

C O P Y

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AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

100 West 13th Street
New York City

Honorary Nat'l Chair.

May 24, 1939

Max Weber
Vice-Chairman
Margaret Bourke-

White
Rockwell Kent
Yasuo Kuniyoshi
Paul Manship
Lewis Mumford

To Mr. H. Ralph Burton, Investigator
Subcommittee to Investigate Works Progress Administration
of the House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

(other names
follow:omitted)

STATEMENT BY THE AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS
on the FEDERAL ART PROJECT

President Roosevelt, in his recent address formally opening the new building of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, made a statement of the greatest importance with regard to the cultural standards of the American people. He declared that the conditions for "art and democracy are one and the same".

Since its founding in 1936, the American Artists' Congress has devoted itself to a program the heart of which is contained in the President's statement. Numbering in its membership some nine hundred representative well known artists from all parts of the United States, headed by such prominent figures as Paul Manship, Rockwell Kent, George Biddle, Lewis Mumford, Max Weber and William Zorach, the Congress is not an association devoted to promoting the interests of a small group, nor merely of artists, as such. It is an organization for the advancement of culture in the United States.

Many great Americans have dedicated themselves to this end. George Washington recognized the importance of the artistic leaven in the standard of living to which Americans are entitled. Thomas Jefferson, while guiding the young Republic through one of its stormiest periods, found time to design buildings expressive of the new spirit in this land. Samuel F. B. Morse enriched the lives of his countrymen not only by his great contribution to telegraphy, but also by his distinguished achievements as a painter. He was the first president of the National Academy, the first organization for bringing art into its proper sphere in this country.

✓ With the rapid growth of the country, while art has made great strides, the opportunities and needs have never been fully met. How little had been achieved

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in brightening the lives of the American people, in bringing to them a true reflection of their own daily life, was made clear in the midst of the depression. Productive activity of the American artists, always on a precarious basis, threatened to come to a standstill in the period of acute distress. Yet the need for art was recognized as greater than ever as a vital factor in preserving the morale of the people.

When the administration went ahead with its program for defeating depression, a few thousand artists were put to work in the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration. Their creations went into schools, hospitals and other public institutions. Their teaching activities extended into the blighted areas of the great cities, providing children and adults as well with a new stimulus, recognized by competent authorities as a crime and delinquency deterrent of incalculable value. Through this development, art has been taken out of the "luxury" class and made a vital component in the program of guarding and enhancing the social well being of the American people, the children, the youth and adults.

All this has been accomplished at extremely small cost, a mere drop in the bucket of Federal expenditures necessary to safeguard democracy by preserving an American standard of living adjusted to the needs of the day. Attacks upon the Federal Art Project in the recent hearings conducted by the Congressional Subcommittee on the Works Progress Administration, have seemed to us animated more by prejudice and lack of objective knowledge, than a desire to review critically the achievements and shortcomings of the Project. We are in favor of criticism, but we think it should be conducted as a fair and objective appraisal. Any such just investigation, we are confident from our own professional knowledge and competence to discuss the subject, will produce the conclusion that the Federal Art Project is a splendid contribution to the strengthening of the democratic ideal in this country through the participation of artists in the development of America's greatest resources, its people.

It is, in sum, the considered judgment of this organization of artists that the achievements of the Federal Art Project are so many and so varied, so valuable and so full of promise for the future life of this nation that it merits the complete support of every American.

By (Signed) Arthur Emptage
ARTHUR EMPTAGE,
National Executive Secretary

Copy to Edward T. Taylor, Chairman, M.C.
Clarence Cannon, M.C.

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