



"History of Transportation" - Mural by Helen Lundeberg

NEWS

For: Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services
City of Inglewood
One Manchester Blvd.
Inglewood, CA. 90301

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Fact Sheet

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Work Projects Administration and

Federal Art Project

The depression worsened in the months preceding President Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration, March 4, 1933. Factory closings, farm foreclosures, and bank failures increased, while unemployment soared. Roosevelt faced the greatest crisis in American history since the Civil War. He undertook immediate actions to initiate his New Deal. To halt depositor panics, he closed the banks temporarily. Then he worked with a special session of Congress during the first "100 days" to pass recovery legislation, which set up alphabet agencies such as the AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Administration) to support farm prices and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) to employ young men. These measures revived confidence in the economy.

Another flurry of New Deal legislation followed in 1935 including the Social Security Act and the establishment of the Works Project Administration (WPA). Its goal was to eliminate the country's high unemployment and preserve the skills and self-esteem of laborers.

George Biddle, a painter who was also a friend and former classmate of Roosevelt, saw the depression destroying the arts community and felt that he could help. He appealed to FDR to form a project that would create work for artists and make use of their talents. Hence, the WPA's Federal Art Project (FAP) was established to help those skilled in music, theater, writing and art. There were four divisions based on media: the easel, the mural, the sculpture, and the graphics divisions. During its time, the FAP employed more than 5,000 artists across the country and thousands of drawings, paintings, posters, and sculptural works were created.

American Scene artists were especially interested in regional and small-town life and produced views of local color and straightforward celebrations of ideals such as community, democracy, and hard work. Although the arts projects did not force artists to work in one style, the American Scene became the unofficial style of the projects--especially in public works such as murals--since local populations expected, and arts administrators promoted, easily understood images.



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During the New Deal years, more than 200 artists painted government-sponsored murals in California. Artists made an important contribution to the government's program to sustain its citizens through times of scarcity. Artists were delivered from want and the country received art that would remain for posterity, even after better times had come.

In 1943, the government was focusing its attention on World War II and away from programs like the WPA. So, in June of 1943 the funding was stopped and the program was officially closed.

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