	George Biddle sends letter to Roosevelt about a government art project	Biddle and Roosevelt were classmates at Groton and Harvard. Biddle said that a mural project “could help achieve Roosevelt’s social ideals and would remain as a monument to them” and that “young painters” wanted to help with Roosevelt’s “social revolution.” State of New York had artists on payroll when Roosevelt was Governor.
November 1933	11 million unemployed (25% of workforce)	
December 1933 to June 1934	Federal Civil Works Administration has short-term authorization.	CWA operated as Federal program which paid recipients directly. \$860 million spent by Federal government, \$90 million by states. Hourly wages for “skilled” and “unskilled” labor; 4.3 million families and 7 million single persons received CWA funding. Under Biddle’s coordination CWA transfers funds to Treasury Dept. Public Works of Art Project as Treasury is authorized to “decorate” Federal buildings. 3,700 artists funded nationally during life of CWA.
May 1935	Works Progress Administration created by Executive Order	Roosevelt required that WPA projects had at least 90% relief labor. WPA spends \$13 billion through 1943.
October 1935	Federal Art Project created under WPA	Easel painting division created under WPA/FAP and at peak in 1936 employs 5,000 artists nationally.
December 1935	FERA discontinued	\$4 billion spent during the three years of the FERA

That mass-scale relief (employment of those eligible for relief) was a priority of the WPA can be seen Document 1. from the archives (Employment on WPA Sponsored Federal Nationwide Projects by State, week ending January 14, 1939) weekly reporting on employment statistics were used²⁵ whereas archival research shows that other reports under the FAP were monthly or semi-annually. Illustration 2. is from page 29 of *Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43*, published in 1947 and shows the employment trend during the life of the WPA; it is estimated that artist made up around 2% of the those employed by the WPA.²⁶

²⁵ The use of economic statistics by the U.S. Government began in the early in the early 1920s as part of what William J. Barber calls the ‘new economics’ of government attempting to counter-act the business cycle, see Barber, *From New Era to New Deal: Herbert Hoover, the Economists, and American Economic Policy, 1921-1933*, page. 8.

²⁶ Park and Markowitz, *New Deal for Art*, state, “Actually, of the people employed on the WPA, only 2 percent at most were artists – including musicians, actors, writers and researchers, as well as visual artists,” page 5. Gene Morris at the National Archives said that he gets asked “every couple of years” for a list of Federal Art Project artists and that he has to say that no list exists. I am hoping that a study of the WPA/FAP payroll records on microfilm and addition archival research might allow the compilation of such a list. Meanwhile GSA 1999 offers the most comprehensive single source.

Illustration 2.



We can see that the peak of WPA employment was late 1938 with a steady decline until the program was liquidated in 1943 upon request by Roosevelt. Illustration 4. (page v. of the *WPA Final Report*) is a letter written by Roosevelt in December 1942 to the Director of Federal Works Program - under which the WPA was subsumed in 1939 - that states “I agree that you should direct the prompt liquidation of the affairs of the Work Projects Administration...”. (By this time the US had been fighting the Second World War for a year.) As part of this project I will compare both in table and graphical form comparisons between public and private employment during the Great Depression years and compare this with the macroeconomic performance (income, or Gross National Product) during the period. I also hope to get accurate statistics on artist employment for the period.

We also know from Illustration 3. (page 32 of the *WPA Final Report*) that the WPA stopped making new assignments in May 1941. This ties with Document 7.

from the archives (Sponsor's Semi-Annual Narrative Progress Report from Mayor of New York City for period Jan. 1- June 30, 1941) which states that the New York City Federal Art Project was having trouble implementing its program "as a result of the 18-months' dismissals" More research is required to determine when the 18-month employment limitation policy with the WPA was initiated but it is clear that as of the summer of 1941 (pre-U.S. involvement in the Second World War) that the Roosevelt Administration had determined mass relief was no longer necessary. I also need to determine if Congress officially de-authorized the WPA and what was the rationale, in other words, did Congress make a determination that an agency was no longer necessary to deal with mass-relief at the Federal level?

Illustration 3.

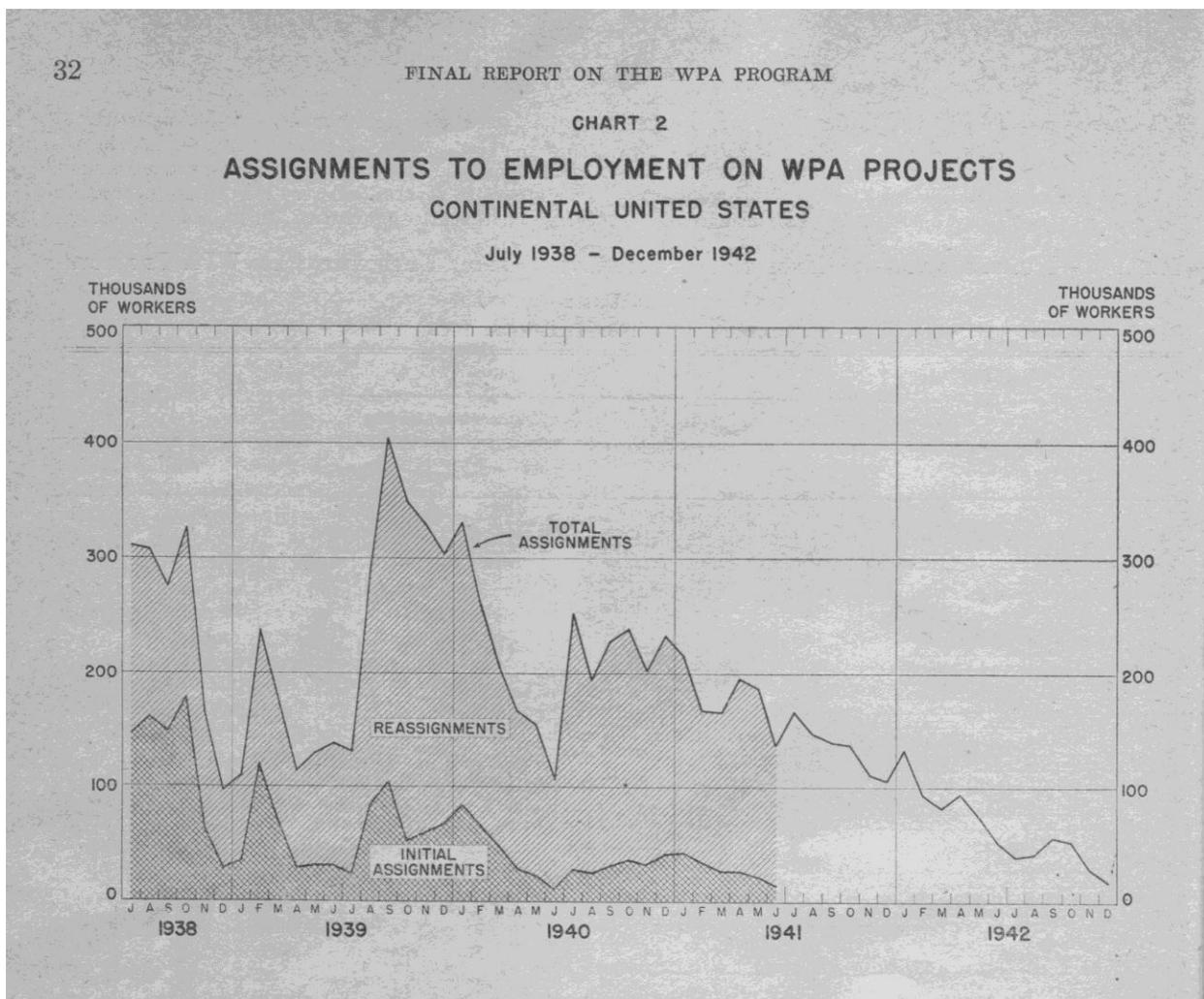
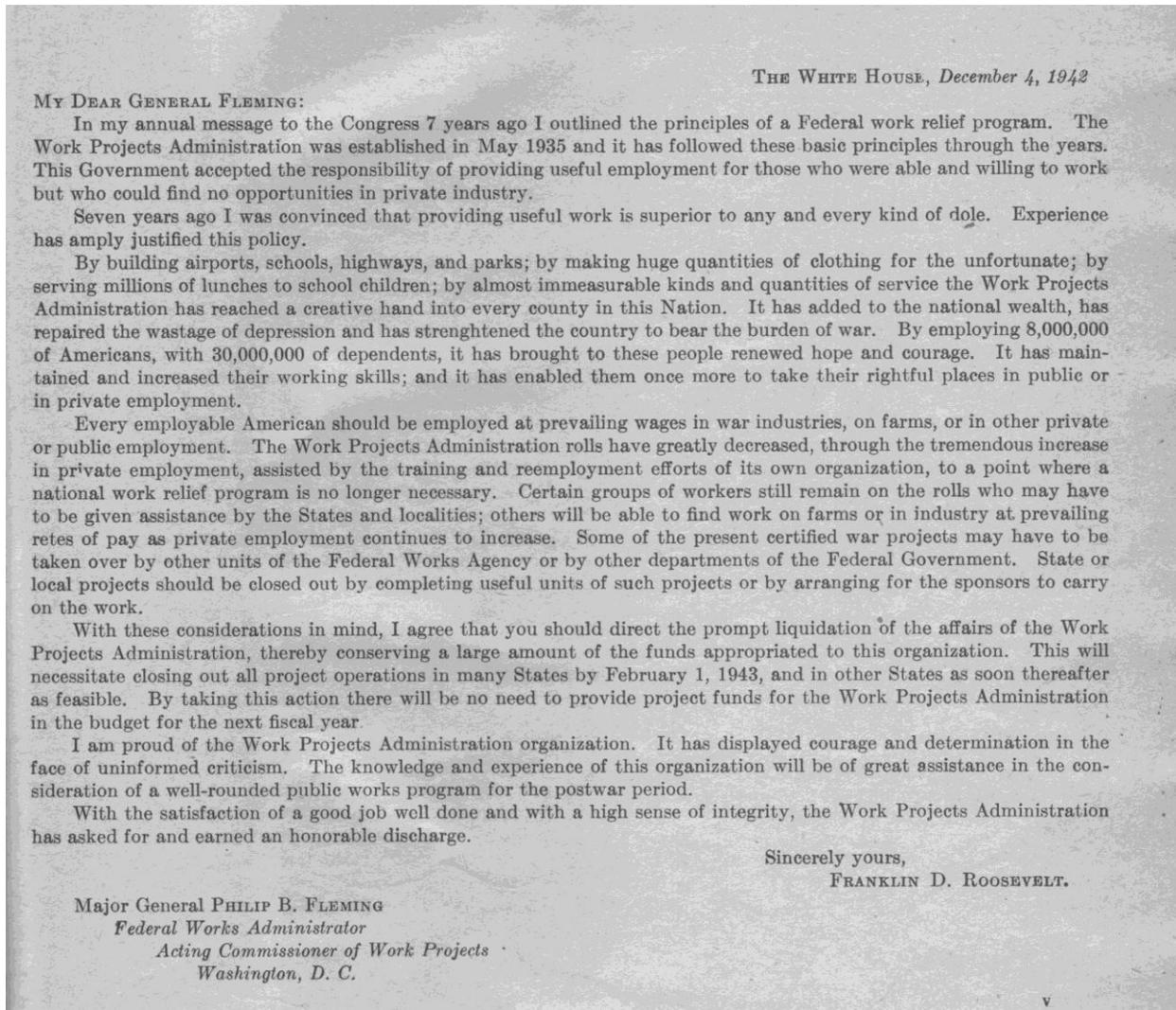


Illustration 4.



Further research the political economy of the relief program itself is necessary in order to ascertain how the wages for artists were determined in relation to other employment classes in the economy and the mechanics that someone had to go through to qualify for this relief and if possible how this relief status effected her art²⁷ (see next section for more on this in terms of the supply-side analysis of the

²⁷ The Smithsonian Institution's Archive on American Art contains an interview with Ben Shahn, one of the WPA's most famous artists, conducted by Harlan Phillips on October 3, 1965. In this interview Shahn states he had to take "an oath of poverty" to obtain WPA funding.

FAP art). We know from Document 5. from the archives (Monthly report from the WPA/FAP project in New Jersey for February 1937) that relief status was monitored and enforced because the document lists workers who were dismissed “because they were found to be ineligible for relief.”

In the order of business of public policy in the Federal government the Administration proposes an action and the Congress then either authorizes and funds the Administration’s proposal or changes it or fails to act upon it. As part of the political economy aspects of my project I would like to research the Congressional Appropriation bills related to the WPA to see what conditionalities were put on the WPA funds and how these conditionalities were implemented by the Administration. Relating to funding we learn from the 1940 radio broadcast in Document 8. from the archives that by 1940 arts funding was in jeopardy as one of the leaders of the American art movement, Stuart Davis, who was the National Chairman of the American Artists Congress, calls for a reaction against threatened funding.²⁸

We have seen that Federal arts funding was implemented by the Roosevelt Administration through the charisma of George Biddle and his prior relationship with Roosevelt, however, what is missing in my research thus far is how a Federal role in the arts was debated in the public sphere and how this manifested itself in Congressional authorizations and appropriations during the period. In addition it will be fruitful to determine how funding levels were chosen in Congress for the WPA and the FAP and how then onward levels were determined for the states for the FAP. We have already seen some examples which are counter to general tendencies expected in public economics in the administration of the WPA/FAP (see the discussion above about the WPA downplaying its role as ‘taste-maker’ for the arts in relation to the Phillips Gallery show in 1936), perhaps additional archival and secondary research will highlight additional insight into the cultural economics of Federal relief related to the arts during the Depression. Also missing from my research is the larger question of why and when did the Roosevelt Administration and Congress decide that massive relief, as opposed to economic

²⁸ U.S. Congressional Representative William I. Sirovich (D-NY) introduced a bill in January 1937 to create a cabinet-level Department of Science, Art and Literature, the bill was defeated in June 1938 (McKinzie, page 51 and Kalfatovic, page xii). Sirovich died in December 1939 and was a “staunch supporter of the New Deal art projects and sponsor of fine arts legislation” (Kalfatovic, page xiv). Thus arts funding lost a prominent supporter in late 1939. Further research is required to understand the relationship between Congressional authorization and funding bills and the creation, implementation and liquidation of the WPA/FAP as well as the creation of any post-WPA Federal arts programs.

recovery, should become a national priority. The study of employment and economic production trends during the period will highlight the relevance of any debates over relief funding.

The semi-annual narrative report of the New York Federal Art Project dated July 1941 (Document 7. from the archives) states that “beyond the immediate objectives of providing work for the unemployed artist and giving him increased confidence and skill, the program of the New York City WPA Art Project is fostering a new art literacy, broadening existing markets, making art available to the tax-payer and cooperating with government agencies engaged in preparations for national defense”²⁹ and a category entitled ‘Civilian Morale’ states that the project offers “precautionary instruction”, instruction in “civilian behavior in war-time” and “foreign born toward good citizenship” and “Illustration and visualization of printed material for purposes of education and propaganda,” pages 4-5. It is clear that by 1941 the WPA/FAP has become something other than just creating art of the ‘American scene’. It would be worthwhile to study earlier project narratives to see what additional goals the FAP had besides the employment and education of artists prior to the defense effort in order to determine the relationship between FAP art and larger Roosevelt Administration goals.³⁰

²⁹ The semi-annual report is dtd. July 1, 1941 and states the project is “engaged in preparations for national defense,” yet the attack on Pearl Harbor did not occur until Dec. 7, 1941; the next day President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan.

³⁰ Most of the New Deal propaganda took shape in FAP divisions other than the easel painting division. For example Park and Markowitz shows a Ben Shahn photograph of a march on May Day 1935 with marchers carrying signs saying “Revolutionary Tradition” and “Created Equal”, another Shahn photograph shows an Artists’ Union Demonstration with signs “Artists Delegations Keep Out” and dialectically “Every Artist an Organized Artist,” an FAP/WPA silk screen says “Keep Your Teeth Clean”, another silkscreen says “Work Promotes Confidence: Works Progress Administration”, another “Stop the Spread of Syphilis”, and another silkscreen states “Cure Juvenile Delinquency in the Slums by Planned Housing”. It could be said too that social realism painting glorifies the working man over the man of capital (despite that – or because of that - social realism also glorifies industrial and technological progress).

II. The Relationship between the Artist and the WPA/FAP

Part of the research program in cultural economics is to evaluate the ‘supply-side’ of art. What is an artist’s motivation for creating, and what institutional settings add to or subtract from, or otherwise effect, the creative process? We have seen in Document 7. from the archives that the WPA/FAP had “citizenship training” as part of its agenda. A larger philosophical question might be that if government is funding production of the arts, can the art really be free from the demands made upon it by its funding source?³¹ Was the artist part of morale building aspects of the WPA/FAP implicitly or explicitly and can an artist whose topics or styles or “integrity” be judged by her funding source really create ‘art’? Jonathan Harris states that the WPA/FAP is “state cultural populism,” and write “The conflict over the interpretation of the Project as primarily a work-creation scheme for the unemployed or a vehicle for state embellishment was central to the arguments over the Project’s legitimacy,” Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pages 28-43.

As noted above beginning in the early 1920s the U.S. Government determined that it could counter-act business cycles through the use of statistics. This ‘logical positivism’ also manifests itself in management of the social aspects of American life under the Roosevelt Administration. FAP Director Holger Cahill³² gave an address in November 1938 which describes how this logical positivism, especially American pragmatist philosophy, influenced him.

³¹ William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1969), page 424, “The professional emphasis of the project is demonstrated by the fact that *easel painters represented by far the largest single class of practicing artists on the project* [emphasis added]. The Federal Art Project accepted the easel painter for what he was and attempted to turn his talent to new uses in another way. [FAP Director] Cahill, whose background was in the field of American folk art, encouraged the depiction of the ‘American scene,’ and his emphasis fitted nicely with the emphasis upon cultural nationalism that was current at the time.”

³² When Cahill was 20 years old, “A job as night short-order cook gave him time and money for courses at the New School for Social Research and at Columbia. He took a course with Thorstein Veblen [a founder of the New School economics department]...His interests were writing and socialism.” McKinzie, page 79.

The subject of my talk this morning is “American Resources in the Arts.” John Dewey and his pupils and followers have been of the greatest importance in developing American resources in the arts, especially through their influence on the school systems in this country. They have emphasized the importance and pervasiveness of the aesthetic experience, the place of arts as part of the significant life of an organized community, and the necessary unity of the arts with the activities, the objects, and the scenes of everyday life. They have insisted that the teaching of the arts should not be relegated to the frills and extras, but that it is central to any system of education. They have shown that art education, like art itself, involves activity, that art appreciation can best be taught through doing. Their thought and activity have been of the greatest significance in the organization of contemporary programs which are stimulating the development of American art resources and making these resources available to wide publics. Among these is the WPA/FAP.

O’Connor, *Art for the Millions*, pages 33-34.

We can see here the vision that Cahill has for the WPA/FAP, the view that art should be of everyday life. This view of art as necessary to social life is echoed in an “America’s Town Meeting of the Air” (Document 8. from the archives, which is a CD of the radio broadcast from 1940 entitled, “Is There a Revolution in the Arts?”) with Stuart Davis, one of the most famous and influential artists funded by the WPA/FAP and in the later development of the American art movement. Davis says that art is the means by which an artist can “think out their artistic and social problems” and that Federal funding of the arts “besides from its economic aspect places art in the category of essential Federal services. Yes, there is a revolution in the arts, there always was a revolution in the arts and I think it is a darn good thing.”³³ Davis’ view of art is countered in the radio program by the next speaker, painter Albert Sterner,

At all times the artist is an emotional individualist as such he is ill adapted to any form of collective or union regimentation. The propagandist themes of racial persecution, capital and labor, squabbling unions and economic unrest in the world as necessarily represented by the cartoonists are doubtful subject matter for permanent fine art. The cold mechanist pseudo-scientific, the bald ugly realism, which in recent years has come to invade the arts can bear only sterile fruit in our scheduled lives, for art stands above propaganda.

³³ One might reasonably ask how can a revolution be funded by the government?

Clearly it was accepted institutionally that a variety of opinions on the philosophy of art were accepted by the Roosevelt Administration³⁴, this is borne out by the wide-variety of styles of paintings produced by the WPA.³⁵

There are two ways to approach analysis of the WPA/FAP's institutional effects on the artist's creativity. The first is a "top-down approach" which evaluates the incentives and constraints placed on the artist during her employment with the project. This will be based on the wage scales, employment contracts and reporting relationships established by the WPA/FAP. The second is a "bottom-up approach" which is to review writings and interviews by the artists themselves, some of which occurred during the time of the artist's tenure with the project and some after the project had ended.³⁶ It is perhaps only these post-WPA interviews and writings which can be considered more free from institutional constraints (e.g. the artist has more freedom to give her true opinion as is no longer dependent on the project for income).

My initial findings in the Smithsonian interviews with Krasner and Shahn show that these artists viewed WPA funding as a government program, as some type of relief as opposed to a status-quo situation.³⁷ Krasner states "I applied and was

³⁴ From what seems a 'pluralistic approach' to state-cultural policy under the Roosevelt Administration can be juxtaposed with a tightly controlled agenda set by Stalin under the Soviet Union during the same period, see Allan B. Ho and Dmitri Feofanov, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (London: Toccato Press, 1989). Stalin coined the term 'social realism' and this is what all art in the Soviet Union had to be. It is interesting to note that both the Soviet Union and the United States state-cultural policies were producing the same types of art (social realism) at the same time.

³⁵ For example, *The WPA Era: Urban Views and Visions* (New York: Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 1992) lists 24 painters whose art was shown at the gallery, the styles include the American scene, surrealism, popular realism, architectural structuralism, social realism and cubism.

³⁶ O'Connor, *Art for the Millions* contains interviews and writings which occurred during the time of the Great Depression, whereas Francis V. O'Connor, *The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972) and the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art oral histories project contains interviews conducted after the Second World War. I hope to find more autobiographical information on artists' relationship with the WPA/FAP in works about specific artists identified for further research. In addition I will access Rosenzweig, Roy, et al., ed., *Government and the Arts in Thirties America: a Guide to Oral Histories and other Materials* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1986).

³⁷The *WPA Final Report* 1947, page 1, states that until the Depression relief funding by the states was most commonly for the unemployable only. This history no doubt effected Shahn and Krasner's views as Federal funding for the arts being something out of the ordinary.

accepted by WPA and *was on WPA*, as a matter of fact, through the various stages it went through [emphasis added]” (see earlier in this paper for an excerpt from the Krasner interview), and Shahn states that he had to take a “poverty oath” (see later in this paper for an excerpt from the Shahn interview). However both had longstanding relationships with the WPA and other government programs so at this point it is too early to judge if the government funding was seen as anything negative. It will be important to see how other artists who later became successful address their early relationship with WPA in their public voice about their work and its progress over time which will in turn give insight as to how the depression is memorialized by the artists and it turn how the Depression is memorialized with the public who read about and view the work of these artists.³⁸

In my discussions with Gene Morris, the archivist responsible for the WPA/FAP records, at the National Archives during the week of April 17, 2008 I learned that the artists signed a contract where they were to produce a number of works of art of certain styles over a given period of time. However I was not able to in my initial archival work find a copy of this contract. I am hoping that a review of the microfilm on payroll records or hard copy documents I have yet to find in Record Group 69 might contain these contracts. Document 9. from the archives (Finance operations manual from WPA Federal Project No. 1, New York City, dtd. March 15, 1939) states that some WPA/FAP employees are paid by the “unit of performance”, page 1. These units (rehearsals and performances) are specified for actors and musicians, page 2, but not for painters. As stated above my study will also include comparing the labor costs (wages earned) by the ‘white collar’ workers under the WPA to those of the ‘blue collar’ workers and the comparative private sector wage rates at the time, and research into how the WPA pay was determined. How for example did the WPA/FAP price a “unit of performance” for a painting? And if I am able to trace these paintings to a recent auction price it will be interesting to see the value appreciation.

When looking at the supply-side of art the issue of copyright is an important factor to consider in artist motivation and pricing.³⁹ Document 9. contains an

³⁸ For example, the *New York Times* obituaries of Ben Shahn and Lee Krasner, the two artists used in my preliminary studies thus far, are found under “Other Documents” at the end of this paper. Shahn’s mentions his work with the WPA (though not as an easel painter) whereas Krasner’s does not.

³⁹ See Towse, ed., *Recent Developments in Cultural Economics*, for two recent papers relating to copyrights in art economics and Ruth Towse, *Creativity, Incentive and Reward: An Economic*

“Employees Deposition” which WPA/FAP funded personnel had to sign as part of the payroll process which states that “during said period (s)he has not engaged in any private enterprise and/or outside employment during the hours for which s(he) is to receive pay from Federal funds.” It is not clear from this document whether this means that all art created by the artist while on relief belongs then to the US Government (or the institutions to which this art then was subsequently allocated). I am hoping that further research, including any contract signed by the artist with the WPA/FAP will clarify this point. This also related to the property rights of WPA art currently being sold at auction and in possession of museums.⁴⁰

III. The Art Created Under the WPA/FAP

As stated in the Introduction, my cultural economics research of the Great Depression revolves around the paintings created by artists working for the WPA/FAP. The goal here is to find 30 works of art by 30 different FAP artists which have sold at auction since 1990⁴¹ and, if possible, trace these works back to their creation date (year) and then document that these artists worked for the FAP at the time the work was created. I also hope to be able find autobiographical data on these artists which provides insight into how they viewed their role as an artist during the Depression and with hindsight after the Depression and how relief work, and/or work during the Depression, effected the arc of their creative careers. Then

Analysis of Copyright and Culture in the Information Age (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2001).

⁴⁰ In 1949 the GSA was assigned responsibility for US Government-owned works of art, including those produced under the WPA (GSA 1999, page iv); the GSA is undergoing research to catalog the location of all extant WPA art allocated to public institution during the life of the project. It is unclear whether works allocated to museums and other ‘non-Federal’ bodies included a transfer of title, see GSA 1999 for the various and conflicting policies regarding this issue. Also see “The Government Wants its WPA Art Back,” <http://www.artbusiness.com/wpa.html>, accessed 3/18/2008.

⁴¹ There are two main internet-based art auction data providers, artnet.com and artprice.com. Artnet.com states that it has over 3.5 million auction sales results from more than 500 international auction houses and artprice.com states that it has 25 million auction prices and indices, and a database of over 405,000 artists and 2,900 auction houses worldwide. In addition I will see if WPA artists are sold on ebay.com and how identified, e.g. are they identified as WPA artists or in other ways with the art created during Depression-era relief.

using this same group of artists and perhaps supplemented with others of note or at random from GSA 1999 I hope to be able to find how these artists and thus the FAP and the Depression are represented in public spaces today. I should also then be able to analyze any relationship between the market value of an artist's work and the artist's representation in public space today.

In 1947 the General Services Administration was assigned the responsibility for management of government funded works of art created during the Depression. As part of its *Fine Arts Collection* project GSA sent surveys to the institutions listed in the allocation records of the WPA (mostly museums and universities) and asked them verify which works of art are in their collections.⁴² The results of the surveys are published in GSA 1999, which lists approximately 11,000 works of art (of which using sampling I identified approximately 1,000 oil paintings) and approximately 2,000 artists identified by the GSA to be WPA artists.⁴³ Using this data as a starting point I will be able to use on-line auction databases to identify works of art by the WPA artists which have recently sold at auction.⁴⁴ I hope then to be able to trace back a work of art to the period in which in which the artist was employed by the WPA, using the employment records of the WPA contained at the archive. (Document 10. from the archives shows an example of WPA allocation procedure indentifying artists, works of art, and to which institution the art was allocated.⁴⁵) As noted, Document 9. from the archives shows that the artists were

⁴² It should be noted that it is a topic of debate in art economics whether or not museums should keep large numbers of artworks in storage or whether the art owned should be displayed only. This of course depends on the charter of the art institution itself and the decisions of its trustees. Selling 'excess' art is a source of funding for on-going operations yet selling art reduces the inventory of cultural heritage available for future generations. Like many questions of intergenerational equity it is a trade-off between the present and the future.

⁴³ See Appendix 3. for a sample of GSA 1999 showing WPA artist works and artist locations.

⁴⁴ The National Archives Record Group 69 also contains photographs (taken by the FAP Photography Division) of specific oil paintings which identifies the artist, the name of the painting and in most cases the year it was painted (RG 69, FAP General Project File 1936-1940, Box 2, Files 37-56). The files contain approximately 120 artists and approximately 150 paintings. A sampled cross-check with GSA 1999 shows that most of these artists are not in the allocation record survey results in GSA 1999 yet they must have been deemed important enough by the FAP to photograph. One measure of their importance will be if these artists have sold at auction since 1990. I am hoping that addition archival research will uncover other FAP artists not captured by GSA 1999.

⁴⁵ I printed Document 10. at random from one of two microfilm reels of the allocation records contained at the archives. I purchased a copy of these reels for my research.

required to sign a document barring them from any “private enterprise and/or outside employment” during the period for which they were paid by the WPA so this might lead to the conclusion that any art at auction which was produced while the painter was employed by the WPA originally belonged to the Federal government.⁴⁶

My initial research has found two paintings recently sold at auction which were painted at the time secondary sources say the artists were being funded by the U.S. Government during the Depression (only the allocation, payroll or contract records at the National Archives can verify with certainty if a painting was created at the time an artist was employed with the WPA/FAP).

⁴⁶ Note that I have shown in this paper that the property rights status of WPA art is unclear. McKinzie gives examples of how pre-WPA Federal art was given to members of Congress so there is no reason to believe that this was not also done with WPA art. In addition I have not yet accessed the employment, payroll or employee contract records at the archives so I am not certain that it is possible to trace a work to the WPA. Finally, it is unclear if the WPA employee disposition signed as part of the payroll process barring outside activity precludes an artist to ownership of art she created during employment with the WPA, especially if the employee contract gives quotas for production and pay and therefore if it then precludes the rights to any works created above a given quota amount. I am hoping that additional research will clarify these issues. If it is not possible to clarify these issues perhaps it is not that important in the larger picture of the ‘art movement’ catalyzed by the WPA and its sister agencies and the ongoing American art movement after the Depression. Perhaps the cultural ‘spill-over’ effects of the WPA Federal Art Project outweigh the specifics of time and place of employment if an artist was at one time employed by the WPA or one of its sister agencies. I will have to weigh these issues as I move forward with my research.

The first painting is Lee Krasner's *Untitled (Still Life Grey Ground)* (Circa 1940-1943) sold for \$65,725 through Christie's New York on May 15, 2002, pictured below.



Source: artnet.com

My reason for belief that Krasner was working for the government at this time is her mid-1960s interviews archived with the Smithsonian Institution which state that she worked for the WPA for a number of years until the “early 1940s” and McKinzie, p. 168, has a photograph of Krasner leading a “WPA team making window display units to advertise war-training courses in New York colleges” in 1942.

The second painting is Ben Shahn's *Scabbies Are Welcome* (1937) which sold for \$262,000 through Christie's New York on Sept. 12, 2006, pictured below.



Source: artnet.com

My basis for assuming that this painting was painted by Shahn during his employment with the government is based on the book *Ben Shahn* (1947), Middlesex: Penguin Books. "In 1933 Shahn was enrolled in the Federal Government's Public Works of Art Project....From September 1935 to May 1938, Shahn worked for the Farm Security Administration as an artist, and very briefly, as a photographer with the euphemistic title of 'Senior Liaison Officer' to guarantee him a living wage," pages 8-9. Therefore according to *Ben Shahn* in 1937 Shahn was working for the Farm Security Administration. However the data in *Ben Shahn* may not be accurate. Park and Markowitz list a 1935 photograph taken by Shahn in the WPA/FAP section of their book, and, they list the FSA as hiring photographers only, not painters. However it is well-documented that Shahn was active in, and supportive of, the WPA. An example of Shahn's support of the WPA is given below in an excerpt for Shahn's 1965 interview archived at the

Smithsonian. When Robert Motherwell said “nothing good came out of it [the WPA], really nothing,” Shahn responded,

I just stuck my head in front of his face. I knew my head was back to the camera and I knew Bob. I said, Look, Bob, you just had a show. The critics quoted the following people who influenced you: Jack Pollock, Bill De Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb and a few others. I remembered them because it was just at the time. All of those people, the critics said, had influenced you; and all of them had been on the WPA.

IV. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this project is to come to a well-reasoned and documented argument on how the Great Depression is remembered through the art created during the time of the relief programs of the Roosevelt Administration, the first time that the U.S. Government provided mass-scale relief to those deemed employable by the states. Based on the per-state spending of the WPA/FAP, the GSA records of allocated art (and any, more comprehensive, list of easel painters I am able to compile from additional archival work), and research into current art exhibitions and literature of WPA-era art I will conduct a survey of recent (from 1990 on) public displays relating to WPA art and examine how this art is identified with the Depression.⁴⁷ I will also conduct field visits to the state- identified arts

⁴⁷ For example the February 2008 issue of *American Art Review* contains a feature piece entitled “Virginia Snedeker and the American Scene”, pages 102-111 and containing photographs of her art from 1933 to 1949, “Lasting until the mid-1940s the American Scene movement championed upbeat depictions of daily scenes to convey the essence of the national character....The plainness in their paintings was self-conscious rather than naive as in folk art. Reinforced by the isolationism of the Depression, the movement was popular with critics and the public alike, and was used to embellish many of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal buildings,” page 102. “Snedeker supported her art during the Depression by submitting hundreds of pen and ink drawings to the *New Yorker Magazine*,” page 105, and her art was used on two covers of magazine, the first in 1939, in a style that is not too different from the magazine’s cover art of today.

The article also states that the Snedeker applied for and received a commission from the Treasury’s Department’s Fine Arts Section, and gives a photograph of the mural she painted for the Post Office in Audubon, Iowa in 1942. “She proposed the namesake of the town, John James Audubon, as the topic of her mural. History topics were frequent subjects of Post Office murals, since they promoted New Deal ideology,” pages 106-107. Here we have an artist who painted in the style preferred by the WPA/FAP yet was not funded by the FAP (at least not per GSA 1999

institutions which received the allocations of WPA art based on the art, artists and institutions identified in GSA 1999 to see how this art is displayed and represented in cultural and historical context.⁴⁸ I will use this information to relate theories of collective memory and develop a ‘case study’ of the art created under the Depression as collective memory.

Furthermore from a cultural economic perspective I will develop a case study into how artists were viewed as labor in relation to other classes of labor by the U.S. Government at the time of the Depression during the development of relief programs and will put this into context around the debates over relief and arts funding and how the artist was ‘valued’ in public policy formulation. I believe that the statistics I develop on artists employed under relief, and their relative pay and therefore one measure of relative worth in relation to the rest of the economy, will be of interest to other scholars of the art and economics of the Depression. The labor (or supply-side) statistics will also include a comparison of relief-identified artists as a percentage of the labor force in the Depression versus the labor force of the artist in the economy today.

The supply-side analysis will also include the institutional effects of relief on an artist’s creativity and output, how this institutional relationship effected an artist’s artwork during and after the Depression, how the Depression-era funding is represented in an artist’s public representations of her art after the Depression, and how the government funding of WPA art is captured today in the marketing and public display of a Depression-era artist. I can evaluate the demand-side of Depression art through recent public auctions and how the Depression-era art is displayed in locations where funding was the greatest. The collective memory of the Depression-era art will also offer insight into the *value difference* in art economics especially relating to the value of cultural heritage.

Oil painting represents a unique opportunity for this case study because a painting’s mobility, inexpensive storage costs and status as high art reduces the transaction costs of value-representation and will give a signal as to the on-going

and the Photography Division photographs of FAP easel painters found in RG 69), and although by 1945 she was under a rare “exclusive contract,” page 106, with *The New Yorker* (and thus one can assume a financially successful artist) she thought it worth her while to contribute her talents to public art through mural painting.

⁴⁸ The field visits to public spaces featuring WPA/FAP easel paintings will be prioritized based on per-state funding relative to project total funding during the life of the WPA/FAP and will be based on the arts institutions listed in GSA 1999 and current exhibitions at the time of on-going research.

aesthetic value (and memory) of the Depression for those who did not live through it.

The published research will include photographs of the 30 works identified at auction, photographs on the public memory of the Depression based on the field studies to state-sponsored recipients of allocated WPA art, comparative statistics and graphical analysis on artist 'white collar earnings' compared to other relief workers and private sector employment, analysis of the institutional effects on the motivation and creativity of the artists, narratives on the results of the case studies of the selected artists on the development of the American scene art movement through the modern art era, and findings into the political economy of Depression-era relief and how this has influenced Federal arts funding and unemployment relief today. This work also adds to the economic theory of productive and unproductive labor through applied political economy in a historical context.

The cultural economic case of the Federal Art Project will conclude with an assessment determining if indeed the U.S. Government (and U.S. taxpayer) received a pay-off on its investment to capture and therefore create a lasting aesthetic memory of the 'American scene' during the Great Depression based on the *value difference* between art and other economic goods. It is worthwhile to note that this work will be conducted and completed during the 75th anniversary of the Federal Art Project.

Documents from the National Archives

1. Employment on WPA Sponsored Federal Nationwide Projects by State, week ending January 14, 1939 (RG-69, FAP General Records, 1935-1940, Box 2).
2. Sample of the Letters of Authorization listing and the authorization to Audrey McMahan for the state of New York (RG-69, FAP General Records, 1935-1940, Box 1) .
3. Sample of state-by-state and total FAP expenditure data (RG-69, FAP General Records, 1935-1940, Box 2).
4. Cahill's letter to the State Art Directors on the loan of Art to state-nominated publically-funded arts institutions (RG-69, FAP General Records, 1935-1940, Box 1).
5. Front page of monthly report from the WPA/FAP project in New Jersey for February 1937 showing dismal of workers "because they were found to be ineligible for relief" (RG-69, Records of the Federal Art Project New York, Box 35).
6. Final and market-up draft WPA letter of invitation to the Philips Gallery FAP art exhibit opening held June 15, 1936, and FAP internal memo from FAP Director Cahill concerning invitations to the opening (RG-69, FAP General Records, 1935-1940, Box 5).
7. Sponsor's Semi-Annual Narrative Progress Report from Mayor of New York City for period Jan. 1- June 30, 1941 (RG-69, Records of the Federal Art Project New York, Box 65).
8. CD of radio broadcast 'America's Town Meeting of the Air' entitled 'Is there a revolution in the arts?' with Dr. William "Billy" Lyon Phelps, Albert Sterner, Walter Damrosch, Clifton Fadiman, Stuart Davis and Aaron Copeland, Moderated by Dr. Arthur E. Bestir, 1940 (NAIL control number: NWDNM-200-ATMA-113).
9. Finance operations manual from WPA Federal Project No. 1, New York City, dtd. March 15, 1939.

10. Sample of allocation process of WPA/FAP art, 'Federal Works Agency, Work Progress Administration, WPA Art Program Request for Allocation' and 'Receipt for Allocation of Works of Art'. (RG 69 WPA State Files Art Allocations, Box 973, Rolls 92, 93, microfilm reels).

Other Documents

1. Sample of U.S. General Services Administration, *WPA Artwork in Non-Federal Repositories*, Edition II (1999), showing 1) specific works of art, and 2) artists' works by location.
2. Ben Shahn *New York Times* obituary (June 21, 1984), Lee Krasner *New York Times* obituary (March 15, 1969).

Appendix 2.

The *Value Difference* in Art Economics

Appendix 1.

Books using National Archives Record Group 69 relating to the Works Progress
(Projects) Administration Federal Art Project, 1935-1943

Arnason, H.H., 1983. *History of Modern Art: Painting Sculpture Architecture*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ and New York: Prentice-Hall Inc. and Harry N. Abrams Inc.

Bargell, Matthew. 1974. *American Scene: American Painting of the 1930's*. New York: Pradger.

Bustard, Bruce I. 1997. *A New Deal For The Arts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Birmingham, Peter. 1980. *The New Deal in the Southwest: Arizona and New Mexico*, Catalog for exhibition of New Deal public art from both states.. Tucson: The University of Arizona Museum of Art.

Burke, Dan E. 1986. *Utah Art of the Depression*, Exhibition Catalog. Salt Lake City: Utah State Fine Art Collection

Carlton-Smith, Kimm. 1990. *PA New Deal for Women: Women Artists and the Federal Arts Project*, PhD dissertation. New Brunswick: State University of New Jersey at New Brunswick.

The Board of Trustees, Cleveland Public Library. 1974. *Federal Art in Cleveland 1933-43*.

Cohen-Solal, Anne. 2001. *Painting American: The Rise of American Artists, Paris 1867- New York 1948*. New York: Knopf.

Conrad, Peter. 1984. *Art of the City*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Contreras, Belisario R. 1983. *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art*. Lewisberg, PA.: Bucknell University Press.

Dijkstra, Braun . 1995. *American Expression: Art and Social Change 1920-50*. New York: Columbia Press.

Fisher, Philip. 1991. *Making and Effacing Art: Modern American Art in a Culture of Museums*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Flynn, Kathryn A., ed. 1995. *Treasures on New Mexico Trails: Discover New Deal Art and Architecture*. Santa Fe: Sunstone Press.

Harris, Jonathon. 1995. *Federal art and national culture: the politics of identity in New Deal America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hoefer, Jacqueline. 2003. *A More Abundant Life: New Deal Artists in New Mexico*. Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press.

Hopkins, June. 1999. *Harry Hopkins: Sudden Hero, Brash Reformer*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Hunter, Sam and John Jacobus. 1973. *American Art of the 20th Century*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ and New York: Prentice-Hall Inc. and Harry N. Abrams Inc.

Kalfatovic, Martin R. 1994. *The New Deal Fine Art Projects: a Bibliography*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press

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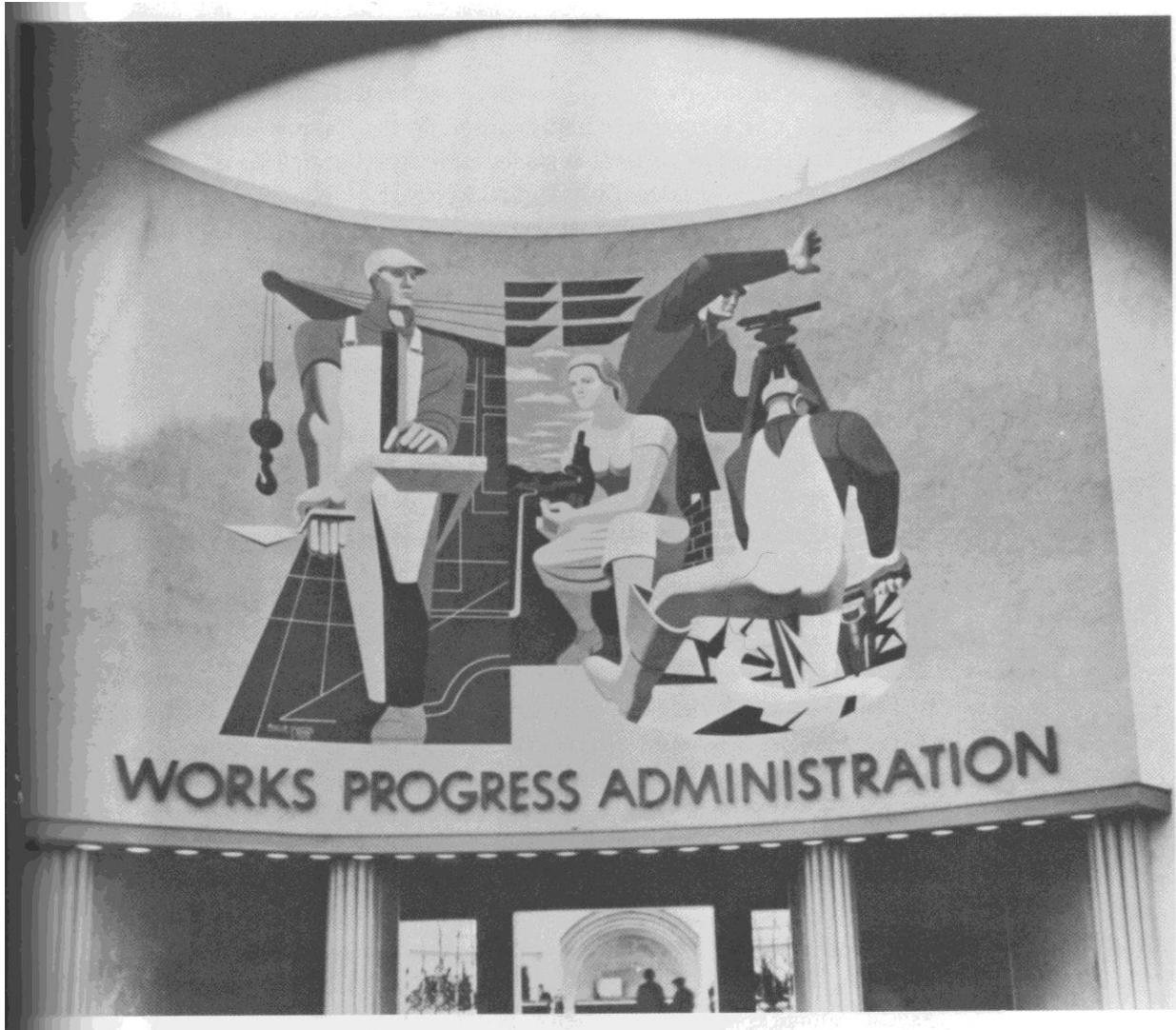


Photo of Philip Guston, *Maintaining America's Skills*, from the WPA Building at New York World's Fair, 1939, from Francis V. O'Connor, *The Deal New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1972), page 255.