

MURAL PAINTING IN TEXAS: A SURVEY OF THE WORK AND  
AIMS OF ARTISTS WHO HAVE PAINTED HISTORIC AND  
INDUSTRIAL THEMES FOR WALLS

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# TEXAS STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

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I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared  
under my supervision by Thelma Stolz  
entitled MURAL PAINTING IN TEXAS

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements  
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## PREFACE

A revival of interest in mural painting has been shown in Texas within the past decade, and especially within the past five years. Due to consideration of this fact and to the belief that no books have been published on the subject of Texas wall painting, the writer felt that a treatise of this kind was expedient. Selections for illustration were not made because of particular merit any more than for a variety of approaches and styles of painting wherever possible. Since historical and industrial themes predominated, these were the types used for illustration.

Most of the data were secured from first-hand sources -- the artists themselves, through interviews and questionnaires, and a study of the original murals. Other information was obtained from government bulletins, books, magazine articles, and photographs.

The writer wishes to make acknowledgment to the artists for their cooperation and assistance in securing necessary information; to city chambers of commerce, colleges, and various individuals who helped the writer to locate murals; to the Section of Painting and Sculpture, a division of the Treasury Department Art Projects, for information and photographs; and to Miss Dorothy A. La Selle as director of this thesis for her patience and untiring guidance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The art of mural painting has created in Texas within the past few years a renewed interest in wall decoration. This form of art is comparatively new in the State of Texas, but a study of art history shows that it is no unusual form of art.

From earliest times in Europe and Asia, mural decoration seems to have been one of the most natural forms under which the art of painting was practiced. The tendency of man through the ages to decorate his home or place of worship, and the suitability of wall surface for decoration naturally make such painting an art of all periods. Just where or when it originated, we do not know; but we have definite knowledge that thousands of years before the birth of Christ, primitive man decorated the walls of his caves with paintings and incised drawings. While these might not be called true murals in the more restricted sense of the term as used in this thesis -- that of a pictorial painting rather than mere decoration subordinate to the dominating architectural design, -- they constitute the very beginning, as far as we know, of wall painting. On through history until the period of the

Renaissance in Italy, when mural painting of the highest type is found, different periods and civilizations abound in examples of such decoration. The Egyptian tomb paintings are good examples of the tempera process in ancient art; the Aegean frescoes show some skill in the fresco process;<sup>1</sup> the Etruscan tomb paintings, which reflect the glory of early Greek art, and the Pompeian paintings in Rome show use of both fresco and tempera processes; and the Ajanta Frescoes in India, which show an art already highly developed by the seventh century A. D., are examples of mural art in the East. Byzantine church mosaics, although not paintings, should be mentioned, because they are a high type of mural decoration and have helped artists set standards for the limits of wall painting.

During the periods of the Renaissance in Italy, mural painting reached its height in the great church murals. This art might be considered the true beginning of modern wall painting in its "fresh and direct observation of reality,"<sup>2</sup> rather than the clinging to myth and dogma of earlier centuries of Christianity. From Giotto, at the culmination of the medieval or Gothic culture (the first artist "to employ

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<sup>1</sup>Helen Gardner, Art Through the Ages (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936), p. 111. Miss Gardner says: "Some of the spontaneity of their painting is due to the use of the true fresco process."

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Hagen, Art Epochs and Their Leaders (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 1.

the realistically comprehended human drama for his subjects"<sup>3</sup>), on through Masaccio and Da Vinci in the fifteenth century, to Michelangelo, Titian and Raphael in the sixteenth, there was a fresh and creative relation to natural life that has never been surpassed.<sup>4</sup>

Since the sixteenth century there seems to have been a decline in the art of mural painting in Italy, for no great works of this type are mentioned in history as having contributed anything of value to this art. The years from 1600 to 1700 are known as the period of decadence.

In the other countries of Europe after the sixteenth century, easel pictures in oil technique were more prevalent than frescoes and tempera wall paintings. But in the nineteenth century France produced a great mural painter, Puvis de Chavannes. This French artist revived, for a time, the art of wall decoration. He never forgot that he was decorating a wall. For this reason he kept the painting flat, and used no deep shadows or violent contrasts. He did not try to create spatial illusions as many of his predecessors had done.<sup>5</sup> He continued the use of the oil medium, however, in his wall decorations.

In the new country, America -- a little over three

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<sup>3</sup>David M. Robb and J. J. Garrison, Art in the Western World (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), p. 490.

<sup>4</sup>Hagen, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Gardner, op. cit., p. 372 (1926 edition).

centuries old. -- no painting of any note was accomplished during the first two hundred years and none of truly American style before the beginning of the present century. The best painting produced up to this time was chiefly in imitation of European styles or so close to that of contemporary European movements that there is little to differentiate it from the art across the ocean.<sup>6</sup> This lack of artistic development was largely due to three major influences: (1) early Puritanical beliefs, (2) the hardships of pioneering life, and (3) the so-called industrial revolution.

The narrowness of the early Puritanical beliefs allowed no enjoyment of what might be called the sensuous aspects of life. "The first duty of the citizen and his chief interest, was conformity to the Puritan standard of godliness; all else was vanity."<sup>7</sup> Any attempt to please the eye was considered a diversion from the one purpose of pleasing God. In such an atmosphere of restraint there was not much chance for the art of painting to develop.

The hardships of life in a pioneer country would not allow much opportunity for creative painting; the struggle for existence absorbed all the time, money, and energy of the people. One writer says that since "art is commonly a product of leisure or tradition or of a combination of the two, we

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>7</sup>Suzanne La Follette, Art in America (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1927), p. 5.

must not expect to find it highly developed in a pioneer country."<sup>8</sup> Our early art, then, was mainly utilitarian.

By the time some of the effects of influences mentioned above could have been overcome under certain conditions, another hindrance to creative painting was having its effect on American, as well as European, art. This was the mechanical and scientific industrialism sweeping the country. "America was too much absorbed in its own material development to make more than perfunctory obeisance before the shrine of art."<sup>9</sup> Any time and thought given to the art of painting was done so by privileged groups only, who studied paintings of European artists. The general public was not concerned with it except as something to be stored away in museums. Art, then, was segregated from the affairs of life.<sup>10</sup>

American painting was, consequently, of mediocre quality before the beginning of the twentieth century. Easel painting was poor in quality, but mural decoration was on an even lower level.

The first muralists in America were probably influenced by Puvis de Chevannes, for it was during his lifetime and the years immediately following that the painters of this country

<sup>8</sup>E. P. Keppel and R. L. Duffus, The Arts in American Life (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1933), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>La Follette, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>10</sup>Historians all seem to agree that art has been a thing apart from life since the Renaissance period.

became interested in murals. Although a few wall paintings were found before this time, historians agree that true mural painting began in the United States with John La Farge (1835-1910) as the pioneer leader. The mural decorations of La Farge and his immediate successors -- John S. Sargent, Edward Simmons, Kenyon Cox, Edward Abbey, Elihu Vedder, Abbott Thayer, and Edwin Blashfield -- were mostly imitations of European styles. Indeed, reproductions of these decorations show indications of a rather slavish deference to the past in the selectic method of painting used. As one writer puts it, they misrepresented history "in styles borrowed from the old masters or peopled with sweet young things in classic draperies all looking alike and labelled to taste with the names of cities, sentiments, or seasons."<sup>11</sup> Such titles as the "Pleia-des," "Quest of the Holy Grail," "Charity," "Beneficence of the Law," "Florence Protecting Her Arts," and the like, certainly indicate that the themes in general were of a "symbolic" or "ideal" aspect of life rather than those of contemporary American civilization as it was found. These works mark the general style of the few murals in America during the past century and the first quarter of the present century. Most of these paintings were done with oil rather than fresco or tempera technique.

In the last decade a new interest has developed in

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<sup>11</sup>La Follette, "The Government Recognized Art," Scribner's Magazine, XCV (February, 1934), 131.

mural painting. For this new mural consciousness the artists of the United States are indebted to Mexico largely through Diego Rivera and his frescoes in government buildings in Mexico City, Chapingo, and Cuernavaca. Just after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921) some artists led by Orozco and Rivera identified the artist with the worker by banding themselves into a worker's association and painting murals by the day for the Mexican Government. A liberal and dynamic minister of education made this work possible. Although Orozco lost his contract, his murals were scratched or otherwise mutilated, and the great burst of national art apparently ended in less than a year, Diego Rivera was recommissioned under a new Cabinet, and the influence of this art through him was felt in the United States as well as in Mexico.<sup>12</sup>

Many American artists went to Mexico to study these wall paintings realistically depicting human drama in the true fresco technique. The paintings showed such inventiveness and power in translating the ideas of the new social order pictorially, over large wall surfaces, that no one could be indifferent toward them. Such masterful handling of a most difficult process naturally influenced, in no small measure, artists who viewed the works. In 1931 Rivera, as

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<sup>12</sup>George Biddle gives a complete account of the story of these Mexican muralists in "Mural Painting in America," American Magazine of Art, July, 1934, pp. 361-371. See also Thomas Craven, "Art and Propaganda," Scribner's Magazine, March, 1934, p. 189.



"the greatest living mural painter,"<sup>13</sup> was invited to decorate the Detroit Institute of Arts. Through the high type of work there his influence has grown even stronger in the United States than before. Although, of course, his communistic viewpoints were not entirely accepted, one might say, from all indications to that effect, that he revolutionized the art of mural painting.

Artists in the United States, believing that the Mexican painters had produced the greatest national school of mural painting since the Italian Renaissance, began to realize the possibilities of wall painting in public buildings. They became conscious as never before of the social revolution that this civilization was going through.<sup>14</sup> In their search for a bond between themselves and other walks of life, from which they felt segregated, they decided that mural painting was the art most likely to unite them with the affairs of life. For "the function of mural painting is to enhance, expand, and interpret an architectural space," and architecture is "in its expression the most social and collective of all

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<sup>13</sup>All historians seem to agree that Rivera revived the art of mural painting. In particular George Pierrot and Edgar Richardson say, "Diego Rivera, whose frescoes in Mexico City and elsewhere had established him as the greatest living mural painter was invited to do the work." -- An Illustrated Guide to the Diego Rivera Frescoes, Detroit Institute of Arts, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup>Letter from George Biddle to President in editor's note, "An Art Renaissance Under Federal Patronage," Scribner's Magazine, June, 1934, p. 428.

the arts."<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in 1933, some of these artists requested government co-operation, in order that they might be given the same opportunity as Mexican artists to express their ideas of modern life through mural paintings in public buildings. President Roosevelt, being interested in the project, discussed it with the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department who had charge of the Public Buildings Work. On December 8, 1933, the Public Works of Art Project began business with a grant from the Civil Works Administration for the relief of needy artists. "Sixteen regional committees were set up in strategic cities throughout the United States to carry the work forward; the first artist was employed on December ninth."<sup>16</sup> As is shown by such prompt action, the Government officials realized the need of such work. Except for the request that the American scene in all its phases should be the theme, the central organization gave the regional directors complete charge of other requirements. These directors selected and employed artists to work at weekly wages on paintings, sculptures, and crafts in public buildings supported by taxation. The artist was paid for his time, only; the materials had to be furnished by some organization,

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<sup>15</sup>Biddle, "Mural Painting in America," American Magazine of Art, July, 1934, p. 366.

<sup>16</sup>Edward Bruce, "Implications of the Public Works of Art Project," American Magazine of Art, March, 1934, p. 113.

by the institution for which the work was done, or by the artist himself. Except for the requirement of an approved preliminary sketch for work to be permanently attached to a wall, complete freedom was given the artist by the regional directors within the limitation as to general theme.

Through this organization, although the artist received little pay and his work was not always of highest quality, the unknown artist as well as the recognized painter of established reputation had a chance to prove and develop his talents. Within a very few months some five hundred murals were under way or completed throughout the United States.<sup>17</sup>

On October 16, 1934, the Painting and Sculpture Section of the Treasury Department was organized to function under the Public Works Branch of the Procurement Division; and this section is functioning at the present time, although under the name, "Fine Arts Section." The duties of the Painting and Sculpture Section are to take charge of and carry out the work of embellishing, with paintings and sculpture, the public buildings constructed by the Treasury Department. In the carrying out of the work, every effort is being made to afford an opportunity to all artists on the sole test of their qualifications as artists<sup>18</sup> instead of whether or not

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<sup>17</sup>Biddle, "An Art Renaissance....," loc. cit., p. 430.

<sup>18</sup>Bulletin of Section of Painting and Sculpture of the Treasury Department (Washington: Government Printing Office, March 1, 1935), Number I, p. 3.

relief is needed. Both appointments because of recognized talent, and competitions of different kinds, have been used in selecting the artists. Although a few changes are being made from time to time, the general plan of competition has been carried out; namely, to treat smaller or unimposing buildings as local projects with competitions open to artists of the locality in which such buildings are situated, and to treat the larger and more prominent buildings as national projects with no geographical limits as to the competitors. In this way many artists have had a chance to practice their profession, and many murals are now under way.

Whether any lasting art of outstanding value has been accomplished in the revival of wall painting in America, can be determined only in later years and is not the problem to be considered here. But there is no doubt that in states where there were few or no murals ten years ago, many are now located. In fact, the present mural consciousness has increased with a rapidity which, as one writer expresses it, is "more characteristic of a fashion than a development of inner necessity."<sup>19</sup> In Texas in particular, where this phase of art was almost entirely unknown a decade ago, it has become now a rather popular form of painting among artists. It can be truthfully said that more than ever in this country

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<sup>19</sup>Philipa Whiting, "Murals, Citizenship, and Labels," American Magazine of Art, January, 1935, p. 53.

the artist is looking into the life of his own land. This can be seen in the type of subjects used, the manner of painting, and the artists' aims, which are discussed in the following pages.

Having brought the brief summary of mural painting in general up to the present time, we turn to the problem of this thesis, which is to study the developments of that art in the State of Texas. The next chapter deals with early mural painting in this state. An attempt has been made to show by certain facts in Texas history why so little mural painting was accomplished in the early period of development in the state.

Chapter III takes up the Public Works of Art Project, its plan of organization, its attitudes toward Government sponsorship, its limitations, and the results.

Chapter IV concerns the permanent plan of the United States Treasury Department in the sponsorship of mural painting, improvements over PWAP, and final results obtained up to the present date.

Chapter V deals with mural painting in Texas since PWAP that was sponsored independent of the National Government. Both Centennial murals and others sponsored by individuals or institutions are discussed.

Chapter VI is a discussion of the artists' viewpoints toward modern Texas mural painting as given by them in inter-

views and questionnaires.

The last chapter preceding the conclusion is an attempt to analyze a few paintings from each group -- PWAP, Section of Painting and Sculpture, Centennial, and Independent. In each case a general description is given of the setting, subject-matter, aims of the artist; and in most cases an analysis of each is made, together with an evaluation.

In view of the fact that most of the themes of wall decorations in Texas have been of a historical or industrial nature, only those with subject-matter pertaining to such themes have been discussed in detail; but a complete list of all murals discovered in this survey of Texas wall-paintings has been tabulated.

CHAPTER II  
STATUS OF MURAL ART IN TEXAS BEFORE  
GOVERNMENT PATRONAGE

The recent revival of the art of wall-painting in America marks the beginning of statewide interest in mural decoration in the State of Texas. Very few murals were painted here before National Government patronage in 1933, few not only when compared to the United States as a whole, but few when compared to the number now existing in Texas. The lack of early mural art is not surprising if one takes into consideration the historical background of the state, a few facts from which will show sufficient reason for the scarcity of all forms of creative art. Consequently, the art of wall-painting -- at a low level throughout the United States -- must necessarily have been neglected in Texas.

In the first place, it must be kept in mind that Texas is a comparatively new state, having existed little over one hundred years. Even though a small part of the state was claimed by Spain as early as 1519, when De Pineda brought the Spanish flag to these shores, no permanent settlement was made before 1716. As late as 1820, history tells us, there were "besides the Indians, scarcely four thousand people in

Texas, all in a wretched and poverty-stricken condition."<sup>1</sup> In 1821, the first American settlement was established; but due to hardships, many settlers became discouraged and returned to the United States, leaving only a few of the original three hundred American families. Although colonization began in earnest soon after this, one may see by comparison with the date of the founding of the Plymouth Colony, that the first settlement of Texas was two hundred years behind time.

The fifty-year period following the first settlement in Texas of American families was one of struggle and hardship. In the first place, there were the severe privations common to pioneer life in an uncivilized land. For several years most of the homes consisted of such crude types of shelter as dugouts and one-room cabins with earthen floors. Indians were a constant menace. Even after the civilized population had grown to some twenty-one thousand inhabitants in 1834, the Indian population was estimated at more than fifteen thousand, of which more than ten thousand were from hostile tribes. When Texas gained independence from Mexico in 1836, some true progress might have been in store for the state had it not been for the drawbacks of invasion, secession from the Union, and Civil War. All of these hindered the development of material benefits, which in turn delayed educa-

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<sup>1</sup>E. C. Barker, C. H. Potts, and C. W. Ramsdell, School History of Texas (New York: Row, Peterson, and Company, 1913), p. 61.



tional and spiritual progress.

The rapid growth in population might be given as another factor in the retarded development of art in the state. This growth is indicated by the following figures: As compared to four thousand in 1820, there were some twenty-five or thirty thousand American inhabitants in 1835;<sup>2</sup> in 1870, there was a total population of eight hundred thousand; in 1910, there were more than three million;<sup>3</sup> and today there are more than six million people living in this state.<sup>4</sup> The city of Dallas -- now second largest city in the state with a population of more than two hundred sixty thousand -- was only a straggling village of five hundred inhabitants in 1870. In 1870 there were eighteen states with population greater than Texas, but in 1910 Texas stood fifth. Fourteen states had been passed during forty years.<sup>5</sup> With this rapid increase in population, the energy of the people was used to take care of everyday living. Some time must necessarily elapse before concentrated effort could be made toward artistic progress.

Texas was not able to progress educationally until after 1870. The first schools and colleges were built in 1876; others, in 1901. Before this time, only children of wealthy parents (who could afford schooling in the Eastern

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>An estimate of nearly four million is given by Barker, Potts, and Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>4</sup>Texas Almanac, 1936, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Barker, Potts, and Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 276.

States) received any higher education. It should be clear, then, that although the early hardships were over by the beginning of the twentieth century, mural painting could not have reached the level of that of the Eastern States where artists could be trained in separate art schools or in colleges and universities. While La Farge and his immediate successors were painting large murals in these states, Texas was just beginning to build institutions where such work might be taught at some future date.

These facts show definitely that there was no opportunity for mural painting in the state before the beginning of the present century at least, and very little thereafter until the Government took a hand in the development of the fine arts throughout the nation.

From answers to questionnaires sent to artists, city chambers of commerce, and colleges in the state, it has been discovered that the few murals painted before 1933 were financed by individuals or by a city or institution in that city. They are found, as a rule, in private homes, club houses, or churches. As some of these murals are inaccessible to the public, and even photographs are unobtainable, the style of painting used cannot be fully or intelligently discussed. It may be safely stated, however, -- since the modernist movement could not yet have affected the art of Texas<sup>6</sup> --

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<sup>6</sup>"The Modernist movement, going on in Europe since at least the beginning of the century, did not reach America until 1913." -- Keppel and Duffus, op. cit., p. 15.

that the style was probably the eclectic one used in America previous to the present effort toward an American style. Murals painted as late as 1932 (although perhaps influenced by the Mexican revival of mural painting) showed as yet nothing to indicate an absorption in contemplation of the American scene. The oil technique was the only method attempted.

Except for those with themes of a historical or industrial nature (to be treated specifically in a later chapter), none of these early wall paintings are considered here other than to list those painted before December, 1933, and to give the name of the artist, the theme, and the size of each painting, as indicated in Table I. In a few instances where the writer could not obtain complete information, the lack of data is indicated by a series of dots in the table.

TABLE I  
LIST OF MURAL PAINTINGS BEFORE PWAP

Date	Location	Artist	Theme	Size	Medium
1897-1912	Home of Mrs. W. L. Crawford, Dallas	Mrs. Katherine Crawford	Grecian fine arts, fete scenes of Bacchus, and scenes of Texas	Various	Oil
1914	Newman Club Hall, Austin	Adele Laure Brunet	King Arthur's Court (Knights of Round Table)	.....	Oil

TABLE I -- CONTINUED

Date	Location	Artist	Theme	Size	Medium
1924	Auditorium, junior college, Wichita Falls	Emil Hermann	Alma Mater	12' x 72'	Oil
1925	Municipal Auditorium, San Antonio	H. D. Pohl	Founding of San Antonio in 1718	36' x 75'	Oil
1927	Capitol Ho- tel lobby, Amarillo	Mr. Schnoor (deceased)	.....	3 panels	Oil
1927	Baptist Church, Amarillo	Mr. Schnoor	River Scene of Baptism of Christ	1 panel	Oil
1929	Residence of F. N. Drane, Corsicana	Thomas M. Stell	St. Jerome in His Study (after an engraving by Durer)	8' x 10' and 2 friezes, each 3' x 12'	Oil
1930	Express Publishing Bldg., San Antonio	Jose Arpa	History of Printing	.....	Oil
1931	Home of the artist (non- professional)	Edith Hud- son	Autumn and Eng- lish Hunting Scenes	Various sizes	Oil
1932	Gilliam Chemical Co., Lubbock	Everett D. Fairchild	History of Cos- metics	6' x 10'	Oil
1932	Fireplace in Llano Cemetery Chapel, Amarillo	Margaret Seewald	Historical Prog- ress of the Pan- handle	9' x 4.5'	.....

TABLE I -- CONTINUED

Date	Location	Artist	Theme	Size	Medium
1933	Refreshment stand, Barton Springs Road, Austin, but removed to McPhail's Wayside Gardens, Austin	Ben P. Bailey, Jr.	Mexican life	Five, each 5' high and 3' to 8' long	Oil
1933	Wall of the residence of Mr. Elbert Williams, Dallas	Thomas M. Stell	East Texas, Founding of Missions	5' x 5'	Oil
1933	Stoneleigh Court, Dallas	Eugene Gilboe	.....	.....	.....

### CHAPTER III

#### PUBLIC WORKS OF ART PROJECT

##### General Set-up

With the organization of the Public Works of Art Project on December 8, 1933, the National Government took an active part in promoting the art of wall painting throughout the United States. Created as a relief measure for needy artists, this project did more toward the instigation of mural painting as a national art than any other factor. In Texas, especially, the impetus toward mural art was unusually noticeable. Although other forms of art were accepted, eighty-five per cent of the work in this state was mural painting. Among the very first assignments made in any state were nine mural projects in Dallas, two in McKinney, and three in San Antonio. In the short four and one-half months of its existence, the PWAP had helped nearly one hundred artists in Texas, some sixty or more mural projects were well under way or completed in Texas cities and towns, and plans were being made toward continuance of mural painting under Government patronage.

An organization that has taken such a large part in the mural art of Texas is due some consideration as to its

origin and plan of work.

The PWAP was the result of correspondence started by a letter from Mr. George Biddle to President Roosevelt on May 9, 1933. In this letter Mr. Biddle asked for Government co-operation in a plan by which artists could express their ideals in a permanent form in the public buildings over the nation. He was convinced that, with a little encouragement, mural painting could become a vital national art. As an example of the possibilities of such a plan, he told of the Mexican school of mural painting made possible by a similar plan of procedure.<sup>1</sup> From this correspondence resulted the creation of an Advisory Committee to the Treasury, which in turn set up the PWAP with Forbes Watson as technical director. A grant from the Civil Works Administration of a million and a quarter dollars was given to be spent with "the least delay and greatest efficiency."<sup>2</sup> The original grant was to have been spent by February 15, 1934, but a subsequent grant extended the time to April 28, 1934. Sixteen regional committees were set up over the United States. The committee chairmen and their helpers had charge of the selection and employment of the artists in their respective regions. Texas and Oklahoma was designated as Region No. 12 with Dr. John S. Ankeney

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from George Biddle to President Roosevelt, May, 1933, reported in "An Art Renaissance Under Federal Patronage," Scribner's Magazine, June, 1934, p. 428.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit., p. 430.

of Dallas as committee chairman. The artists were paid for labor only, at rates of from twenty-six to forty-two dollars a week. The materials with which to work and the cost of installation were furnished either by the artists themselves, or by the institution for which the mural was painted, if not by some one else interested in the project. The directors donated their services, receiving pay only for travel expenses. Only artists needing work were considered as applicants; and the art work must be placed only in buildings supported by taxes.

#### Attitude Toward National Patronage

Such a plan as this, created for the relief of needy artists, aroused some speculation and skepticism as to results. Doubts as to the quality of the work to be done were manifest in the manner in which newspapers treated the subject. Some papers amused themselves in suggesting such themes as "President Roosevelt Crossing the Ice," or "General Johnson Freeing the Wage Slaves." Another quoted a leading artist concerning his fears that "pre-Raphaelites" and "painters of nudes" would soon be decorating the walls of public buildings over the nation.<sup>3</sup>

The general attitude among the uneducated laymen of Texas -- many of whom had never heard of murals -- was one of

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<sup>3</sup>"What Price Public Art," Literary Digest, January 27, 1934, p. 20.



indifference toward any plan the Government might have and use to encourage art and artists. Naturally some tax-payers resented any spending of tax money for other than material benefits. Any amount of money spent for paintings on walls of buildings they considered foolishness and extravagance when the bare necessities of life were lacking. It was impossible for them to understand the spiritual value of such painting. But the majority of people knew nothing more of the plan than that large paintings were being placed in public buildings by artists working for the Government. Many chambers of commerce evidently knew nothing of murals located in their cities and painted by local artists for P. W. A. Even a few college librarians and art department heads had no knowledge of mural paintings located in buildings connected with their schools.<sup>4</sup> What more could be expected of the public in general when the better informed displayed such ignorance and indifference? The probable viewpoint of many toward these paintings is indicated by the answer a hotel employee gave when asked what he thought of the large mural located in the hotel. Shrugging his shoulders, he said, "Oh, it is just another picture to me."

As a whole, the attitude on the part of writers and artists seemed to be one of hopefulness, although some doubts were expressed as to the quality of the work itself. The general idea was that the artist would become a worker among

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<sup>4</sup>If all chambers of commerce and art departments had information concerning these murals, several showed no such knowledge in the manner in which questionnaires were answered.

workers and art a part of everyday life. A plan that would destroy the mistaken idea of painting as something stored away in museums and studied only by privileged classes, was looked upon as a promising one. Educational leaders and art critics expressed hope of a lasting and vital art developing from this sort of organization. The following quotations are typical of the attitudes expressed by these leaders and critics:

For the first time since the Christian Church, emerging from the Roman wreckage, employed humble zealots to embody its ideas in stone and color, has the artist been called to a social function.<sup>5</sup>

Definitely, then, an ideal government in support of living art is in the process of realization in certain segments of the national scene.<sup>6</sup>

The artist for the first time in our history has his chance to produce with the sure knowledge that his work will be used by the society in which he lives.<sup>7</sup>

A few good murals in America would do more to raise painting to a dignified and useful art than all the easel pictures in the world.<sup>8</sup>

The educators of Texas seem to have had the same attitude toward the project that the critics showed. Dr. Ankeney,

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas Craven, "Art and Propaganda," Scribner's Magazine, March, 1934, p. 190.

<sup>6</sup>Ralph Pearson, "Renaissance in American Art," Forum, April, 1935, p. 204.

<sup>7</sup>Pearson, America Today (New York: Equinox Cooperative Press, 1936; copyrighted and exhibited by American Artists' Congress), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Craven, "Politics and the Painting Business," Mercury, December, 1932, p. 471.

regional chairman for Texas and Oklahoma, made the statement that "the great thing about this movement is that it is going to put art principles into the actual stream of life."<sup>9</sup> Along with such viewpoints was one which expressed the idea that the growing familiarity with mural painting of this type ought to "deflate art," so that some of the mystery and sacredness which surrounded it in the past would disappear.<sup>10</sup>

As may readily be concluded, then, there were no expectations of great masterpieces among P. W. A. mural paintings. If there had been, disappointment would surely have been keenly felt, for the limitations were such that the highest quality of painting could hardly have been accomplished. The difficulties were those to be expected from a relief project of this kind.

#### Limitations

An outstanding hindrance to good work was the requirement that the planning and execution of paintings must be accomplished within a short time limit. Many artists needed extra time to finish their projects, for, in spite of having worked unusually fast, they were unable to complete the painting in the allotted period. Too often their requests for an extension of time could not be granted. Many artists felt

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<sup>9</sup>Letter from Dr. Ankeney to the writer, June 30, 1938.

<sup>10</sup>"Murals by the Day," Arts and Decorations, February, 1934, p. 46.

that they should make it a point to finish as soon as expected, and in their haste failed to do their best work. Others worked overtime without pay in order to accomplish at least a fair degree of efficiency. A large number of artists expected to paint other panels in connection with the first in order to give full expression to their ideas; when no time was left for these panels, the work must necessarily be deficient to that extent. Several panels were never installed because of the hope that a companion piece might be added to the original. Since these were treated as murals even though not attached permanently to a wall, they are considered as murals.<sup>11</sup> The general effect, however, is often of a framed easel painting instead of a mural painting. Furthermore, movable panels of this sort were sometimes moved from the specified location to another not suited to them. In this way, the general effect was ruined. Even in the case of paintings which were really completed and correctly installed, lack of time hampered the artists in the preparation and execution of their designs.

In connection with the time element was the shortage of funds allowed the projects. Because of this shortage,

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<sup>11</sup>Dr. Ankeney, regional chairman, expressed his opinion concerning these mural paintings when he wrote that "if a painting is large scale and done definitely for a certain architectural setting and treated as a part of a certain wall, it fulfills the intent of a mural even if done on wall board and possibly edged with a narrow moulding." -- Letter to writer, June 30, 1938.

limitation of time was necessary. An outstanding example of an unfinished project due to the lack of funds is the small framed painting depicting early Indian life which hangs in the Travis County Courthouse in Austin. When one views the painting, he sees an illustration of Indian Trading in Travis County in the sixteenth century; but there is nothing to indicate the complete historical background of the county supposed to have been pictured in other panels connected with the first painting. These supplementary panels were never painted; the money gave out after the first small one was completed. The small panel was never installed as a part of the wall, because of the expense of cutting into this particular type of wall. Many panels in other cities were improperly hung, largely due to the expense of installation. A large one on wall board, painted by Anthony De Young for Brackenridge Park Museum at San Antonio, is sagging so badly in the middle that one feels that it might fall at any time. Another, in a school building in the same city, had to be removed because of improper hanging. If it were not for the fact that the regional director's services were donated, he might be accused of having neglected his duty in seeing that all completed murals were also properly hung. But the money element again enters in; for he could not be expected to shirk his regular duties in his own business to "follow up" every mural project, after having already given his services

in countless ways.<sup>12</sup>

The small salary paid to the artists affected the type of talent to some extent. The very purpose of a relief program of this kind, which was to give employment to needy artists, would indicate that those employed would not be artists of outstanding reputation and ability. The idea of giving the young, inexperienced beginner a chance to prove his talent was as important as the requirement that the work reach a certain standard of quality. The mural paintings, then, could not be as "finished" or "polished" as those of more experienced painters. Though not meaning that works of artists with reputations for outstanding technique necessarily excel in art value those more crude paintings of beginners, nor that there were no artists of established reputation employed by P. W. A. in Texas, the fact remains that a large percentage of artists would necessarily be inexperienced where experience means a great deal, and the work of many would not reach the highest standards of efficiency. Actually, in Texas, many students and inexperienced artists acted as assistants to others with reputations as easel painters or art instructors, but few experienced in mural painting were employed.

Just as good technique does not determine art value,

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<sup>12</sup>The regional director of Texas projects, Dr. Ankeney, suffered a nervous breakdown which forced him to abandon any plans he may have had to make a final check-up.

neither does a big price always buy a masterpiece. No one can get away from the fact, however, that the price paid for art work should depend upon quality to a great extent. With this fact in mind, it is interesting to compare the prices paid for P. W. A. murals with a few others not sponsored by the project. The cost of two wall decorations of the nineteenth century, painted for the capitol in Washington, might be cited as examples of prices paid for early mural art in the United States. One, over the stairs of the capitol extension, painted in 1861, is said to have cost twenty thousand dollars; the other, over the Senate wing, painted in 1865, cost twenty-five thousand dollars.<sup>13</sup> In Texas, one of the earliest examples possible to use for comparison is a huge painting executed in 1926 for the City Auditorium in San Antonio, costing some thirty thousand dollars.<sup>14</sup> Others in Texas, very much smaller than the preceding decoration, cost more proportionally. For illustration, take the amount paid for three medium-sized panels over the stairway of a hotel lobby in Amarillo. Although they might be considered by many artists as poor mural painting, they cost the hotel management twenty-five hundred dollars. In comparison with such as these, the murals painted for the Government in 1934 brought an astonishingly low price.

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<sup>13</sup>"Murals by the Day," Arts and Decoration, February, 1934, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup>It is the writer's understanding that this so-called mural is really used as a curtain, but was painted in the first place to be attached to a wall. The artist himself calls it a mural.

Despite the fact that the latter were, as a whole, smaller paintings completed in a comparatively short time and thereby costing less than larger or more complicated works, the prices paid for the largest was remarkably low. A group of panels covering about three times the amount of space as that of the Amarillo hotel mural, and requiring several times the amount of labor, cost the Government about one-third as much as the hotel mural cost the management. At a salary of from twenty-six to forty-two dollars a week, each artist under PWAP received about fifty dollars for unusually small panels to no more than several hundred for large projects of several panels. As may be shown in the following figures, the cost to the Government for all the works done in this district -- including sculpture, easel paintings, prints, etc., in both Texas and Oklahoma -- was little more than the prices paid in the nineteenth century for the mural paintings in the capitol building. The artists' payroll (about ninety per cent of the total cost) amounted to \$39,548.86 for both Texas and Oklahoma artists combined.<sup>15</sup> With eighty-one murals (about 200 panels), four sculpture pieces, three hundred fifty prints, as well as a few water colors, carvings, and sketches, it should be evident that no large amounts were paid for any mural project.

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<sup>15</sup>Public Works of Art Project, Report of the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury to Federal Emergency Relief Administration, December 8, 1933-June 30, 1934 (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1934), p. 5.



In addition to the hindrances of inexperienced talent and lack of time and pay, the artists have named one other limitation that added materially to their difficulties and to the unsatisfactory general effect of their work for PWAP. This frequently mentioned obstacle to good results was the inappropriate setting for their mural paintings. Buildings which had been erected without consideration for the possibility of decoration by use of mural paintings, had wall spaces entirely unsuitable for such paintings. Spaces cut into with doorways, windows, or ventilators, and bad lighting with narrow hallways allowing poor view of the paintings, were some of the architectural conditions encountered by the artists. The very type of architecture, usually of classic or pseudo-classic style, lent itself but poorly to the modern spirit of painting.

An example of an unusual difficulty was the painting of a space containing a fire hose and a door which must become a part of the design.<sup>16</sup> The door was given the effect of a judge's desk and the fire hose made to appear as a part of the painting.

The difficulties of poor lighting were met to some extent by painting at night with the lights on to keep the colors "true," for it was necessary to use artificial lights a part of the time, anyway. In a few of the buildings where murals were

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<sup>16</sup>Mural painting in the Dallas City Hall by Alexandre Hogue.

painted directly on the old walls, there was danger of lime burning through the cracks and causing the colors to whiten around the edges. In cases like this it was necessary to apply a lime neutralizer to the wall. Many painters who worked in their studios instead of painting directly on the wall did not have to solve this problem, but they found difficulties in hanging large canvasses and in harmonizing their work with its setting. These obstacles to good results may serve as examples of many outstanding difficulties encountered by PWAP artists.

The whole quality of the work was affected to some extent by the necessity of pleasing the patron. In the case of PWAP murals, the work became the property of the United States Government, thereby lessening criticism from the executives of the institutions for which they were designated. Political strife and favoritism were at a minimum. Nevertheless, as the institutions sometimes paid for the painting materials and cost of installing the mural, the artists wished so much to please the officials that they sometimes did so to the detriment of the designs they had planned. On the other hand, one group of paintings and panels was not accepted by the San Antonio school for which it was painted because the particular style of painting used did not please the executive in charge. Another in the same city was removed because of alleged communistic symbols. Still another case of hindrance to work

through failure to please the patron was that of a young Dallas artist who did not complete a painting for a school in that city because he did not follow certain instructions. In a Houston post-office, an artist installed a mural in a space too large for the design because the postmaster requested that it be placed there instead of in the location intended for it. The artist had no opportunity to alter the design, although she felt that it was impaired a great deal by the change of location.

The combination of all limitations discussed in the foregoing paragraphs necessarily affected unfavorably the general appearance of the P. W. A. wall paintings. One must keep these limitations in mind when studying these works if a fair judgment is to be made of their quality.

### Themes

Artists had a great deal of freedom in the manner in which they treated the subject-matter of the P. W. A. murals; the only stipulation the Government made as to theme was that it must concern some phase of the American scene. In a very few cases the artist failed to follow this requirement, as when such themes as "Mother Goose Rhymes" and "Greek Figures Representing Art, Music, and Literature," were employed. But, as a whole, the artists co-operatively made a very satisfactory effort to conform to the plan of using strictly American subjects, and themes pertaining to their own state. With the

exception of a few idealistic themes, an Indian pictograph, a Spanish and Indian dance scene, and two or three landscapes and scenes from college activities and life, the wall paintings are based on historical or industrial subject-matter.

The function of the institution, or other public building for which the mural was intended, determined, as a general rule, the theme of the painting on its walls. In post-offices the subject-matter dealt with the history and development of mail service; in public schools, it gave the history of some phase of educational development; sports, or industries; in municipal buildings (city halls and court houses) the theme was the development of the city; in criminal courts buildings it pictured crime control in Texas.

Besides the purpose of the building as a determining factor in the choice of subject-matter, the artists considered the interests and scope of the people likely to view the painting most frequently. They made attempts to use subjects easily understood and appreciated by these laymen. The compositions for children's rooms in schools and hospitals were of interest particularly to children, those in colleges and universities appealed to those groups. The interests of the locality were considered in the use of themes pertaining to a particular section of the state. The artist, usually a resident of the locality for which the mural was painted, was, himself, interested in interpreting the interests of his fellow citizens. Indeed, this very fact was considered in using

local talent rather than outside talent, even though the artist from another section might be capable of a higher type of work.

### Style and Technique

Every mural, with the exception of one large fresco project in the School of Mines and Metallurgy in El Paso, was executed in some type of oil process. One evident reason for no tempera painting and little true fresco work was the fact that the artists lacked experience in such processes. In fact, these processes have been used but little by artists in the United States in general. In a relief program of so short a duration there would have been no time to learn the art of which only a small number of PWAP artists had any practical knowledge. The large mural project in the Gymnasium-Assembly Hall of the School of Mines and Metallurgy was executed, with the help of several students, by a Mexican artist who had undoubtedly studied the frescoes in Mexico during the recent revival of the art in that country, and was also acquainted with European wall paintings.<sup>17</sup>

Of the murals executed in oil technique, it is interesting to note the variations from the usual process in easel painting of using pure oil paints on canvas or board without a mixing medium other than perhaps a little linseed oil. Mr. Granvel Bruce, in his Corsicana High School panels and Dallas

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<sup>17</sup>Dr. Ankeney, in a letter to the writer (June 30, 1938) stated that he considered this fresco in El Paso to be a really important piece of work.

High School panels, used oil paint extracted on blotters to eliminate sheen, and thinned with turpentine and a very little poppy-seed oil. Mr. Gilbert Franz Newman, in his paintings in two buildings in San Antonio, used, as a mixing medium, Mastic Varnish (a fine picture varnish) and turpentine mixed together. Mrs. E. Richardson Cherry of Houston used absorbent oils in fresco effect painted on absorbent duck. Most of the paintings, however, were executed in the same manner as the easel paintings. Except for being on a large scale, and differing in subject-content, they were about the same as other paintings by the same artists.

As has been stated, although some designs were painted directly on the wall, many were painted on canvas or wall-board and then attached to the wall. The surfaces most often preferred were canvas board, masonite, pressed wood fibre, heavy canvas, and absorbent duck. These were mounted on the wall by toggle bolts or fastened securely by adhesium -- a mixture of Venice turpentine and white lead -- or merely glued to the wall. Often the design was enclosed by a narrow picture molding or the effect of such a molding was given in the painting.

The styles of painting in these wall decorations vary from those showing a definite and finished technique to those showing attempts to imitate another artist's style. In some cases young students, having acquired no style of their own

as yet, lifted their characters bodily from magazines or other paintings and inserted them into their designs. The styles also vary from attempts at photographic literalness with very little attention to design qualities, to simplified forms stressing plastic qualities and little attention to subject-matter. But the majority show more interest in the story value of mural painting than in the problems of visual composition.

In spite of the faults in painting, one cannot help admire the sincere attempts to portray American life and the breaking away from imitation of the classic period that was used so often in the nineteenth-century murals. Throughout, one finds a conservative style of representation instead of radicalism.

#### General Effect of PWAP

The particular set-up of the PWAP, requiring not only the use of tax money, but the co-operation of institutional directors or other business officials with the artists and regional committees, affected more individuals than would ordinarily result from the same number of artists working for private concerns. The PWAP artists were assured of their art being displayed in public buildings. Sixty-five or more artists attempted to prove their painting talents by covering available wall spaces in public buildings in a state where murals were previously almost unthought of. In some cases,

artists painted in classrooms directly in view of the school children. Obviously, then, this Government project affected three groups of people: the artists themselves, various officials involved, and the lay public.

The reaction of the laymen toward this painting is difficult to determine. One would be fairly accurate in stating that the general public is a little more "mural conscious" through having become acquainted to some extent with PWAP wall paintings. Even now, however, several years after the close of the project, many people have only a vague conception of murals. Wall decorations in their public buildings have made little impression on them. Nevertheless, in those sections of the state where the most murals are located, the public is interested and comparatively well-informed on such painting.

Except for a very few complaints from artists having met with opposition in their undertaking, the artists themselves feel that a great deal of good has grown out of the PWAP and have a thankful and appreciative attitude toward the National Government for the opportunity to practice their profession and put the results before the public. Although they feel that most of the paintings are very poor in workmanship and not worth much as works of art, they constitute a beginning toward good mural art in the state. They know that some experience and training such as that acquired in painting these murals was necessary if any important work in that field is to be accomplished. The unknown and unrecognized



artists, especially, feel that the project gave them their start, and was an incentive to study more extensively in the art of wall-decoration.

There is, no doubt, much truth in a statement by Edward Bruce concerning the reaction of the artists to the projects. He says (judging from many hundreds of letters) that the reaction has been "that while the economic relief afforded them by the project was enormously appreciated and greatly needed, the spiritual stimulus to them in finding that they were recognized as useful and valuable members of the body politic and that the government desired their work has been simply amazing." He says also that the movement has "broken down the wall of their isolation and brought them in touch and in line with the life of the nation."<sup>18</sup>

Undoubtedly, the PWAP had a desirable effect on the artists as a whole in the stimulus toward bigger and better themes for future work and in the creation of a hopeful attitude toward mural painting.

That the reaction on central government officials has been one of sincere belief in the movement toward mural painting is proven by the organization of a new department of the Treasury, called the Painting and Sculpture Section. Recognition of mistakes made in the early plan of organization is indicated

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<sup>18</sup>"Implications of the Public Works of Art Project," American Magazine of Art, March, 1934, p. 113.

by changes in the manner of selecting the artists, types of buildings used, and stricter requirements for the work.

Table II presents a list of murals painted in Texas under the auspices of PWAP.

TABLE II  
LIST OF PWAP MURALS

City or Town	Building	Artist	Theme	Size	No.
Austin	Architecture Building of U. of Texas	Xavier Gonzales	Sources of Art and Applied Art	8' x 16'	2
Austin <sup>a</sup>	Union Bldg. of U. of Texas	Isabelle Mays Hale			2
Austin	Travis County Court House	Elizabeth Keefer-Boatright	Indian Trading in Travis County, 1500-1600	4' x 6'6"	1
Beaumont <sup>a</sup>	Lamar College Library	Katherine Green	Oil Industry	12' x 27" 9'9" x 30"	1 2
Bryan	A. and M. College Library	Otis Dozier	Pure Science and Applied Science	6' x 10'	2
Canyon	Museum (Panhandle Plains Historical Society)	Ben Carlton Mead	Coronado Enters Texas	7' x 14'	1
Canyon	Museum	Harold D. Bugbee	The Cattleman	6.5' x 14'	1
Commerce	Educational Bldg., E. T. S. T. C.	O. C. Mulkey	Educational	4' x 10'	2

<sup>a</sup>Listed in Mrs. Esse Forrester O'Brien's book, Art and Artists of Texas, but not given the writer by the artist himself.

TABLE II -- CONTINUED

City or Town	Building	Artist	Theme	Size	No.
Corsicana	High School Bldg.	Granville Bruce	Navarro, the Surveyor, and Industries of Navarro Co.	10' x 12'	2
Dallas	North Dallas High School	John E. Douglass	Historical Development of Educational Institutions of Texas	23'4" x 5'	7
Dallas	Criminal Courts Building	John E. Douglass	Crime Control in Texas	5½' x 10'	2
Dallas	Woodrow Wilson High School	William Lester	Development of American Industry	4' x 6'	3
Dallas	Technical High School	Perry Nichols	Mechanics and Machinery and Applied Science; Radio Activity	7' x 10'	2
Dallas	Children's Ward, Parkland Hospital	Adele Laure Brunet	Mother Goose Rhymes		..
Dallas	Boude Story High School	William Lester	Agriculture, Electricity, and the Art of Building	6' x 24'	1
Dallas	J. L. Long Junior High School	Olin Herman Travis	"Man's Interdependence," based on food in Texas	8' x 20'	1
Dallas	City Hall	Alexandre Hogue and Jerry Bywaters	History of Dallas in Ten-year Periods	7' x 11'	9

TABLE II -- CONTINUED

City or Town	Building	Artist	Theme	Size	No.
Dallas	Forest Avenue High School	Thomas M. Stell, Jr.	Texas History, Alamo and San Jacinto	7' x 11'	2
Dallas	Forest Avenue High School	Otis Dozier	Cotton and the History of Oil	6' x 14'	2
Dallas	Sunset High School	Granville Bruce	Pioneer School and Settlers Landing at Matagorda Bay	11' x 6'	2
Denton	Teachers College Administration Building	Ronald Williams	History of Education	4' x 9'	2
Denton	Library (back entrance), T. S. C. W.	Helen Spellman	Events in the Life of C. I. A. Students	5'10" x 7'4"	2
				5'10" x 3'1"	2
El Paso	College of Mines and Metallurgy, Gymnasium-Assembly Hall	Emilio Garcia Cahero and student assistants	Metallurgy and Formula and Manual Labor	10' x 40'	2
El Paso	College of Mines and Metallurgy, Gymnasium-Assembly Hall	Emilio Garcia Cahero and student assistants	Symbolical representation of humanity: The Elements, The Mind, The Alchemist, and The Conqueror	10' x 10'	4
Fort Worth	Paschal High School	Burno Leopold Clausen	.....	.....	1
Fort Worth <sup>a</sup>	New Federal Building	Wade Jolly	Texas Industries	4' x 7'	1

TABLE II -- CONTINUED

City or Town	Building	Artist	Theme	Size	No.
Fort Worth	New United States Post Office	William Henry Baker and Dwight C. Holmes	Transportation and History of the Mail	6' x 10'	1
				5' x 5'	2
					3
Fort Worth	Children's Hospital	Margaret Martin Littlejohn	Nursery Rhymes and Stories	25½' x 34½'	2
				20½' x 32½'	1
Fort Worth	High School Building	Samuel P. Ziegler	Development of Aviation	4' x 6'	1
Fort Worth <sup>a</sup>	Public School	Sallie B. Mummert	The Flying Industry of Ft. Worth	6' x 4'	1
Fort Worth	Fort Worth High School	Emile Guidros	Astronomical theme		2
Highland Park	Town Hall	Ruby Stone	Early Texas Life and Perils of the Trail	4' x 10'	2
Houston <sup>a</sup>	Public Library, Children's Room	Carden Bailey		3'8" x 5'8"	2
Houston <sup>a</sup>	San Jacinto High School	D. L. Armstrong	Industries (Cotton and Oil)	6' x 5'	2
Houston	Public Library	Ruth P. Uhler	Incident of the Early Library History of Houston	10'5" x 13'	3
Houston	Lubbock School Building	Designed by Stella H. Shurtleff and painted by a student, Sarah Kahlden	Peace Treaty between Early American Colonists and Chief Massossoit		1

TABLE II -- CONTINUED

City or Town	Building	Artist	Theme	Size	No.
Houston	Federal Post Office	Bertha Louise Hellman	International Peace	6' x 12'	1
Houston	Alexander Hamilton School	Virgie Claxton	Landscape	6' x 9'	1
Houston	Carnegie Public Library	Mrs. E. Richardson Cherry	Homes of Texas Heroes in sepia insets with local flora and fauna in color	7' x 12'	2
Lubbock	Texas Technological College, Engineering Building	Everett D. Fairchild	Art Through the Ages	15' x 15'	1
Marshall	High School	Don Brown	Art and Science and High School Athletics	10½' x 6½'	2
McKinney	Post Office	Frank Klepper	Historical theme	4' x 10'	1
Paris	Public Library	Jerry Bywaters	Texas Heroes Definitely Connected with the Early Town; The Paris Fire of 1916	3' x 6'	2
Prairie View	State School for Colored	Frank Klepper	Symbolical theme	4' x 10'	1
San Antonio <sup>a</sup>	Thomas Jefferson High School	J. A. Griffiths	Boy Scouts and Girls' Athletics		2

TABLE II -- CONTINUED

City or Town	Building	Artist	Theme	Size	No.
San Antonio	Witte Museum	Octavio Medel- lin	Industry of Cotton	4' x 10'	3
San Antonio	City Hall	Gilbert Franz Newman	Autumn Land- scape	4' x 9'	1
San Antonio	Robert Green Memorial Hos- pital	Gilbert F. Newman	Spring Land- scape	4' x 9'	1
San Antonio	Public Audi- torium (re- moved)	Xavier Gon- zales	War and Peace	8' x 25'	2
San Antonio	Witte Museum	Harry An- thony De Young	Basket Maker Indians of Early Texas	8' x 17'	1
San Diego	High School	Antonio E. Garcia	New Deal	5' x 12'	1
San Marcos	Teachers College	Adele Laure Brunet	Makers of Pottery		
Sherman	Public Li- brary	James Swann	Greek Fig- ures Repre- senting Music, Art, and Litera- ture	7' x 11'	
Tyler <sup>a</sup>	Carnegie Public Li- brary	Douthitt Wilson	Industrial and Agri- cultural Development in East Texas	72' x 28'9"	12
				4' x 18	1

## CHAPTER IV

### TREASURY DEPARTMENT MURALS

#### Objectives and General Plan of Organization

The Painting and Sculpture Section of the Treasury Department, organized on October 16, 1934, gave promise of a permanent government sponsorship of painting in public buildings. In fact, a statement has been made recently by C. J. Peoples, Director of Procurement, that this Section shall be a permanent Section of the Treasury Department.<sup>1</sup> The general objectives, as set forth in the first bulletin published by this department of the government, give an idea of the general plan to encourage and develop the art of mural painting in this country. Following is an excerpt from the Foreword of that bulletin, published March 1, 1935, and repeated in the February, 1939, bulletin, which defines these general objectives:

- (1) To secure suitable art of the best quality available for the embellishment of public buildings.
- (2) To carry out this work in such a way as will assist in stimulating, as far as practicable, development of art in this country and reward what is regarded as the outstanding talent which develops.
- (3) So far as consistent with a high standard of art, to employ local talent.

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<sup>1</sup>On October 13, 1938, the name was changed to "Section of Fine Arts," according to an editorial note in Bulletin No. 18, February, 1939, p. 4.



(4) To endeavor to secure the cooperation of people throughout the country interested in the arts and whose judgment in connection with art has the respect of the Section in selecting artists for the work to be done and criticism and advice as to their production.

(5) In carrying out this work, to make every effort to afford an opportunity to encourage competitions wherever practicable, recognizing the fact, however, that certain artists in the country, because of their recognized talent, are entitled to receive work without competition.<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to fulfill these aims, the projects were first divided into two classes, (1) small local buildings, involving an expenditure of less than \$5,000, to be treated as local projects, and (2) larger, or more imposing buildings, involving an expenditure of more than \$5,000, to be treated as national projects. In the case of the smaller local buildings, the Section had in mind the possibility of employing artists living in the locality in which the building is situated. In the larger, or national projects, geographical limits were to be ignored; but efforts were to be made to select the ablest artists in America regardless of their place of residence. Advisory committees, both local and national, were to be selected to aid the staff of the Painting and Sculpture Section in the choices of designs and artists. Both open and closed competitions and appointments of certain well-known artists were to be used in the plan to secure art work according to merit only. Such a plan, if carried out, would indicate not only a democratic selection

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<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit., pp. 3-4.

of artists but a high standard of work done. In general, the original plan of procedure has been carried out, although many minor changes or additions have been made from time to time.

The first national project assigned to the Painting and Sculpture Section was the decoration of the Justice and Post Office Department buildings in Washington. The original plan was to appoint twenty-two painters and ten sculptors to carry out the work. An advisory committee (made up of sculptors, architects, directors of art museums, painters, and United States Government officials) was appointed to advise and assist the Section in its recommendations of artists to decorate these buildings. Although the members were selected from several states, only one was chosen from Texas, namely, John S. Ankeney, former director of the Dallas Museum of Art. The members of this committee were not advised who their fellow members were. Each was asked to furnish the names of the twenty-two painters and ten sculptors in the United States who were, in his opinion, the best fitted to carry out the work in these two buildings. Those artists standing out from the others because of having received at least two more votes than others mentioned were selected for eleven of the painting and two of the sculpture commissions. It was then decided to give an opportunity to a group of painters and sculptors to enter limited competitions for the remaining eleven paintings and eight sculptural commissions. The art-

ists invited to enter these competitions included all the painters and sculptors who received one or more votes of the Advisory Committee, and who were not on that committee. An advisory jury of five painters and four sculptors was selected to help judge the quality of the designs received.

In this way a few Texas artists had their first chance to compete in the projects of the Painting and Sculpture Section. Although no Texas artist won a commission in the first national project, they received inspiration to work hard toward future commissions assured them if their designs showed merit.

The first mural painting sponsored in Texas by the Painting and Sculpture Section of the Treasury Department was painted by an artist from another state in the summer of 1937 for the Henderson Post Office. The artist, Paul Ninas of Louisiana, received the commission as a result of the regional competition for the Jackson, Mississippi, Post Office mural. In this competition, no designs being suitable for the designated space, the artists with unusually good designs were invited to submit others for other buildings in their region; hence, the Henderson mural by Mr. Ninas. One may see, therefore, that for the first two years of the work of the Section, no Texas projects were begun; and when a beginning was made, a Texas artist was not appointed for the first commission.

## Improvements Over PWAP

When artists desire to enter a regional competition -- the type used most often -- they must first apply to the regional committees for full information of the competition requirements. This committee usually consists of from three to five members. Among them is the architect of the building to be decorated, artists of the region, and leaders of art associations or museums. The committee gives the artist a description of the mural spaces, type and coloring of surrounding architecture, lighting fixtures, etc., and suggestions as to subject-matter. Perhaps blueprints of the spaces to be decorated are furnished if any unusual feature is present. The artist is required to make several sketches, usually one in black and white, to the scale of one inch to one foot, for each panel; and another full-size detail in color, or a fully colored sketch to scale. The designs must be accompanied by a plain, sealed envelope, enclosing the artist's name and address. The envelopes are carefully numbered when received with the same number as the designs they accompany, and remain unopened until after selection of the best designs. The artist may submit as many series of designs as he desires; and outstanding designs not actually used in a particular building are considered for appointment to do murals for other buildings later. If, however, no designs are submitted which are of sufficient merit to justify a recommendation by the

Section of Painting and Sculpture, no contracts are awarded.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of these regional competitions, the local committee usually studies and recommends certain designs, and then the staff of the Section of Painting and Sculpture approves the selection.

Under such a plan, the committee is able to obtain a fairly accurate sample of the artist's style of painting, the colors to be used, and the probable final effect, as well as the composition and story content shown in the small sketches. If any revision is necessary for the approval of the Director of Procurement, the artist agrees to make such revision. Repeatedly the Section has stressed the importance of selecting only designs of quality. It is to be supposed, therefore, that only outstanding designs, showing careful workmanship and commendable technique, are accepted. The financial status of the artist and his position in the community have no bearing whatever upon the selection.

The amount paid for each mural depends upon size, number of panels, and method of painting to be used, and therefore vary; but the artists consider the compensation more reasonable in proportion to the work demanded than that received for PWAP murals. The full price for the completed painting correctly installed is named at the outset instead of payment by weekly wages, and in Texas ranges from \$500.00

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<sup>3</sup>Information on the plans of competition was secured from various editions of the Bulletin.

for small murals of one panel only to \$12,000.00 for large frescoes covering large wall spaces. The cost of installation and materials is furnished by the artist. The compensation, then, is sufficient to attract good talent.

Many young, inexperienced artists who started mural painting under the Public Works of Art Project are now doing work for the Section of Fine Arts. The experience they received in working on the former plan undoubtedly helped them in attacking these larger murals.

The requirement of speed in planning the design, and in the execution of the mural after the plan is made, have been eliminated. The artists are allowed several months to prepare their designs to be submitted for competition; they are given plenty of time to make corrections on the designs selected; they are allowed from several months to several years (depending upon the size of the proposed painting and the technique used) to complete the final painting and installation. Although a definite time may be set for completion, it may be extended at the request of the artist. Therefore, plenty of time may be used for research on historical facts and experimental painting as well as opportunity for thorough study of the architectural setting and proper final installation.

Payments for the murals are usually made by installments, the first payment being made after the design has been accepted and the contract for painting been signed; the second,

when the mural is partly finished; and the third, after completed mural has been installed and approved by the Director of Procurement. For a specific example of the plan of payments for large projects, the fresco now being painted by Howard Cook for the new San Antonio Post Office may be cited. The sum of \$12,000 was to cover the complete cost of execution and installation. The artists were given at least three months after the announcement of the competition to work out and submit designs. The artist selected, Mr. Cook, was then required to execute a formal contract with the United States, "agreeing to execute the finished murals from the submitted designs for the sum named under the conditions herein stated."<sup>4</sup> The sum of \$12,000 was divided into four separate installments, the first, \$3,000, to be payable after formal approval of the design by the Director of Procurement; the second, \$3,000, to be payable when the murals were, in the opinion of the Director of Procurement, one-third complete; the third, \$3,000, when two-thirds complete; and the balance, when installed by the artist and approved by the Director. The artist in this instance was required to furnish a bond of \$3,000 for the faithful performance of his contract.

The thoroughness of the department (as shown in the preceding paragraphs) in its requirements concerning the execution and installation of work, as well as assistance

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<sup>4</sup>Bulletin No. 11 (September, 1936-February, 1937), p. 8.

given the artist on subject-matter and technique, lends itself toward a comparatively high standard of accomplishment.

In the first place, after the designs are selected, suggested changes desired by the committee are sent to the artist, who in turn makes corrections or new designs and again submits them for approval. After the sketch has finally been accepted and a full-size cartoon made, he is given permission to proceed with the painting. If the work is to be executed in the oil medium, he is also required to submit a sample of canvas. And, finally, a photograph of the completed mural is called for, and a report of satisfactory installation is required of the official in charge of the institution -- i. e., the postmaster or other government employee -- before the last payment is made to the artist.

In order to assist artists in various ways, the Section of Fine Arts sends out bulletins in which are announcements of competitions, suggestions on subject-matter and techniques, and (recently) reproductions of selected completed murals. Also, a technical adviser, Mr. Alexander Abels, was appointed to give any assistance called for by individual artists with reference to the best ways to install paintings or other problems pertaining to techniques of painting.

Therefore (even though certain artists resent the changes in design sometimes required by the Director of Procurement and feel that they are harming their designs when they must make the changes), a better quality of work is



likely to result from the strict requirements and assistance given the artists than if they had complete control of the projects.

A condition lending itself to better general appearance of the finished work than found in PWAP is the use of new buildings instead of old and of correspondingly better wall spaces for the paintings. Under the former plans, paintings were placed sometimes in quite unsuitable spaces, due to the lack of appropriate settings obtainable, whereas, under the present plan, the buildings are erected with the expectancy of containing mural paintings at some later date. Although these buildings are not necessarily planned with the idea that certain spaces might be used for mural decoration, nevertheless they offer a more suitable setting than that confronted by the artists under the former plan. Except for some new complaints about the placing of hanging electric lights, the artists have mentioned no particular difficulties encountered with reference to architectural setting.

#### Themes and Style of Paintings

The themes of these later mural paintings are similar to those of PWAP. They concern, usually, local industrial life or a historical background of that section of Texas in which they are located; in post-offices, they pertain to some phase of postal service. It is not an absolute requirement, however, that those in post-offices must concern the service

rendered by that branch of the government, or even that they must show industrial or historical subject-matter. The particular requirement here, as in the former project, is only that the theme pertain to some phase of the American scene.

The Government officials seem particularly anxious that the subject-matter have a human appeal that will interest the "general run" of individuals as well as the more art-minded groups. The artists themselves, as a whole, believe that a mural for a public building should appeal to the masses, and consequently have for its theme something universal and fairly well understood. Therefore, the designs show subject-matter containing a popular appeal not always present in easel paintings by the same artists. The representational aspect is more obvious than abstraction or purely visual quality. There are no complete abstractions found in Texas mural paintings.

Naturally, the styles of painting vary with the individualities of the artists. When work is chosen from painters of various sections of the country, with different backgrounds of study and experience, the style of painting would necessarily reflect those differences even if all used the same medium; and when both tempera and fresco technique are attempted as well as the frequently used oil medium, it becomes evident that many differences would result in the manner of painting. (Although few native Texans have attempted either

tempera or fresco panels, many artists from California and adjoining states are doing murals in Texas in these processes).

But, however wide the differences, none in this group show slavish deference to the past as did many of the early mural paintings in the Eastern States; nor do they exhibit the other extreme phases of the so-called Modern Movement, but all show the attempts to portray modern life as it is found. Usually, these paintings are of a vigorous style without any of the sentimental prettiness sometimes present in earlier decorations. Although quite a lot of interest is sometimes evident concerning authenticity of details, the designs are usually kept fairly simple, and have a universal appeal. As a whole, the style might be considered conservative, with attempts at realism.

The technique and general appearance in these works are much improved over the PWAP type. That is to say that the paintings show that better materials have been used, a more finished style of work accomplished, and a better method of installation used. As a result of competition with other artists, the incapable fumbling efforts of beginners have given way somewhat to superior attempts of more experienced painters. Even though no profound or particularly striking work may have been accomplished, the painting technique has improved. (There has been very little attempt to portray contrasting textures by the method of applying pigment; a smooth manner of painting

is most commonly used).

Table III presents a list of Treasury Department murals located in various Texas cities.

TABLE III  
TREASURY DEPARTMENT MURALS (PAINTING AND  
SCULPTURE SECTION)

Location <sup>a</sup>	Artist	Title or Theme	Medium	Size
Big Spring	Peter Hurd	"The Pioneers"	Fresco	23' x 6'
Borger	Jose Aceves	"Big City News"	Oil	.....
Brady	Gordon Campbell	"Texas Immigrant"	Oil	.....
Caldwell	Suzanne Scheuer	"Indian Moving"	Oil	5' x 12'6"
Canyon	Francis Ankron	"Strays"	Oil	13' x 4'
College Station	Victor Arnautoff	"Main Industries of Texas--Oil and Cotton"	Oil	11'10" x 5'
Conroe	Micholas Lyon	"Early Texans"	Oil	14' x 5'6"
Eastland	Suzanne Scheuer	"Indian Buffalo Hunt"	Oil	6'5" x 12'
El Paso	Tom Lea, Jr.	"Pass of the North"	Oil	52' x 11'
Gatesville	Joe De Young	"Off to Northern Markets"	Oil	.....
Giddings	Otis Dozier	"Cowboys Receiving the Mail"	Oil	.....

<sup>a</sup>All of these are located in post-offices. Others are being painted but were not completed when these data were obtained.

TABLE III -- CONTINUED

Location	Artist	Title or Theme	Medium	Size
Goose Creek	Barse Miller	"Texas"	Tempera	600 sq. feet
Graham	Alexandre Hogue	"Oil Fields of Graham"	Oil	6'8" x 12'
Henderson	Paul Ninas	"Local Industries"	Tempera	13' x 6'
Jasper	Alexander Levin	"Industries of Jasper"		
Kaufman	Margaret Dobson	"Driving the Steers"	Fresco	5' x 12'
Kenedy	Charles Campbell	"Grist for the Mill"	Oil	
Lamesa	Fletcher Martin	"The Horse Breakers"	Oil	
Lockhart	John L. Waker	"The Pony Express Station"	Oil	
Mineola	Bernard Zakheim	"New and Old Methods of Transportation"	Tempera	5'6" x 15'
Quanah	Jerry Bywaters	"The Naming of Quanah"	Oil	
San Antonio	Howard Cook	"San Antonio's Importance in Texas History"	Fresco	2 walls 74' x 6'4" 2 walls 20' x 6'4"
Waco	Eugenie Shonnard	"Cattle," "Indians"	Gum-wood	

## CHAPTER V

### OTHER MURALS SINCE PWAP

#### Centennial Murals

Chapters II and III presented information on mural painting in Texas sponsored by the Central Government through the Treasury Department in Public Works of Art Projects, and the Section of Painting and Sculpture. These projects aroused so much interest in wall painting that many other murals, financed by individuals, private institutions, or the state, have been finished since that time. The most important among these so-called independent murals is the group at the Fair Park in Dallas.

These paintings were commissioned as decorations for the new exposition buildings because the Texas Centennial Committee thought murals were the most appropriate form of decoration for the style of architecture they had chosen.<sup>1</sup> The engineer in charge of building, Mr. George Dahl, sent for mural painters from New York and California who had previous experience in large-scale painting of this type, and set them to work on the problem of ornamenting buildings inside and out.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Texas Centennial in 1936 was the celebration of one hundred years of progress in Texas.

<sup>2</sup>These professional decorators did most of the murals at the Fairgrounds except those in the Hall of State Building.

The decorations by these artists give the effect of huge posters strictly two dimensional in nature, rather than pictorial compositions such as easel painters create. Some of the designs are raised a little from the background through the use of cement attached to the wall and then colored. Sometimes single motifs were used over doorways or even on a large wall space; at other times the entire surface, covering several hundred square feet, was filled. The evident interest was in making colorful decorations of a modernistic nature in an effort to add to the spectacular effect as a whole. As such, they fulfill their purpose. But no attempt was made apparently to continue the realism observed in the style of the painters working under PWAP or under the Section of Painting and Sculpture.<sup>3</sup>

The decorators employed were Mr. Pierre Bourdelle, Mr. Carlo Ciampaglia, and Mr. Julian Garnsey. Mr. Bourdelle is a Frenchman living in New York. He decorated the outside walls of the Varied Industries as his chief problem.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Ciampaglia, an Italian, also living in New York, made the decorations outside the walls of the Agricultural and Poultry Building and the Foods Building. Mr. Garnsey of Los Angeles, California, executed panels in the Federal Building.

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<sup>3</sup>At this time, however, no paintings under the Section of Painting and Sculpture had been done in Texas. Only PWAP work had been completed as yet.

<sup>4</sup>Incidentally, while in Dallas, Mr. Bourdelle did the sculptural murals in the Baker Hotel.

Besides these colorful decorations mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, several rooms in the Hall of State Building contain mural paintings that pertain to the history of Texas or to the industries of the state. The main room, and the largest, in this building, has both of the long side walls covered from floor to ceiling with oil paintings depicting outstanding characters and events in Texas history. Represented on one side is the Republic of Texas and on the other, the State of Texas. Mr. Eugene Savage, internationally known as a mural painter, and several assistants, executed the work on sections of canvas later glued to the walls; these sections were thirty by eighty feet each.

The problems encountered in planning so large a work demanded an artist experienced in mural art. Mr. Savage and his assistants named the following as a few of their technical problems: (1) The proper solution for a design in so large a space with five bay colonnades in front, (2) the hanging of large sections of canvas in which the painting must coincide with that next to it, and (3) the protection from moisture due to air conditioning that might ruin the painting. In addition to technical problems, these artists had only ten weeks to execute murals for which six months of research had been made. They said two years should have been allowed to complete the job.

Besides the two murals in the main room are two smaller



panels in each of the rooms at the left of the main entrance to the building, and one in each of those at the right. The panels in the East, West, and North Texas Rooms will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. The panel in the South Texas Room is by J. O. Mahoney, a former student of Eugene Savage at the Yale School of Fine Arts. It pictures allegorically "South Texas" surrounded by a wealth of vegetation typical of the southern section of the state. This painting can scarcely be called either historical or industrial in subject-matter; hence it is merely mentioned briefly here and is not to be discussed with the others in a succeeding chapter.

With the exception of the mural in the North Texas Room executed in fresco technique, all of those in the State of Texas Building are in the oil medium, painted on canvas and fastened to the wall in the professional manner. They were unique in that they had settings planned to contain mural paintings; they were not just crowded into a space unsuitable for such decoration, as many former murals had been.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the Centennial paintings is that a large group of people were given a chance to view large-scale painting for the first time and to see what a mural painting was like. Until this time, the great mass of Texans had never seen such paintings. If they had any idea of what they were, it was only a hazy conception. Some of them had been partially educated to mural painting by the

Government projects in their own towns and cities. But the attention focused on those at the Fair helped establish the importance of wall painting as a serious activity in the life of the present day.

### Independent or Local Mural Painting

Several other mural decorations have been done, here and there over the state, since 1933, independent of the patronage of the Federal Government. These were financed as a gift from the artist himself, or sponsored by clubs, railway concerns, hotels, and schools, or by the county, city, or state.

It is impossible to give the exact number of these murals at this time. As is indicated by their sponsorship, they may be found in all sorts of places -- homes, mausoleums, churches, hotels, civic centers, libraries, schools, and other buildings. More and more decorations of this type are being painted by both students in art classes and professional artists. The works from the latter group only are listed at the end of the chapter.

If the styles of paintings used in the murals sponsored by the Treasury Department vary, as has been previously stated, then those sponsored by different individuals and groups would be more likely to vary immensely. Such is the case in the group of paintings discussed in this chapter.

The talent ranges from beginners who have never at-

tempted murals -- and perhaps little painting of any kind -- to professional mural painters experienced in the art of wall-decoration. Consequently, the draftsmanship varies from uncertain, childlike painting to a meticulous, assured technique. In a few decorations the emphasis has been placed on design or plastic appeal, but in most of the work the stress is on subject-matter or the human appeal through knowledge and experience -- i. e., intellectual or literary rather than visual. In many murals the artist's interest seems to have been on form; in others, on pattern through dark and light, or line, or with no apparent emphasis on any one of these elements throughout the painting. The effect of deep space in which solid forms appear has been suggested by a few; only shallow space with planes varying little from the picture plane has been effected by others; and frankly two-dimensional form only, with no attempt at modeling, has been created by a few others.

The medium used most often is oil, applied either to canvas, wall-board, or the wall itself. However, "Texcrete, a modern form of fresco, made of casine and silicate,"<sup>5</sup> was used by one artist in Houston. Perhaps other media have been used also, but if so, the artists have not mentioned them. The oil has been applied both in a thin manner more as a stain, and in the commonly used method of oil paint application by

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<sup>5</sup>Grace Spaulding John, in a questionnaire, reported this as her medium in the Sidney Lanier High School panel at Houston.

using thick pigment without a thinner.

The themes of these independent murals, like those of the early decorations before Government sponsorship, indicate less concern for historical or industrial subject-matter than the Treasury Department paintings. The decorations for church baptistries contain subject-matter pertaining to the Bible; those in private homes have themes of particular interest to the occupants; and the one in a mausoleum deals with immortality. There are, however, several paintings in this group that show possible influences of the Government projects in the use of historical or industrial themes. For instance, the decoration in the Medical Arts Building at Dallas presents the history of medical science; that in the Highland Park Village Theater, the history of early Texas; that in the San Angelo County Court House, the oil industry of Texas; that in the Gunter Hotel of San Antonio, the evolution of Mexican craft industry; and that in the new Southern Pacific Passenger Station of Houston, important events in the history of Texas.

A complete list of all those discovered in Texas follows. A few containing historical or industrial subject-matter are discussed and described briefly in a succeeding chapter.

TABLE IV  
INDEPENDENT MURALS SINCE PWAP

City and Building	Artist	Theme	Size	Medium
Austin, University Memorial Museum	Ben P. Bailey, Jr.	Indian Pictographs	6' x 16'	Oil
Corpus Christi, Civic Center	Lucy H. Locke	Services of the Civic Center	Two, 8' x 3'. One, 5' x 6'	Oil
Corpus Christi, residence	Antonio E. Garcia	Mexican Dance Motif	7'6" x 4'	Oil
Corpus Christi, residence	Antonio E. Garcia	Chinese Ladies Having Tea	3'6" x 5'	Oil
Dallas, Hillcrest Mausoleum	Reveau Bassett	Immortality	490 sq. ft.	Oil
Dallas, Medical Arts Building	James (Buck) Winn, Jr.	History of Medical Science	800 sq. ft.	Oil
Edinburg, Junior College Library		Education, Its Phases in and out of School	10' x 5'	Oil
Fort Worth, Blackstone Hotel	James (Buck) Winn, Jr.			Oil
Galveston, residence Maco Stewart, Jr.	David L. Dru- bin	Pirates, La-Fitte and Crew		Oil
Highland Park, Village Theater	James (Buck) Winn, Jr.	History of Texas prior to the Republic	2400 sq. ft.	Oil
Houston, Southern Pacific Passenger Station	John A. Mc- Quarrie			
Houston, Sidney Lanier High School	Grace Spaulding John	The Pipe of Peace	16' x 19'	Tex- crete

TABLE IV -- CONTINUED

City and Building	Artist	Theme	Size	Medium
Kingsville, N.Y.A. Dormitory, A. and I. College	Ben P. Bailey, Jr.	Contributions of A. and I. College to South Texas	3' x 4'	Oil
San Angelo, Church of Christ	Tince Hughes	River Scene	8' x 3'	Oil
San Angelo, Court House	Tince Hughes	Oil Industry in Texas	4'6" x 8'	Oil
San Antonio, St. Anthony Hotel	Harry A. De-Young	Chuck Time on the Lazy R	9' x 21'	Oil
San Antonio, Bright Shell Tea Room	Mary Aubrey Keating	.....	8' x 6'	Oil
San Antonio, Gunter Hotel	Mary Aubrey Keating	Evolution of Native Mexican Crafts and Customs	6 panels, av. size 8' x 6'	Oil
San Antonio, Public Library	Paul Rodda Cook	Story Illustration	3'6" x 6'	...

CHAPTER VI  
CONFLICTING VIEWS AND AIMS OF ARTISTS  
CONCERNING WALL DECORATION

Attempts have been made through questionnaires and interviews to discover the viewpoints and beliefs of artists concerning modern mural painting. The following questions were asked the artists: (1) How would you classify your style of mural painting? (2) Was the mural done in a style greatly different from your usual studio style? (3) In your opinion, what qualities should a mural possess that an easel painting does not have? (4) Do you prefer mural painting to easel painting?

The replies of the artists to the above questions constitute the topic of discussion of this chapter. Answers to most of the questions were given by fifty-two (52) artists out of the fifty-six (56) returning the questionnaire.

By grouping these in the form of a table, the variety and individuality of replies become discernible. Following is a table showing answers of artists to the first question: How would you classify your style of mural painting?

TABLE V

HOW WOULD YOU CLASSIFY YOUR STYLE OF MURAL PAINTING?

Classification Concerning Style	Number
Modern or contemporary.....	9
Realism, realistic, or basic sense of reality..	8
Decorative.....	6
Slightly stylized, or conventional.....	5
Not modernistic.....	3
Conservative.....	2
Classic.....	2
Broad or bold.....	3
Architectural.....	2
Mingling of natural with decorative.....	3
Suitable to subject.....	2
Beauty of color.....	1
Individual or personal.....	2
Early Renaissance.....	1
Eighteenth century.....	1
Striking.....	1
Allegorical representation.....	1
Illustration.....	1
Academic.....	1
Striving toward two dimensional forms.....	1
Flat wall decoration.....	1
Not flat poster style -- some modeling.....	1
Sharp details.....	1
Simplicity.....	1
Finished.....	1
Creative.....	1
No attempt to classify style.....	11

These answers of artists (although not necessarily coinciding with the individual opinions of others concerning the same particular work) show that it is fairly difficult for an artist really to give any special classification to his style. Many painters used several of the above terms to



describe their style. This is the reason for more answers than the number of questionnaires. Several artists frankly said that they did not classify it at all, others left the space blank, while others evaded the question by merely mentioning descriptive terms that might apply to the manner of painting. Two artists gave the inspiration for their styles. One, Mr. James Buchanan (Buck) Winn, Jr., mentioned Persian art, and the other, Mr. Antonio E. Garcia, named Oriental art and the Florentine muralists headed by Fra Angelico, as inspiration sources. A few mentioned the fact that they had several styles.

Answers to the second question also varied, as shown in the following table.

TABLE VI

WAS THE MURAL DONE IN A STYLE GREATLY DIFFERENT  
FROM YOUR USUAL STUDIO STYLE?

Replies	Number
Yes (with no qualifications).....	18
No (with no qualifications).....	11
Yes (with certain qualifications listed).....	9
Yes, rather more conservative	
Yes, the natural difference found between a wall or a piece of canvas	
Yes, in a way	
Of course	
Yes, always design in terms of wall quality	
Yes, in use of outline	

TABLE VI -- CONTINUED

Replies	Number
Yes, only modeled, no full light and shade Naturally much broader handling	
No (with qualifications).....	6
No, only on a larger scale No, but frescoes demand different style Not at all Not much Not fundamentally	
Other answers.....	4
Somewhat less subtle color and less paint texture Do only pictorial painting (commercially) Have no unusual studio style Yes and no	

According to the answers given to this question, practically one-half of the artists use essentially the same type of painting for murals as they do for easel canvases, a few mentioning only a broader handling of the use of outline as a difference even though an affirmative answer was given. However, a few emphatic replies such as "of course," and "not at all" show an opposite attitude toward the handling of mural painting.

Answers to the third question concerning the qualities that pertain especially to murals brought almost as great a variety of answers as there were artists' replies. Many of

these answers, however, can be "boiled down," so to speak, to the extent of greatly reducing the number without destroying their true meanings. An attempt to group these in the order of their importance, as shown by the qualities named most often, follows in Table VII.

TABLE VII

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT QUALITIES SHOULD A MURAL POSSESS  
THAT AN EASEL PAINTING DOES NOT HAVE?

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Qualities

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Suitability to architectural setting (harmony or co-ordination)  
Should be flat -- a part of the wall -- (i. e., so as not to give suggestion of emptiness)  
More frank admission of decorative needs  
Greater simplicity  
Subject matter more important (readability)  
Restraint in use of color  
Surface quality less important (texture)  
Trend away from belief that murals must be flat  
Absolute control of spatial relationships relative to the front plane of wall surface  
Form within patterns, not too much space between  
Certain effect of belonging on a wall  
Not too much perspective  
Complete or closed organization  
Proper scale  
Boldness of form and design  
Greater breadth of treatment  
Epic or timeless theme rather than incidental  
Easel painting is more experimental  
Must have power  
Greater carrying qualities  
More emphasis upon verticals and horizontals  
Spacing of design more carefully considered due to large area  
Symbolical or representative qualities  
Effort to please sponsor  
Circumstances should govern style -- should fit the purpose and architecture

---

Except for the agreement that a mural should be decorative and harmonize with the setting, no quality stands out as being one of particular importance to the artists as a whole. Although the artists seem to agree that the mural should "fit in" or co-ordinate with its setting, there is a distinct difference in the meaning of the term as used by certain artists. For instance, a few artists took care to mention that they did not believe in the old theory that mural painting should be flat, i. e., it "must have respect for the wall surface" or "must not destroy the wall." Others merely mentioned that murals should not have too much natural perspective nor too much modeling in light and shade, or that the artist should have complete and absolute control of spatial relationships relative to the front plane of the wall surface. But others stated definitely that a mural must be flat so as not to destroy the plane of the wall or weaken it by suggestion of empty space instead of a solid wall, in other words, not like an open window. Certain artists believe that the architectural setting determines the style to such a degree that, although some decorations should perhaps be kept fairly flat, others might be designed so as to "knock the wall out" if necessary to extend the room space. Although several artists profess to believe that a mural should be flat, they either do not mean strictly two-dimensional masses, or they have contradicted themselves by painting decorations that show modeling of forms and at least a suggestion of space be-

hind the figures.

From such answers as these, one may judge somewhat the conflicts of opinions among modern American artists, and among Texas artists in particular, on the qualities a mural should possess. One may notice the vagueness of certain artists' beliefs concerning the characteristics differentiating wall decoration from easel paintings, or perhaps, instead, the definite opinions of others that bespeak a keen interest in such painting. Mr. Howard Cook says that "a sense of eternal harmony with the architecture to which it is bound, is one of the myriad of differences that separate mural painting from studio work." Another artist, Mr. Emilio G. Cahero, expresses forcefully his belief by saying: "It would be ridiculous to make a sculpture in stone imitating the quality of a clay model and equally ridiculous to paint a wall like a precious little easel painting."

In answer to preference for mural or easel work, twenty-one artists replied that they preferred mural painting; thirteen said that they did not prefer it; thirteen liked about equally both easel and mural work; and nine either did not answer or were undecided as to which they liked most. One artist expressed himself by saying that he might as well be asked whether he preferred an orange or an apple, or, "better still," whether he liked "a big orange better than a little one."

One may conclude, therefore, that artists in Texas who answered the questionnaire do not mind the many problems involved in mural painting enough to dislike it. They may even find the problems of large space, architectural limitations, or technical complexities, a challenge to their ability. Mr. Cook remarked that the mural spaces in the San Antonio post-office proved a fascinating problem because they were difficult to use.

The results from the questionnaire and interviews indicate definitely the conflicts of opinions and the likes and dislikes of artists concerning modern wall painting.

## CHAPTER VII

### EXPLANATIONS AND ANALYSES OF MURALS

The purpose of this chapter is to present brief explanations and analyses of a few of the representative murals in Texas classified into four groups according to sponsorship, as follows:

1. Public Works of Art Project.
2. Treasury Department (Section of Painting and Sculpture).
3. Texas Centennial Murals.
4. Independent Murals.

## Public Works of Art Project

### Discussion of

Plate No. I -- Panels by Otis Dozier

Plate No. II -- Panel by S. P. Ziegler

Plate No. III -- Panels by Alexandre Hogue and  
Jerry Bywaters

### Illustrations:

Plates No. I, II, III

Charts No. I, II, III, IV



### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. I

Two large panels, each six by ten feet, entitled "Pure Science" and "Applied Science," are the works of Otis Dozier of Dallas for the A. and M. College Library. They hang on each side of a large opening into the library reading room. Since they have the size and treatment of a mural painting, were executed for a particular architectural setting, and are classed as murals by the regional director of PWAP and the artist himself, they are discussed here as murals, although they are only hanging on the wall instead of being glued to or set into it.

The colors have been kept soft, cool, and clear in an effort to harmonize with the setting, or -- to give the words of the artist himself -- "to enhance the wall." Mainly soft blues, greens, and browns have been used, with a blue saturation over all. The contrast in value of dark and light shown in the photograph of the "Applied Science" panel is not so marked in the original painting, perhaps because of the soft, grayed coloring used.

The panel at the left of the opening (right one in the illustration, Plate No. I) deals with the theme of pure, or natural science, as found in nature, being used in such a way as to develop more fully the agricultural products. In it are pictured symbols of early, or the undeveloped, plant and animal life compared to results obtained from cultivation

and development of those products; for example, long-horn cattle are compared to modern beef cattle, the wild lily to the hot-house plant, and the wild chicken to the present-day Buff Cochran breed of poultry.

The second panel shows this science applied to modern industry; for example, the chemist, biologist, astronomer, and physicist are shown making use of the knowledge obtained by the study of natural science, together with the symbols of that science -- guinea pigs, sea creatures, planets, plants, etc.

The subject-matter or theme of these decorations, then, might be stated as being in harmony with the purpose of a college of the type of A. and M. College.

In studying the paintings for the purely visual qualities shown therein, one finds variety and constant contrast as well as repetition in the elements of line, dark and light, and color. The fundamental motifs of the triangle and circle control the arrangement of masses and help guide the movements of the eye over the paintings in a flowing or swinging manner. The effect of pattern is obtained through the use of dark and light masses in such a way as to cause the observer to notice it more than the solidity of the forms. Perspective is shown in the drawing of these forms in the use of receding lines and foreshortening of shapes, but the use of only a little gradation of value (dark-and-light) from front to back counteracts in such a way the forward and backward movement that no

particular feeling of space is noticed.

Practically the same plan of organization has been used for each panel, thus tying the two together visually, although the patches of dark and light are more broken within the large masses in the panel on pure science, and the edges more uneven or broken. Because of this, there is not as much contrast between broken and unbroken areas as compared to the panel on applied science. (Only this latter panel has been used for further discussion here).

Chart No. 1<sup>1</sup> shows practically the same number of vertical lines as horizontal lines in the panel on applied science (even fewer if the imaginary uprights framing the axis of the figures are left out); but the general effect of the vertical is given. Perhaps it is because of the contrast of light against dark in the upright figures of the men against the uprights of the tables (see Chart No. II). Shown in Chart No. II is a play and interplay of curves and straights forming contrast and variety, and directing attention to the center of the painting.

The plant at the left side was introduced, Mr. Dozier explains, to keep the composition from being too stiff, as well as to make use of it in connection with his theme.

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. II

Mr. S. P. Ziegler's painting for a public school in Fort Worth has for its theme "The Development of Aviation."

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<sup>1</sup>The term "chart" as used in this thesis refers to tracings of fundamental lines and dark and light values found in the murals.

A series concerning the history of transportation by land, water, and air was planned by the artist, but only the aviation panel was completed for the Public Works of Art Project. Due to lack of time the artist was unable to use his entire theme.

The panel (4' x 6') reflects the artist's interest in portraiture. He made use of each member of his family to model for the figures holding small symbols of air travel, and grouped in front of a large plane. The skyline of the city and an airplane in flight are in the distant background. The insertion of a wagon wheel at the left symbolizes the old form of transportation by land discarded through disuse. The bird, used as a symbol of flight from which air transportation first began, is in one boy's hand ready for its trip; the kite typifies man's attempt to create objects that would fly like birds; the other symbols are models of early airplanes and the early balloon which developed into the dirigible.

A complementary color scheme of greens and reds predominates, although other hues were used also. The green filing cabinets in the room were considered in the plan of coloring.

The irregular silhouette of the entire group of figures forms a modified rectangle within the rectangular frame. As shown in Chart No. III, there are a few small strong lights within the main mass, but the whole group forms a dark mass

against the light sky and ground. The introduction of the light kite is essential in helping balance the heavy dark mass situated principally at the left of the center. Perhaps the skyline and the airplane in flight were also meant to help balance the dark mass, although they do not do so in the photograph. The artist mentioned that some of the pattern of the lights and darks does not show to advantage in the photograph. He said, also, that the apparent off-balance is not felt when the three panels originally planned are seen as a unit.

Many edges of forms follow vertical, horizontal, or diagonal lines, as do many of the intersections. This might indicate that a framework of squares, formed by drawing vertical and horizontal lines, may have been used in planning the drawing. The many upright figures are varied in height and position, and are contrasted by diagonal movements of the seated central figure and by the arms and legs of others as well as the diagonal placement created by the placement of symbols or other light motifs. The wheel and the airplane in the sky balance on a diagonal. The heads are arranged in a circular or elliptical order.

Although the slight diagonal of the clouds does not show much in the photograph, Mr. Ziegler said that the line of clouds is a part of the pattern, although secondary, and that it meanders through the whole series.

The manner in which the artist applied his paint is in contrast to the somewhat smoother strokes of many other

Texas muralists. Through the brush strokes he has achieved some feeling of texture.

### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. III

The Dallas City Hall contains ten mural panels pertaining to the history of the city in ten-year periods. Mr. Alexandre Hogue and Mr. Jerry Bywaters worked in collaboration on nine of them; one was painted by Mr. Hogue, only, as an extension of the original project. Although painted in the oil medium, these were unusual in that they were not on canvas but painted directly on the wall itself.

The two used here for analysis are located at the head of the stairway near the elevator; the others are on the same floor, at the left. These two panels indicate the style of the other paintings which complete the series.

The top illustration, by Mr. Hogue and Jerry Bywaters, pictures the young city of the late nineteenth century. The second illustration, painted by Mr. Hogue, shows some of the outstanding contributions to modern city life in Dallas. All of the panels taken together average about seven feet by eleven feet. Most of them are cut into by windows, doors, or ventilators, and the light reflected on the paintings is very poor. These architectural difficulties in the setting were met by the artists in many different ways. To solve the light problem somewhat, the artists painted at night by use of electric light, because artificial light must necessarily be used dur-

ing a part of the painting period. Spaces cut by large windows and ventilators, creating a U shape, made it difficult to fit in the life-sized figures. This caused the artists to paint only the upper section of some figures and place them so that their heads were on the eye level of the observer. In this way the artist could use the full-length figures in the tall spaces and create the illusion that the others were partially hidden behind a wall, which was actually the marble wainscot beneath the mural. The street scene shows two parts of figures treated in this way.

When a door cut into the painting space, Mr. Hogue used the door as a desk behind which the judge could sit. In this painting the artist had to introduce into his design a fire hose and an alarm box which were actually on the wall.

The color in all of these panels was built up as the artists chose, rather than by the use of a standard color harmony. Since they worked at the location instead of in the studio, the artists felt that they could harmonize the coloring better in this way.

The top illustration is an early street scene (see Plate No. III). For subject-matter, the artists used the old opera house, court house, bank, and other authentic buildings in the background; and in front they placed the old carriages and horse-drawn street car, and people dressed in the styles of the historical period. The "dandies" are about to enter the saloon after having attended the opera.

The signs help create the impression of buildings not really seen, and lead the eyes into the composition. The horizontal movement of the eye throughout the painting is stopped by the verticals of figures and buildings. Although there are actually more straight vertical lines than horizontal ones, the impression is given that there are more of the latter. This is due to the movement of the dark carriages to the right, the receding lines of the tracks, and the horizontal groupings of window shapes, as well as arrangement of dark and light (see Chart No. IV).

The meanings of forms shown in the lower illustration have been explained fully by the artist, who took quite an interest in the subject-matter therein.

A police broadcaster is speaking into an old-time microphone located in the basement of the City Hall. The wave impulse which leaves the aerial on top of the Hall, as indicated, zigzags across the mural space to stop along the top of a radio police car. The sound waves leaving the microphone, and those leaving the aerial, are connected by the "heart" of the radio, a giant tube, suspended in space. The signal is received by the police radio car, leads to the arrest and the appearance of the criminal before the judge.

The street signals placed above the car are actually a part of the lower right-hand section which relates to Mr. Garrett, as one of his inventions. A brick wall has been



painted behind the fire alarm box and hose actually on the wall. Another instrument, which is a part of the automatic ticker-tape fire-signal system, emits a paper tape perforated with the alarm box number from which the signal came. This tape curls around the alarm box and changes into a blaze which barely spells the word "fire," and which blaze surrounds the hydrant to which the hose is attached. Streamers of smoke, running diagonally up to the right, separate this section dealing with the fire signal system from the remainder of the mural dealing with the police signal system. A wide ribbon, bearing a memorial inscription to Henry (Dad) Garrett, curls down behind the head of his portrait, a figure that is partly revealed around the corner of the brick wall. The airplane in the upper left corner was introduced as a prediction that the future police signal system would be extended to cruising airplanes.

Although there is a distinct feeling of reality in the modeling of the forms, no impression of deep space is given. This design is more abstract in its arrangement of forms than is the street scene above.

Shown in the lower illustration of Chart No. IV are the principal straight lines and curves created by dark and light. They show the variety and contrast, as well as repetition, of curve and straight, long and short, broken and unbroken spaces and lines, through which the artist has attained rhythm.

The line element is present only in as much as a form or space, gradually blended from light to dark, creates an edge against another form or space of another value.

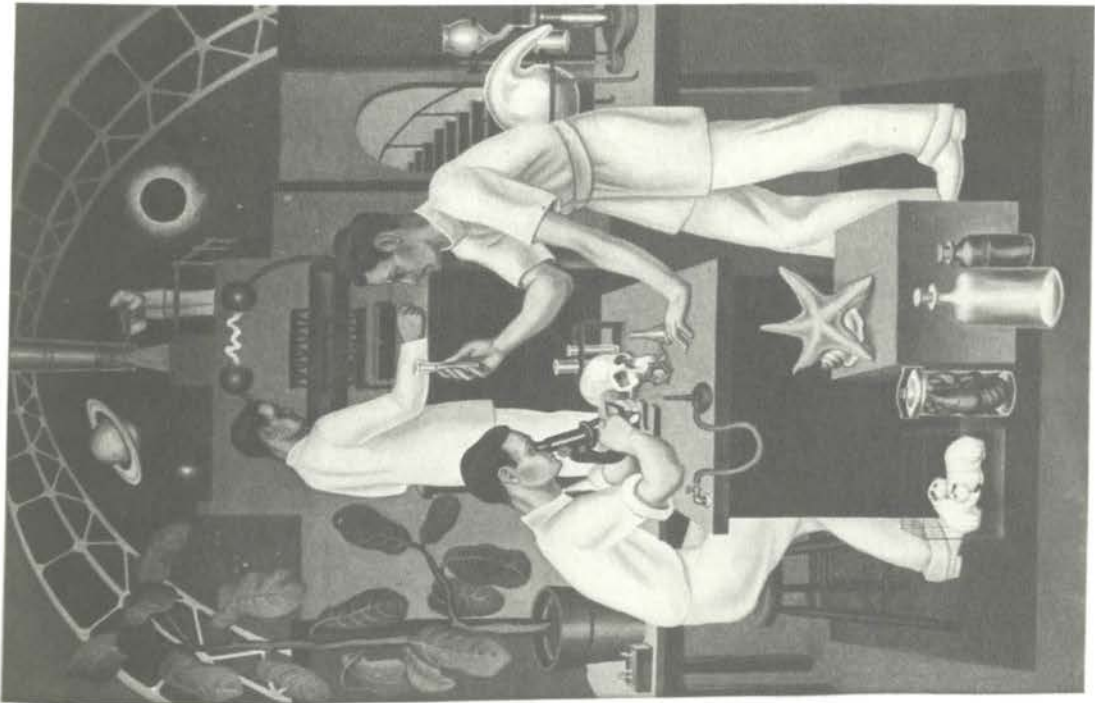
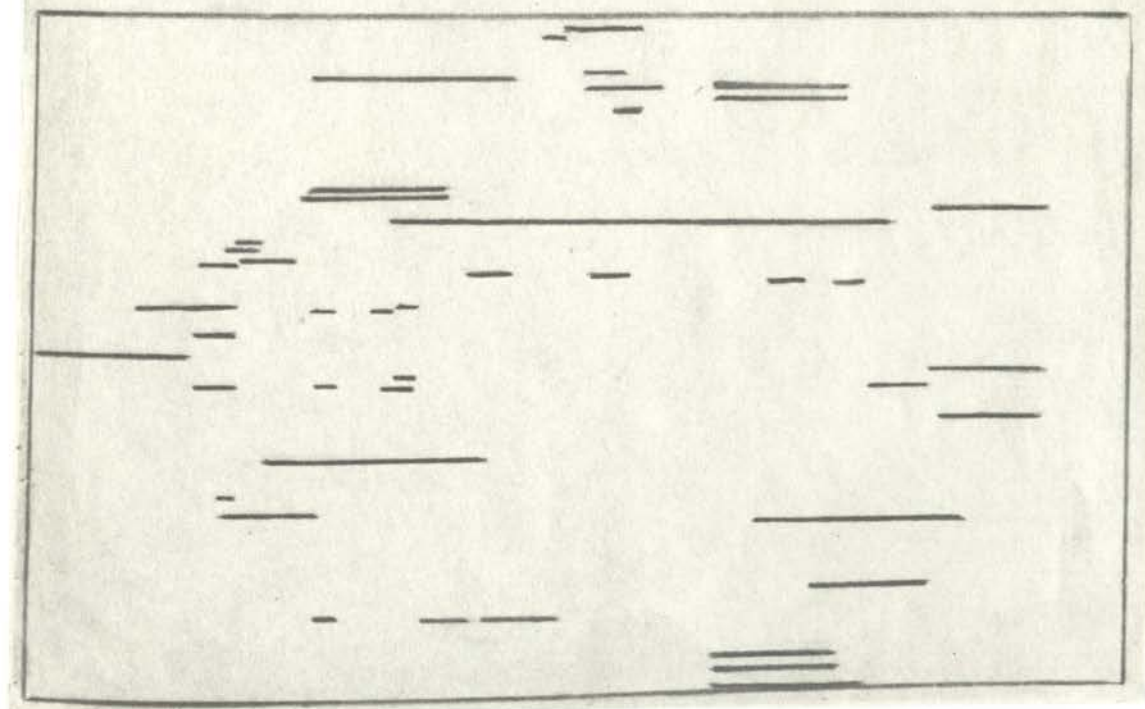
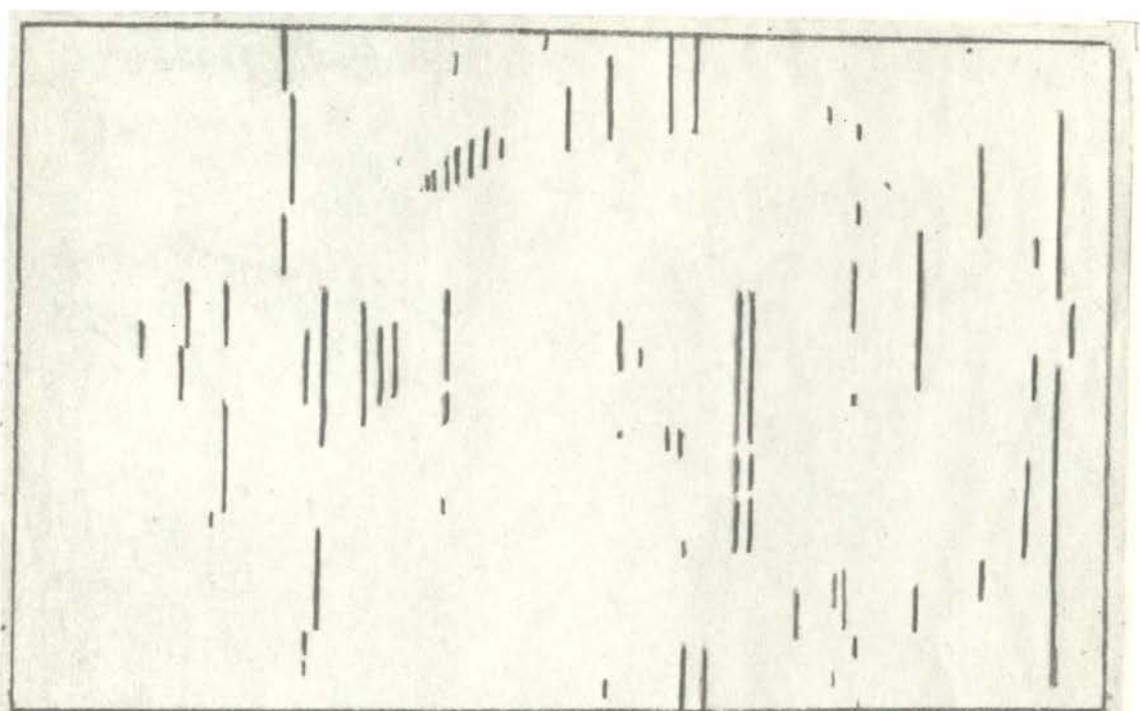


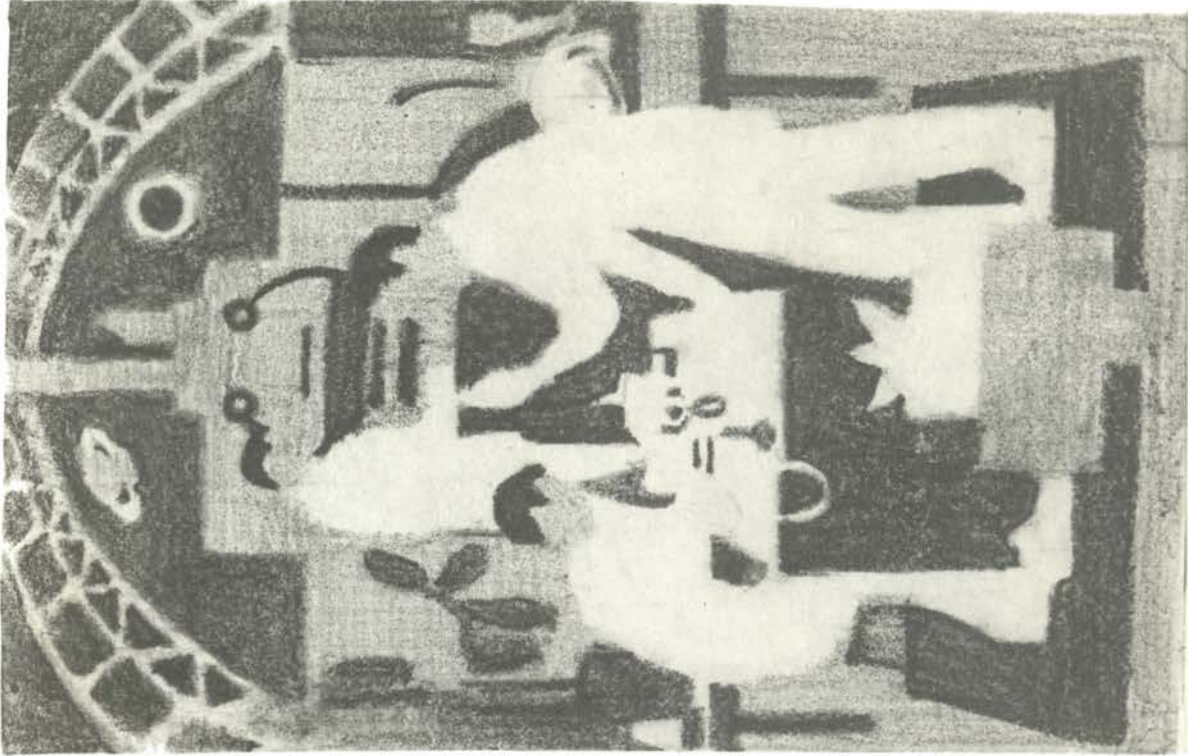
Chart I



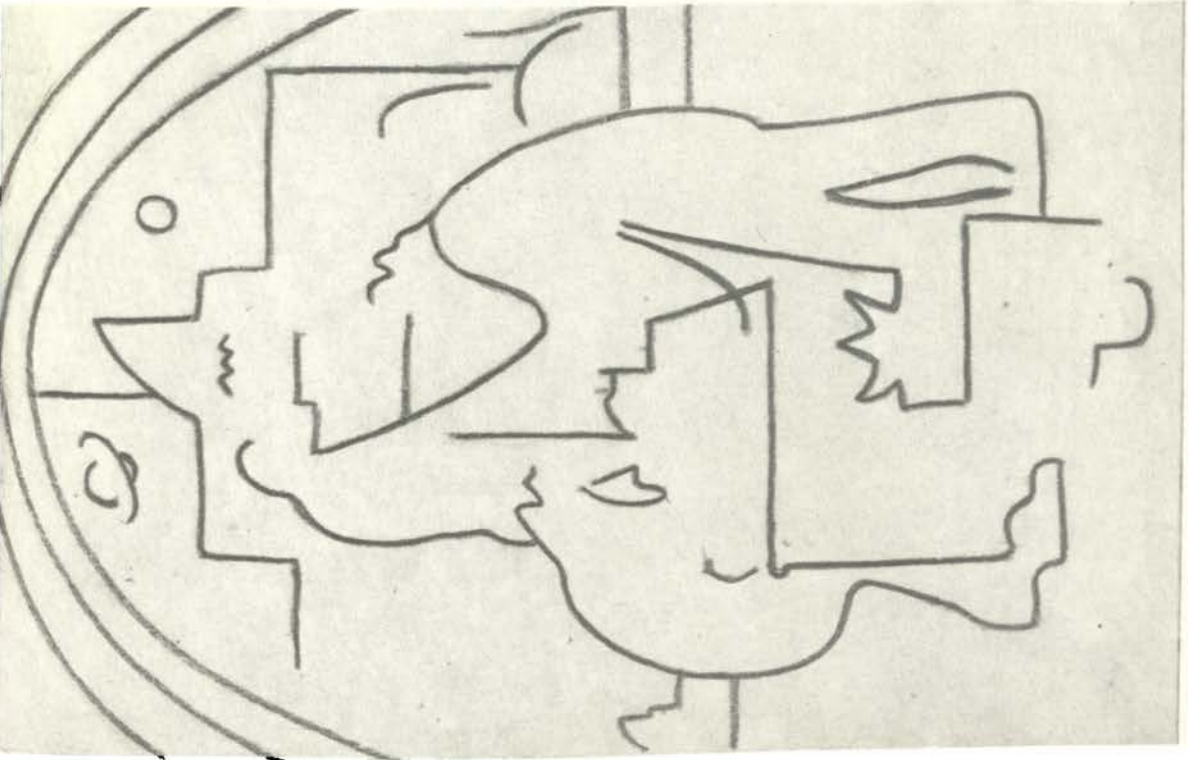
Vertical Lines



Horizontal Lines



Arrangement of Dark and Light

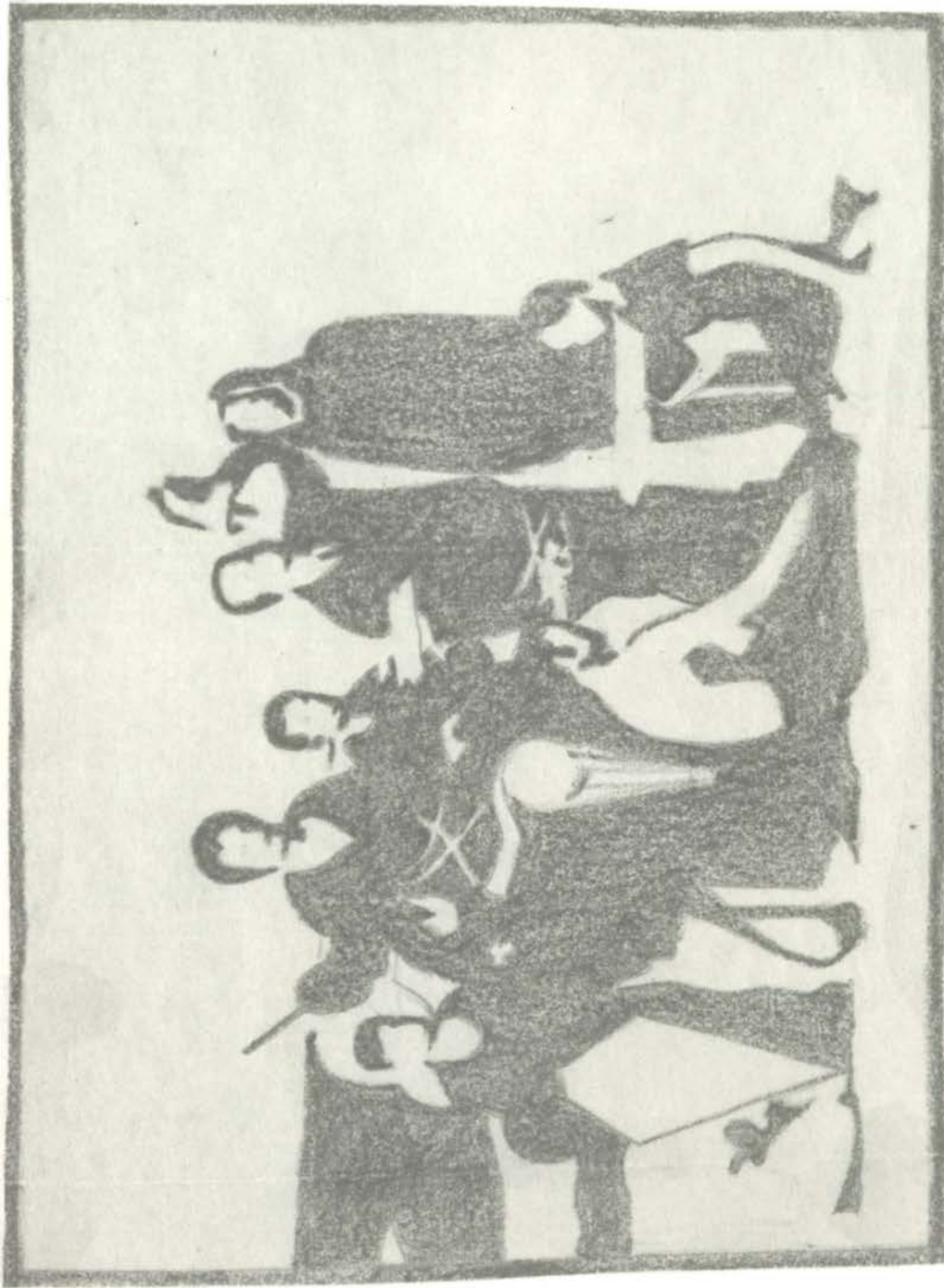


Line Directions from Value Contrasts





Chart III



Arrangement of Dark and Light

## Plate III

1890 - THE YOUNG CITY PUTS ON AIRS - POST OFFICE AND CITY HALL ARE BUILT



1931 - RADIO EQUIPPED POLICE CARS - 1923 - AUTOMATIC TRAFFIC CONTROL - 1887 - FIRE SIGNAL SYSTEM





Chart IV



Tracing of Curved and Straight Edges

## Section of Painting and Sculpture

### Discussion of

Plate No. IV -- Panel by Paul Ninas

Plate No. V -- Panel by Barse Miller

Plate No. VI -- Panel by Alexandre Hogue

Plate No. VII -- Panel by Jerry Bywaters

### Illustrations:

Plates No. IV, V, VI, VII

Charts No. V, VI, VII, VIII, IX

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. IV

The painting by Mr. Paul Ninas in the Henderson Post Office is located on the north wall, at the left of the main entrance, over the door into the Postmaster's office. The mural completely fills the plastered space above the oak paneling and door of the post-office and touches the ceiling at the top and the walls at the sides. The size of the painting is typical of the dimensions used in murals for small post-offices over the state. It is thirteen feet long by seven feet high at the center and five feet, five inches high at each end. The curved top, fitting into the curve of the ceiling in the room, accounting for the differences in width, creates a unique shape.

The warm cream color of the wall and ceiling and the warm rich brown of the woodwork have been repeated in variation throughout the painting. Although these warm, earthen hues predominate, some cool blues and greens give contrast, and some dull reds are present. The motif, however, is in a middle key as a whole as compared to the dark woodwork below the painting and the light walls and ceiling. There are, however, a few strong lights and darks used in the painting. In coloring, then, the mural harmonizes well with the setting.

The subject matter pertains to the industries of Texas and, in particular, to the section in which the post-office is located. For instance, cotton farming, as the main agri-

cultural industry of the state, is pictured in the foreground; but the oil and lumber industries, for which this particular locality is noted, are also represented in the background. At the request of the postmaster, an airplane, symbolizing the air-mail industry, was inserted also.

A study of pattern or composition of the painting reveals a certain movement of the eye over the painting. This is an active, almost jumpy, movement from one cool color to another or practically the same hue, or from one warm patch of color to another warm one in the same way. The strong darks in the belts and hat bands of the men, the houses, and the straps of the cotton bale give a small decorative motif in contrast to the larger areas of a more middle value. Although the forms are modelled to give some feeling of solidity, they are also outlined in a dark value of the same color used within the space. In the slight forward and backward thrust of forms, some movement forward and backward into the painting has been secured; in the change from warm to cool of the ground planes, some effect of space is given, although not that of deep space or atmospheric quality. The manner in which the artist has painted his figures indicates the possibility of his modelling each figure separately and then grouping them into a composition. The variation and repetition used in the positions and grouping of the figures, the curves used in the cotton sacks repeated in the fields, the contrast of curved uprights of the men with the straight uprights of tree trunks

and oil derricks contribute to rhythm and contrast (see Chart No. V). No mechanical system of design -- at least, not Dynamic Symmetry -- has been used. The way in which the artist has built form suggests that he has not yet arrived at a specific style.

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. V

The mural decorating the end of the main lobby of the Goose Creek Post Office was painted by Barse Miller of California in the tempera process (egg-oil emulsion). It depicts in heroic scale a winged torso entitled "Texas," represented as a pioneer in a coonskin cap. Represented also are symbols of transportation -- an airplane, a covered wagon, and an early type of locomotive. The painting covers about six hundred square feet; it is approximately thirty feet long and twenty feet high.

Such a large painting high on a pure white wall must necessarily be kept light in value in order to keep it on the plane of the wall space. The artist has achieved this through use of only the lighter hues -- an ivory white figure held with terra-cotta red line, gold wings, and accessories to match the marble wainscot of the room. The scale and coloring of the mural is in keeping with the artist's objective of "A simple architectonic solution in scale with the building."

The mural is evidently quite different from the Henderson Post Office mural in its conception and in the handling

of plastic means. Consistent with the belief expressed by the artist concerning the qualities a mural should possess, Mr. Miller's painting is literary and symbolic in character, as compared to the more literal representation of industries shown in Mr. Ninas' mural.

When studying the painting for its plastic qualities, one finds that the decorative effect is built up mainly by the element of line. The strong outline of the figure, sometimes narrow and sometimes wide, is more interestingly varied than the pattern of dark and light masses. This linear appearance is probably due largely to the necessity for outlining the figure, so near the wall color, in order to make its form distinct. The variety and ease in the flow of line from the hips to the shoulders and on up through the arm make the figure appear to reach for the star. This upward swing to the right has a counter-balance in the wing and other horizontal lines above it which keep the eyes from moving entirely out of the picture. The whole curved upright of the torso has a counter thrust in the wings and in the symbols of transportation essentially horizontal in direction.

The patches of dark and light and the outline confine the form to practically the same plane as the wall. Although the left arm of the figure is drawn so as to reach forward and the other backward, the movement is counteracted by the use of dark and light to keep them on the same plane. One

cannot tell whether the form of Texas is meant to hover over the symbols of transportation below, or whether the figure is erect and the symbols pressed up against it.

Chart No. VI shows many vertical and horizontal lines which are defined by the lines of the drawing. This would suggest that a similar layout had been used in making the original sketch. Chart No. VII shows many points of intersection on diagonal lines as well, and a distinctly diagonal movement of forms which also may have been the basis of the composition.

Though simplified and used symbolically, the wagon and train (early Southern Pacific type) are represented rather literally.

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. VI

The mural painting in the Graham Post Office was created by Alexandre Hogue of Dallas. It is painted in the oil medium on canvas fastened securely to the wall by a mixture of white lead and varnish. The mural (6'6" x 12') covers the wall space above a door and bulletin boards, and extends at the sides down to the marble tile below the boards.

In color, this marble tile is a mingling of yellow-ochre, light red, and Mars Violet, with a cool gray mixed through it. The woodwork is a dark mahogany. In order to harmonize the coloring of his painting with that of the setting, the artist restricted his palette to the Mars colors

only. His blues were secured mainly from a mixture of black and white. Very little real blue was used.

The scene was taken from one observed in the oil fields outside of Graham. Mr. Hogue had watched men working on machinery there. After planning his design, he returned to the scene to observe details more carefully.

The figure at the left facing the front is a portrait of the city founder, Mr. E. S. Graham. At the extreme right is the owner of the oil well. He is giving directions to the foreman in charge, who is studying the blue-prints shown to him. Two workers form the center of interest. Behind them is the machinery, and in the distance, derricks, tanks, pipes, and equipment pertaining to oil fields.

The mural has been built up principally of diagonals and horizontals, although many verticals and curves are present also. The curves and diagonals have been concentrated more in the center and the verticals on each side. The principal uprights are formed by the standing figures with pipes or tanks above them. These change to slight curves, and then on to the pronounced curves of the central figure. The straight verticals form a transition from long ones at the side to the short ones in the center (see Chart No. VIII).

Quite a contrast of forms may be seen within the machinery alone, besides the obvious contrast of figures against machinery. We find round and square, large and small, wide and narrow, long and short forms, as well as sharp and



dull, simple and complex lines.

The forms appear as real solids in space. Apparently no attempt was made to keep the painting flat in appearance. Movements of the eye are controlled by color passage from dark to light, bright to dull, and warm to cool more than by perspective drawing.

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. VII

The mural panel in the Quanah Post Office was painted by Jerry Bywaters as one of the projects sponsored by the Section of Painting and Sculpture. The painting, executed in oil on canvas, fills the space above bulletin boards on the side wall, at the right of the entrance from the street. The woodwork of the room is a gray-green, but the wall is a warm color. The mural also is warm in coloring -- yellow-ochre and gold predominating -- and has what the artist calls the "blond look of West Texas."

The panel has for its subject "The Naming of Quanah." It shows the Indian chief, Quanah (from whom the town got its name) making a peace pact with the cattleman. To the left of the central figures are pictured the long-horn cattle and, in the distance, a buffalo herd, both typical of early West Texas. Also shown at the left are surveyors and an old-time train. At the right are pictured the modern industries of Quanah -- agriculture, oil, and manufacturing.

The artist planned his composition on a series of

lines converging in the upper center of the picture, thus forming several triangles with a common apex. In this way he has kept the eyes moving away from the sides and back to the center of the painting. He has further controlled the eye movements in a circular motion over the painting through the arrangement of dark and light. An attempt to show this organization is found in Chart No. IX.



Chart V



Tracing of Curved and Straight Edges

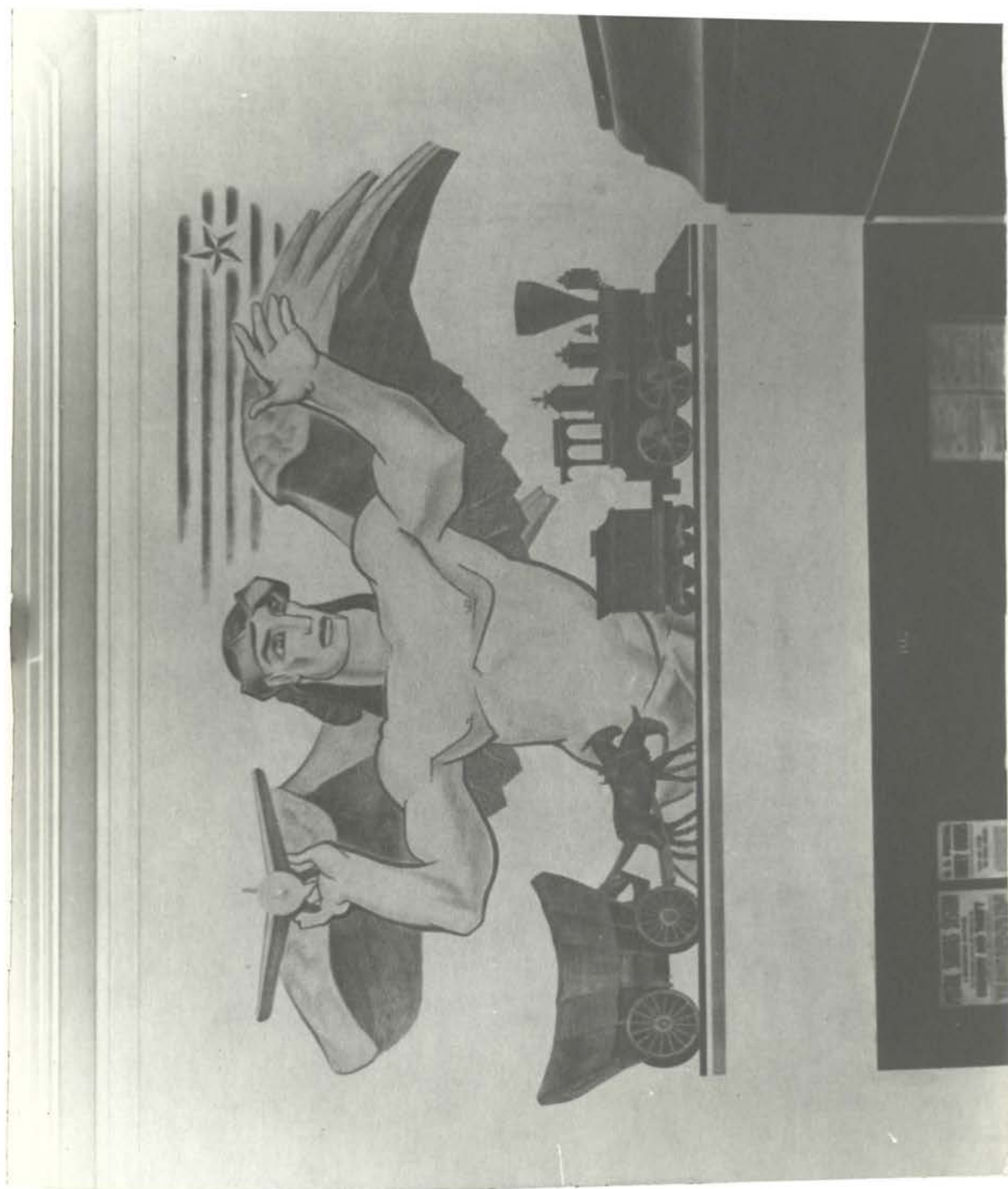
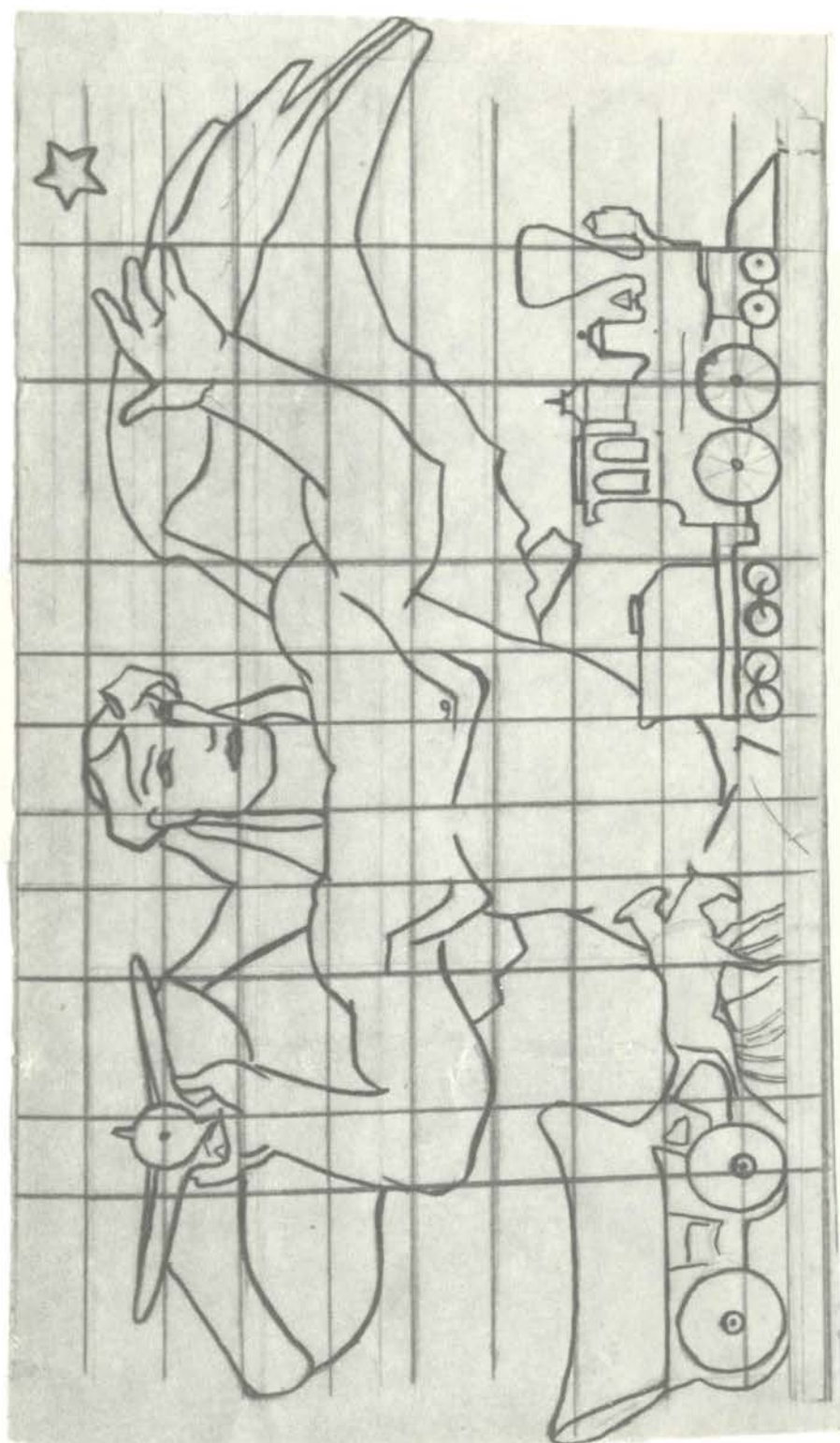


Chart VI



Verticals and horizontals as Defined by Lines of Drawing

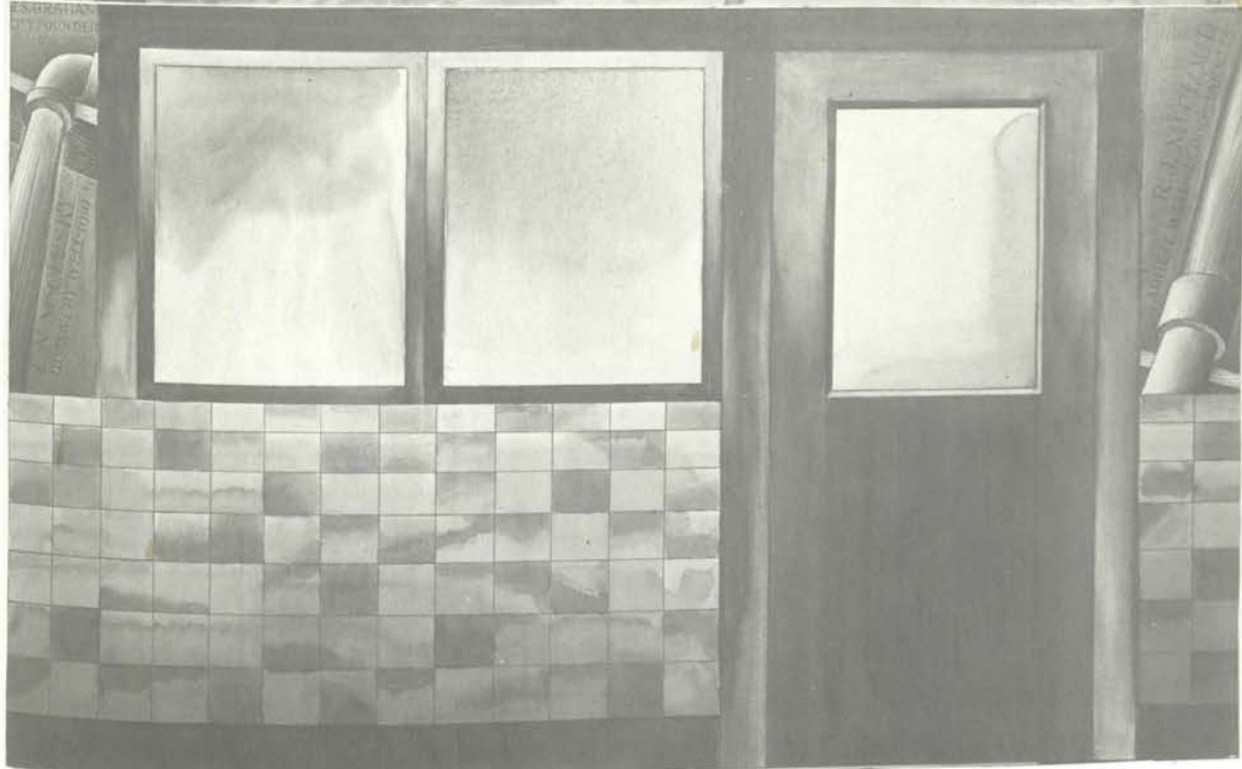


Chart VII

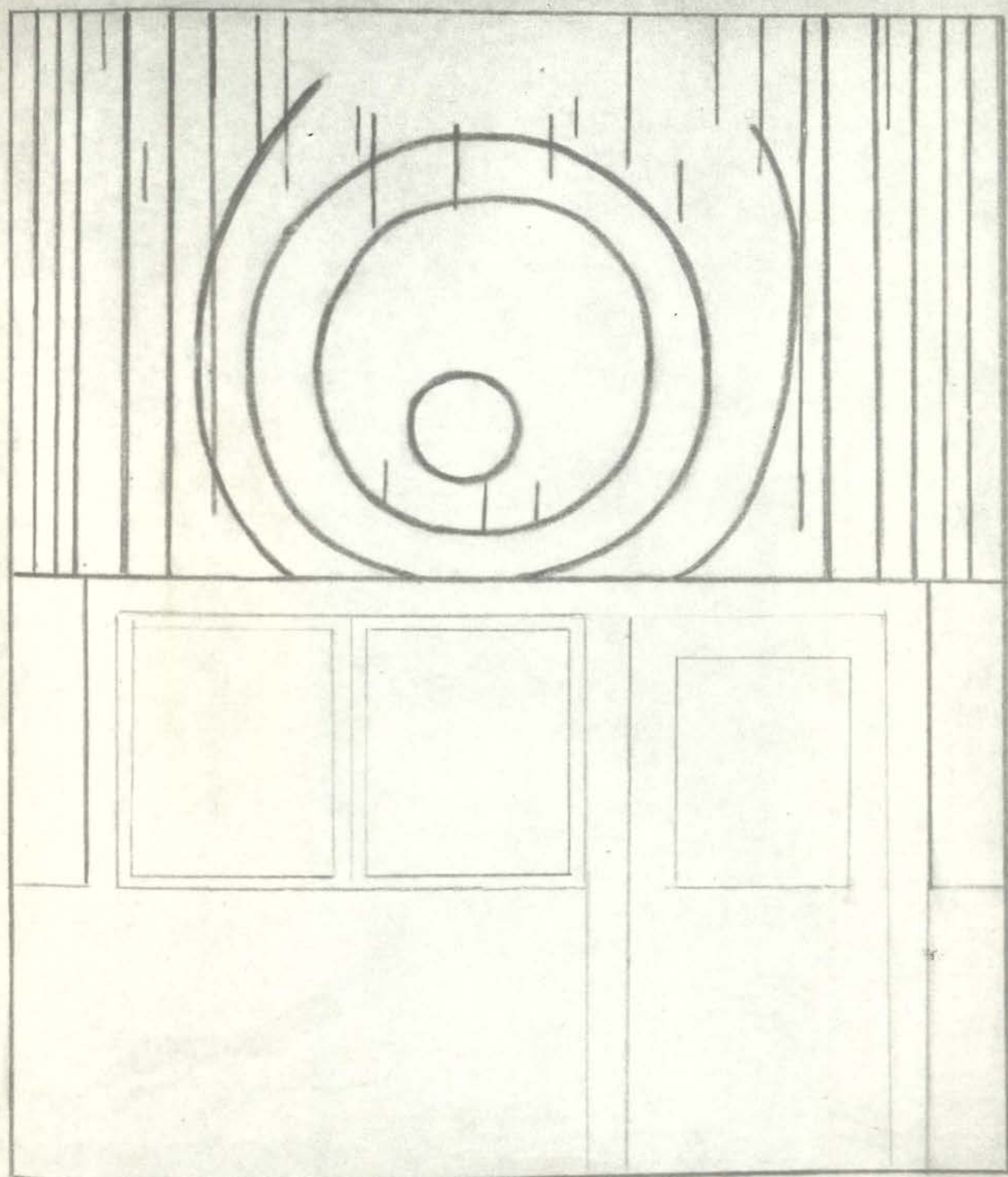


Diagonals as Defined by Lines of Drawing

## Plate VI





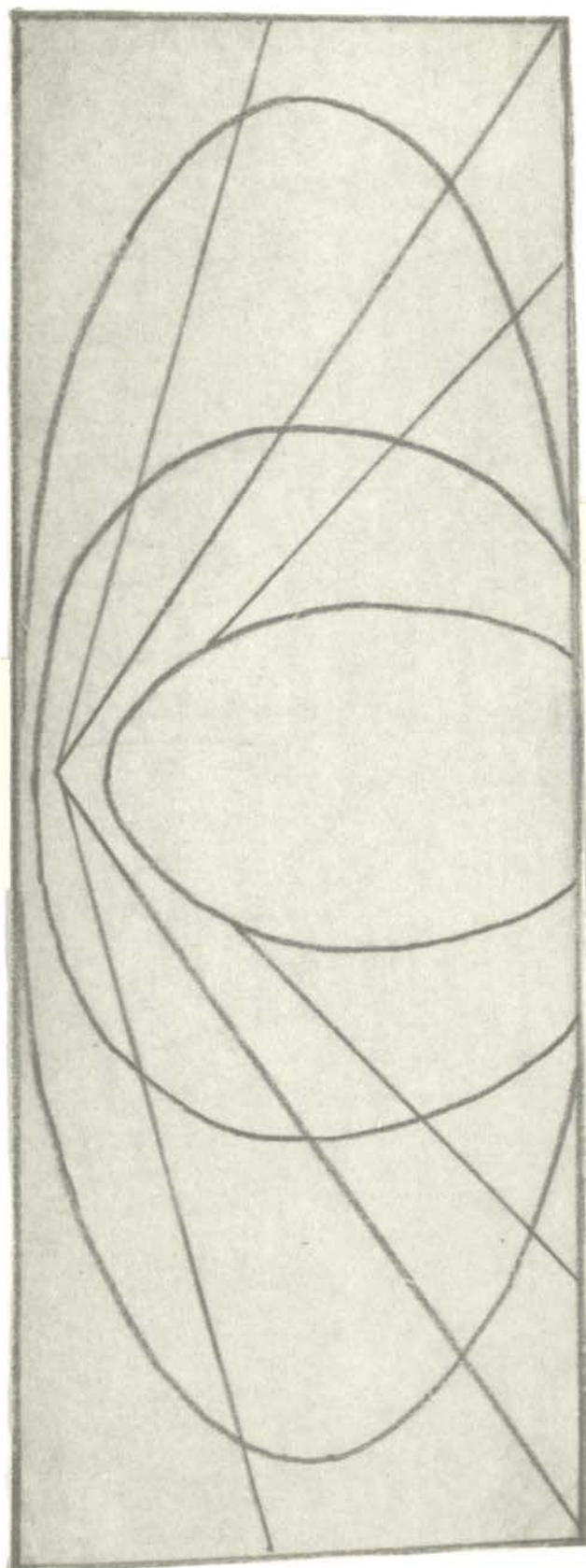


Plan of Verticals and Curves

Plate VII



Chart IX



Organization of Masses

## Centennial Murals

### Discussion of

Plates No. VIII -- Panels by Tom Lea, Jr.

Plate No. IX -- Panels by Olin H. Travis

Plate No. X -- Panels by Arthur S. Niendorff

### Illustrations:

Plates VIII, IX, X

Charts No. X, XI, XII

Palettes No. I, II

### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. VIII

In the West Texas Room in the Hall of State Building at Dallas, Tom Lea of El Paso has painted two large panels (22' x 8'6" and 13' x 8'6"), typically western in subject-matter, which portray early settlers and cowboys. The painting on the wall opposite the entrance to the room depicts the cowboy with his rope, surrounded by the familiar objects of the range -- cattle, horses, and riders; corral, windmill, and tank in a western setting. On the opposite wall, over the entrance, is a mural symbolic of "small mankind's courage and enterprise in the midst of a huge and inimical world of nature."<sup>1</sup> Three figures, evidently suggesting early pioneers, appear to be riding toward the observer in a wagon. The group is set sharply against a background suggestive of the vastness of the western country.

The room with its adobe wall, hand-hewn ceiling beams, floor decorated in the cactus motif, and dull metal fixtures, add an atmosphere in keeping with the theme of the paintings.

Mr. Lea has used only soft, dull hues in his coloring of the cowboy panel and a limited palette as to range of hues. Only blue which is almost gray, a touch of green, and several shades of brown have been used except for a note of yellow surrounding the cowboy's head. The opposite mural

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<sup>1</sup>The State of Texas (Austin, Texas: Steck Company, 1937), p. 29.

has coloring of the same type, although more blue, perhaps for the sake of distance, is used (see Palette No. I and Chart No. XI).

Some one has said that "the poetry of the West is hard and sharp and clear like the straight talk of the cow-hand." Mr. Lea has used a sharp and clear outline of dark against light in an interesting pattern. Whether or not the sharp, distinct edges show only the peculiar style of the artist, or whether they represent an attempt to express this "poetry," does not alter the fact that this style is in keeping with the idea.

In considering the composition, one finds an obvious center of interest in both panels -- the cowboy in one and the group of people in the other. The horses and riders on the left side of the first panel help balance the cattle, tank, and windmill on the other. Although the figures give the impression of form in space, the decorative manner of handling these forms make for much interest in the pattern of light and dark. The lower illustration in Chart No. X shows an attempt to reduce the pattern to three values. Extremely little naturalistic detail is used except in the central figure, intended, very likely, for a record of the Texas cowboy. No line, in the sense of pure outline (as in drawing), is present; but line, created by the edges of one area of color against another, grows dim and blurred in places, and then becomes sharp and distinct in others. The

mountains in the distance suggest little solidity -- mainly pattern against the sky -- and the horizontals in the foreground are purely decorative.

An organization of the verticals and horizontals (see Chart No. X) shows few vertical lines in the lower section and few horizontals in the upper, but a pleasing balance of the two throughout the panel. Except for the central upright of the cowboy, the diagonals are perhaps more noticeable than either the horizontals or verticals. Several very strong diagonals are evident.

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. IX

The mural paintings in the East Texas Room of the Hall of State Building were painted by Olin H. Travis, Dean of the Art Institute of Dallas. The paintings (oil and wax medium) are on canvas attached to the wall with white lead and varnish.

They fill the complete space, at the north and south ends of the room, over the carved doors and wood paneling of the walls on each side. The side walls are paneled from floor to ceiling. East Texas gum, a deep rich brown in color, is used for doors and paneling. The murals, essentially horizontal in their proportions, eight feet high and twenty feet long, would tend to cut the effect of height given the room by the tall doors and lines of the wall panels; but the upward movement of the eyes obtained through emphasis on the central uprights within the paintings, counteracts somewhat

the horizontal effect given by the proportions of the boundary lines of the mural.

The contrast of wall color in this room with that in the West Texas room next to it is noticeable, and a contrast is also evident in the color schemes of the murals in each room. Whereas Mr. Lea used only a limited palette of grayed hues, Mr. Travis has freely used a wide range of colors of varying intensities. Palettes No. I (Mr. Lea's) and No. II (Mr. Travis) indicate the colors of each artist. They show to some extent the difference in range and intensity, but cannot give the contrast shown in the actual mural; for while the rectangles of color as found in Mr. Lea's murals indicate almost his complete range from light to dark and from bright to dull, as well as changes in the hue itself, those of the other murals show only the changes in hue and the changes of value naturally accompanying them. Due to the large variety of these changes in the mural itself, none of the various grays, or the tints obtained by the addition of white, could be shown in the few rectangles of color used here.

This liberal use of color -- or "ample use of color," as the artist terms it -- is in keeping with Mr. Travis' belief that color or design in murals need not be subordinated to the setting.

In fidelity to detail and literal representation of subject-matter, the artist has shown quite a contrast to the rather stylized paintings in the next room. The realistic



treatment of the cotton wagon, cotton gin, warehouses and sawmill in one panel and the "spider" in the other suggest that they were modelled from the originals. Indeed, Mr. Travis remarked that he made various trips to surrounding towns for the materials used in the illustration. He showed quite an interest in the presentation of authentic subject-matter.

His theme, however, adds a dramatic note to the picture. The original plan was to show the tranquility of East Texas rural life before the discovery of oil, and then the bustling excitement and activity created after its discovery in the eastern part of the state. In the first panel, the activities of rural life all take place over sleeping giants representing the potential wealth and power as yet undreamed of. In the second panel the giants are awakening and are casting their shadows from a great oil-well fire out over the entire district. The first panel was changed from the original plan at the request of the sponsors, to include the cotton and lumber industries.

The obvious interest felt in story content justifies the statement that the approach to the problem was made from an illustrator's standpoint. The artist's aim -- to paint something that people in all walks of life might enjoy -- accounts, perhaps, for this approach to his subject.

A bi-symetric appearance is given the designs by the

placing of the tall pines (in the first) and the rising giants (in the second) almost in the exact center, and by the smaller objects on each side fairly alike in shape and placement to those opposite them.

The strong diagonals of the cotton wagon and logs tend to balance the center verticals of the pines and to lead the eyes into the background. The effect of distance is given in the first panel through the perspective drawing, and through the contrast of the dark foreground as a whole against the lighter value behind it, as well as stronger contrast within the front forms. Even though some pattern of dark and light is present, the decorative quality is subordinate to the feeling of form, presented as real solids in space. One distinctly feels the forward and backward movement of the eye. In the second panel, the giants, the tanks, and the "spider" in the left foreground, all are treated as solids, although the coloring of the diagonal rays of light is decorative. The forward and backward thrust of the giant forms is quite evident. The painting gives one a sense of the technical ability of the artist in the portrayal of his subject-matter.

#### Explanation and Analysis of Plate No. X

The only painting in the Centennial group executed in true fresco method is the mural in the North Texas Room of the Hall of State Building. Mr. Starr Niendorff painted this mural to represent the agricultural wealth and progressive

industrial life of North Texas.<sup>2</sup> Symbols representing industry, manufacturing, and agriculture are pictured in an abstract arrangement on either side of a figure representing the Texas farmer in front of which is the family of today.

The artist says he has tried to present "North Texas as it is today in its beauty, its strength, power, wealth, and modernity, the heritage of one hundred years from the lonely, rolling prairie."<sup>3</sup>

A complete explanation of the artist's aim with reference to subject-matter and explanations of symbolic meanings is given in the book, The State of Texas.

A study of the design of Mr. Niendorff's fresco gives evidence of dynamic symmetry proportions in the root-five rectangle (see Chart No. XII). The apparent divisions along the dynamic symmetry lines leads one to conclude that this system of mechanical divisions was used for the framework of the composition.

The balance is secured through bi-symmetric placing of forms and masses of color on each side of a central mass. Almost identical shapes are placed on each side of a central mass balanced within itself. The verticals and horizontals of the buildings, train, and lightning, on one side, balance

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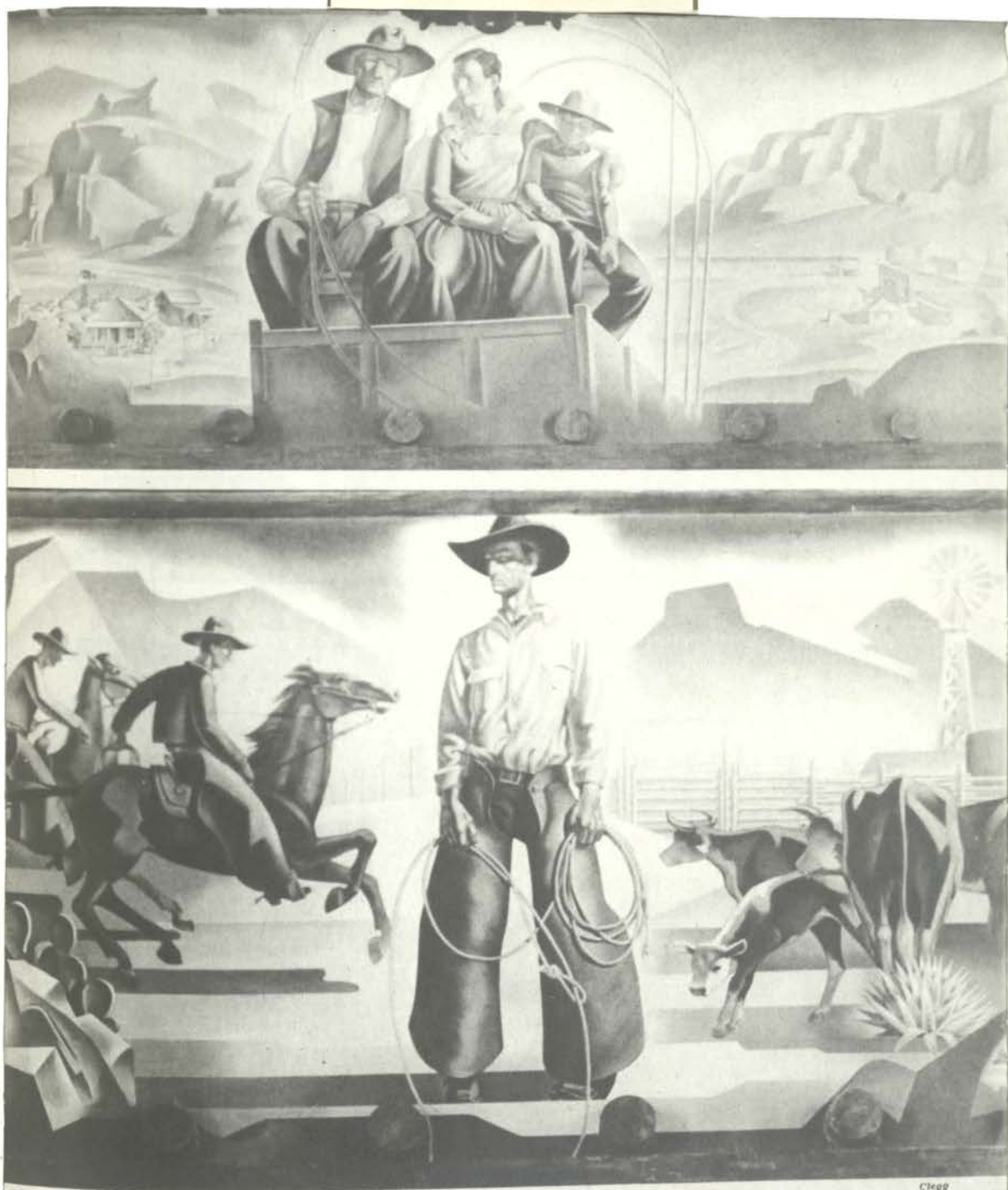
<sup>2</sup>Although the artist did not answer the questionnaire sent him, the writer studied the mural.

<sup>3</sup>The State of Texas, p. 32.

the verticals and horizontals of buildings, airplane, and lightning opposite. The attention is drawn to pattern rather than to forms in space, and the forms themselves do not always outline the dark and light masses. Sometimes they have apparently been forced to follow the dynamic symmetry framework. The principal dark area is in the middle section of the composition, with smaller or more broken patches at the sides. The introduction of small motifs in the ears of corn, wheat, and windows of the buildings lends interest to the pattern by its variety and contrast.

The painting has a crowded effect. This indicates inability on the part of the artist to portray the mental conception of the theme without harming the visual quality.

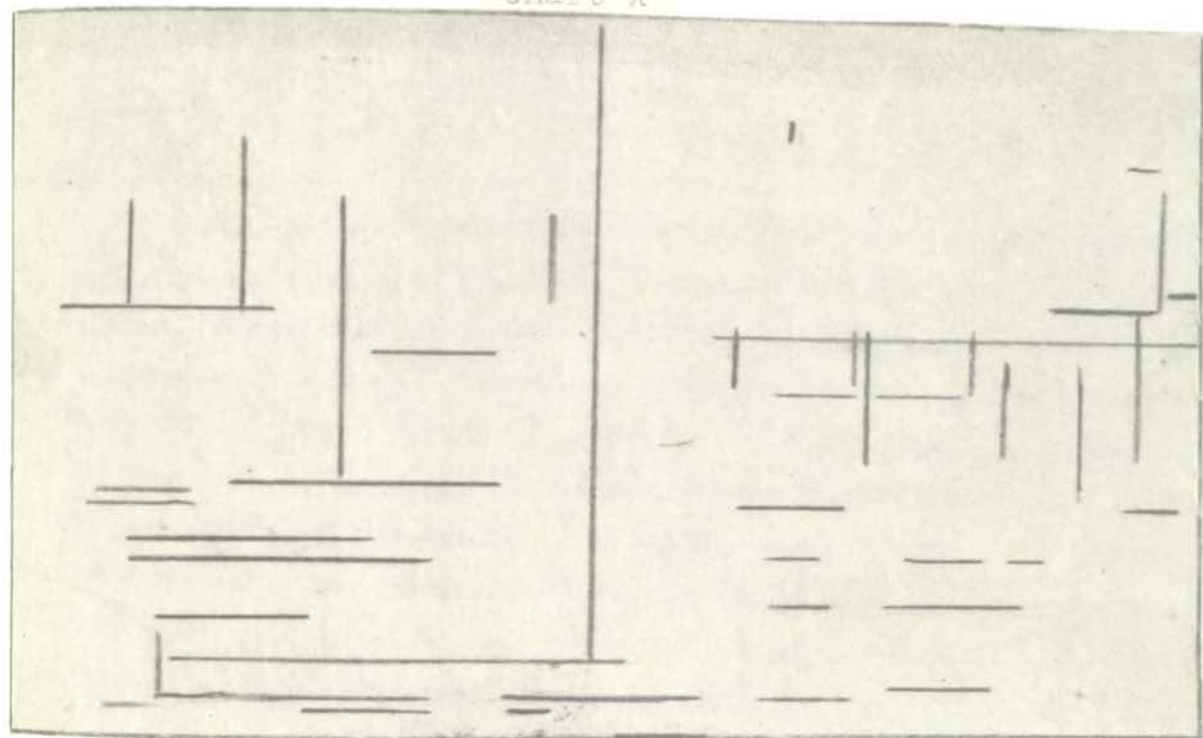
## Plate VIII



Murals of the West Texas Room created by Tom Lea

Clegg

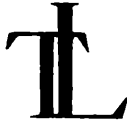
Chart X



Horizontals and Verticals



Arrangement of Dark and Light



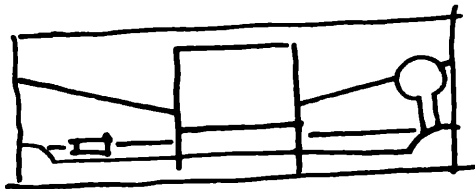
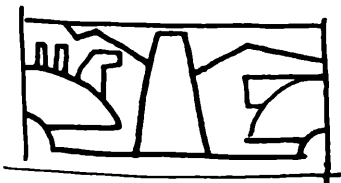
1400 EAST NEVADA STREET  
EL PASO TEXAS

VI 22 1939

Dear Miss Stolz

I am unable to send you any exact notation of the color range in the Dallas murals, even if I had the time and a better memory. However, the palette used during that work was as follows: Cadmium yellow, light-yellow Ochre - cadmium red, light - Venetian red; burnt sienna, Ultramarine blue; Terra verte - Ivory Black - Zinc White. The pre-dominant tones were a kind of grayed amber brown - the blues were mostly not blues at all, but Ivory Black lightened with white. During the work, I used more Ivory Black and yellow Ochre than anything else (with the exception of white) - The warm grayed tonality was produced mainly by these - That is about all I remember about the color scheme at Dallas.

I find nothing to take issue with in your text concerning the murals. It is my feeling, however, that all academic, non-creative "analyses" of a design are too complicated, too muddled. The analysis of a design means nothing when it becomes too elaborate, for it ceases being an analysis and becomes an awkward and useless description. An artist is never conscious of the academic rules of composition when he is creating a living design - the thing creates itself. And if it must be analysed afterwards, would it not be well to ask first of all, "Was the artist here most pre-occupied with line, or with pattern, or with volume?" And having decided which of these three plastic points-of-view the artist was stressing, the analysis might then be stated in congruent terms of lines, or of flat shapes, or of solids. - In diagramming my designs in Dallas, perhaps flat shapes make the most sense:



Isn't this just gingerbread?

Sincerely  
Tom Lea



## Palette I



Color Palette (Mural by Tom Lea)

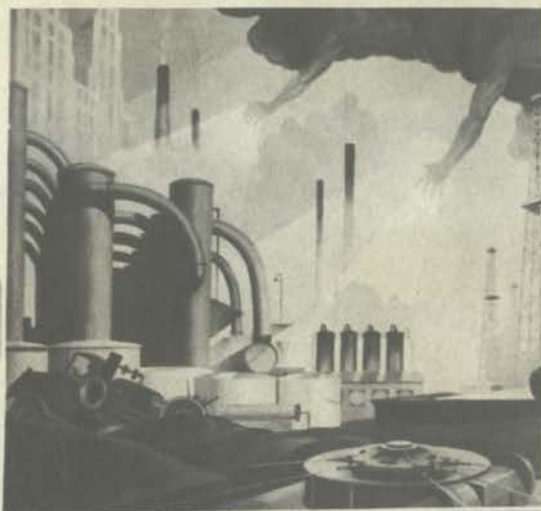




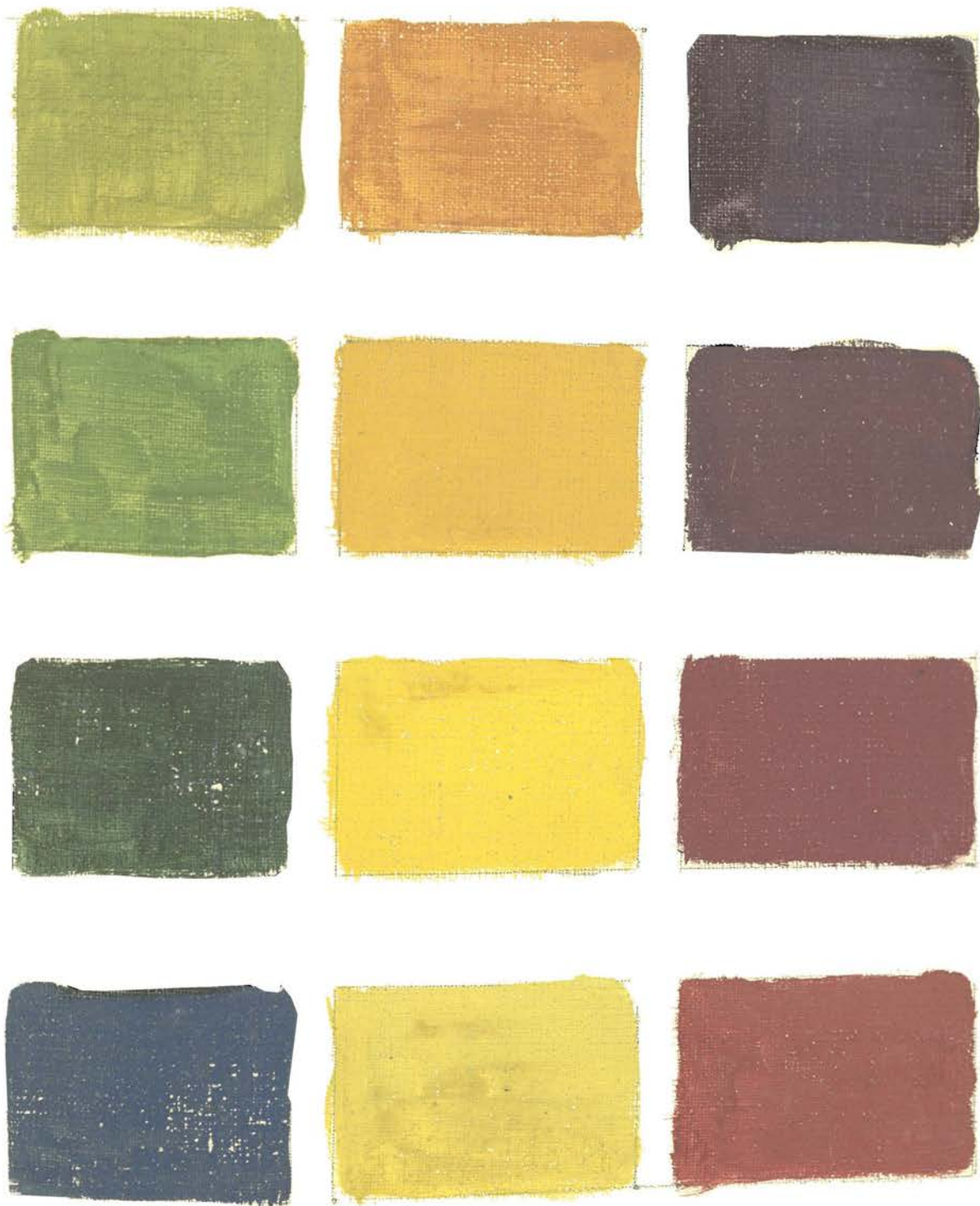
The Murals of the East Texas Room are the work of Olin Travis and depict East Texas before and after the discovery of oil



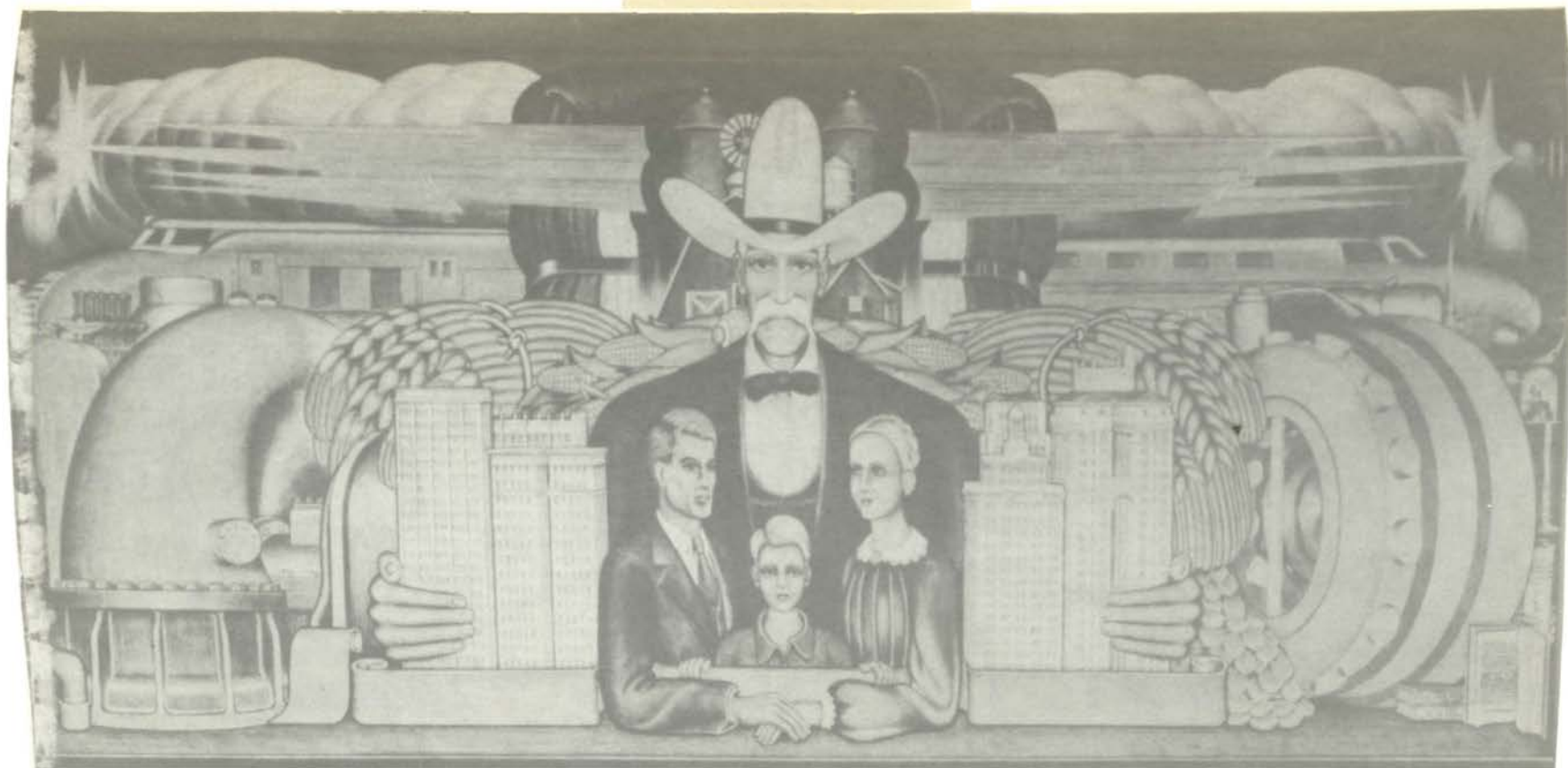
Gilroy



## Palette II



Color Palette (Mural by Olin Travis)



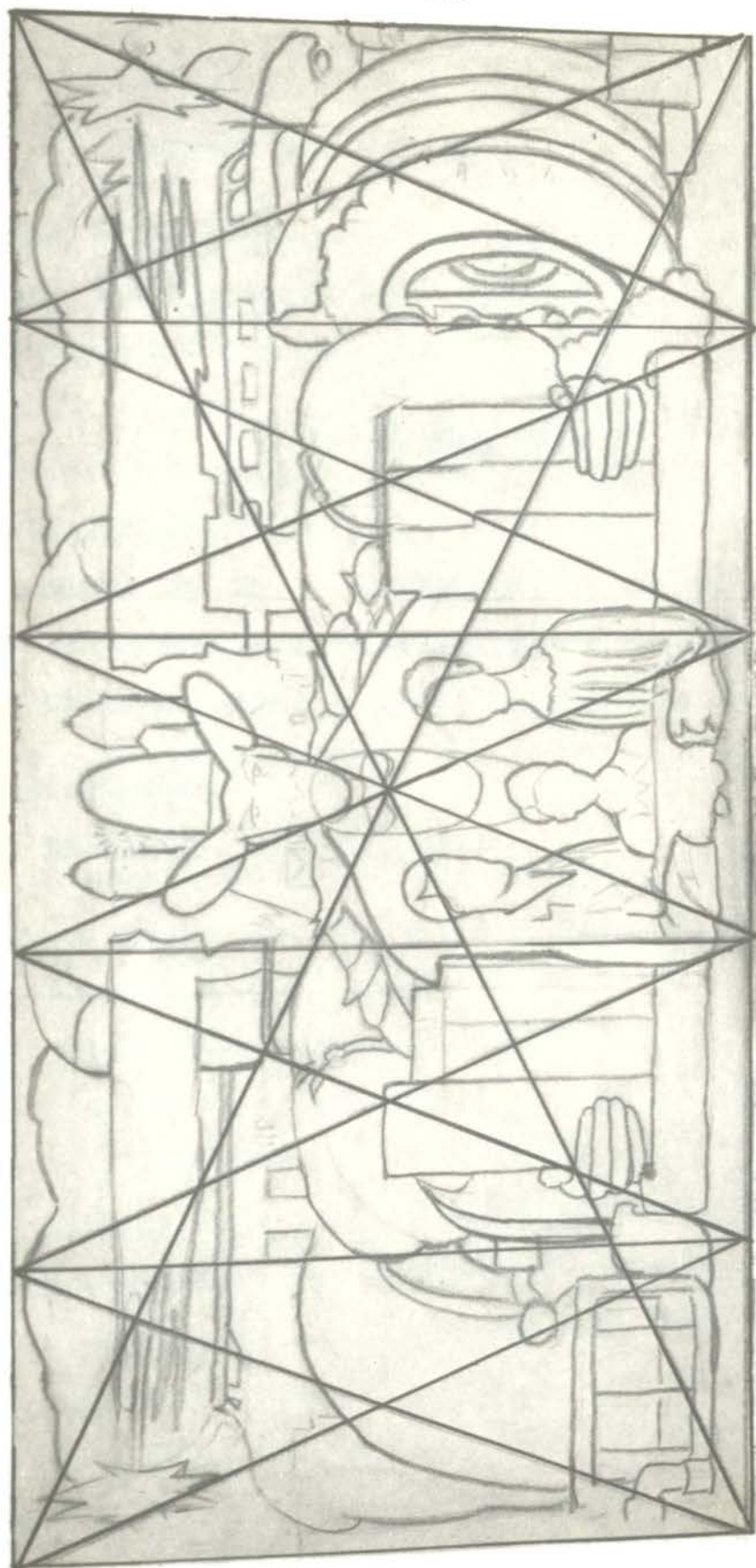
The Fresco of the North Texas Room was created by Arthur Starr Niendorff

Clegg





Chart XII



Divisions of Dynamic Symmetry

## Independent Murals

### Discussion of

Plate No. XI -- Panel by Mrs. E. Richardson Cherry

Plate No. XII -- Panel by Mrs. Lucy H. Locke

Plate No. XIII -- Panel by Mrs. Mary Aubrey Keating

### Illustrations:

Plates No. XI, XII, XIII

General Description of Plates XI, XII,  
and XIII

The three illustrations in this group represent mural decorations based on historic or industrial themes but sponsored independent of either state or central governments. The first, Plate No. XI, was a gift from the artist, Mrs. E. Richardson Cherry, painted for the library of a private home in Houston. The second, Plate No. XII, was painted by Mrs. Lucie H. Locke for the Civic Center in Corpus Christi and sponsored by that organization. The third, Plate No. XIII, was painted by Mrs. Mary Aubrey Keating for the Gunter Hotel of San Antonio and financed by the hotel management.

Mrs. Cherry's mural panel shows the first capitol of Texas in a sepia inset surrounded by colored flora, enclosed by a border. It is one of four showing places of historical interest surrounded by Texas flora and fauna. The painting is in oil on absorbent duck mounted to the wall over bookcases. The artist said she wished to create the effect of tapestry with subdued color for flat wall effect.

The house in the inset appears photographic in its literal representation and perspective drawing. Visually there is no connection between it and the flowers and tree within the outside border. The artist appeared to be interested more in portraying detailed flat decoration in the tree and flowers than in harmonious lines of interesting dark and

light pattern.

The second mural panel pictured here is one of three in the Civic Center at Corpus Christi, all of which are allegorical representations of the services of the Center, with agriculture, oil, and port activities in the background. The illustration is of the center panel. The artist, Mrs. Locke, said she made her figures rather formal and created her composition so as to heighten the effect of the Gothic arches in the lobby. The panels are set into niches in the plastered wall. They are in the oil medium.

When studying the mural for visual elements, one finds that the figures are placed in an obviously bi-symmetric arrangement as far as drawing is concerned. The dark and light masses, however, do not carry out this balance. The principal contrast of value is in the dark hair of the girl at the left and the dark eyes of all the figures, against the light faces. The forms appear as cardboard figures cut out and pasted to a flat background.

The illustration shown in Plate No. XIII is one of six panels by Mrs. Keating in the Coffee Shop of the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio on "The Evaluation of Native Mexican Crafts and Customs." This particular panel, at the right as one enters the room, represents the "Basket Craft." Natives are shown cutting tube to make baskets while the two workers in the center are platting the tube fibre. The artist states

that her main objective was to create a design "typical of the city's atmosphere and tradition" and also conforming to building lines. She classifies her style as modern, simplified form with a basic sense of reality. Indeed, her design is obviously simplified in such a way that one might term it a "self-consciously simple" arrangement of dark and light, line and color. Evidently, the artist did not bother about a smooth method of applying the paint medium. In places the paint is fairly thick and in others so thin that the canvas may be seen.

The bright warm coloring typical of Mexican arts and crafts adds a lively note and a certain gaiety to the atmosphere of the room.



## Plate XI





Plate XIII



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

A total of some two hundred panels have been done in Texas in the five-year period since the Central Government first became patron of mural art as compared to less than thirty-five known to have existed before that time.<sup>1</sup> Over one hundred were executed under the Public Works of Art Project, which lasted only a few months. No exact number of these panels has been given here because all artists could not be contacted and certain discrepancies could not be cleared up; but we know that nearly fifty artists, besides various assistants, painted from one to nine panels each in public buildings of at least twenty-six towns or cities in Texas. Of the remaining number painted since 1934, several are Treasury project murals also, although painted under the permanent department called the Section of Painting and Sculpture. Many of the remainder, although independent of any national patronage, were probably the result of the impetus toward mural painting and therefore encouraged directly or indirectly by the National Government.

Groups of mural paintings -- e. g., PWAP, Section of

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<sup>1</sup>The writer was surprised to find that as many as thirty-five panels existed before 1934.

Painting and Sculpture, and Independent projects -- were found to differ in size, style, and themes used.

The three Independent projects included here were chosen because they present themes on history or industry better, perhaps, than many of the other Independent projects listed by the writer. The styles of painting and sizes of panels differed greatly within the Independent group.

The workmanship of the PWAP group was found to be inferior when compared to the Section of Painting and Sculpture. This was due to the employment, by PWAP, of inexperienced or inferior talent and the requirement for conceiving and executing the design in a minimum of time. The murals of the latter group show a marked improvement in design quality, technique, and general appearance.

The attempts to discover aims or beliefs of artists concerning mural art resulted in the expression of noticeable differences of opinion which were at times completely contrasting or opposite. These variations and contrasts as found substantiate the feeling on the part of the writer that no dogmatic statement should be made on the beliefs of the modern artists concerning the qualities a mural should possess.

The majority of artists, however, appeared to agree that a mural painting should harmonize with the architectural setting even though their opinions varied as to what constitutes harmony with the setting. The majority also were pleased



with the new mural movement and felt that its effects would be far-reaching. Those working for the Government expressed appreciation to that source for its sponsorship.

Many art critics and writers of note expressed the belief that the modern mural movement is a development toward a great American style or school of art; and a few stated that many Texas artists are doing as good work as are others in any state.

Therefore, the final conclusions on the part of the writer are, first, that Government support has increased interest and performance in mural painting, although mural art existed in Texas before Government aid; second, that the increased amount of performance has aided in developing standards for the artists; and, third, that the paintings are so varied that they indicate an art activity in a state of flux and growth in which no distinctly regional flavor or style can be defined except in subject-matter.

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## APPENDIX

## ARTIST'S QUESTIONNAIRE

(NOTE: Will you please fill out this questionnaire and return as soon as convenient? I need this information for a thesis on mural painting in Texas. I expect to publish the results.)

I. Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

II. Have you ever painted a mural? \_\_\_\_\_ In what state? \_\_\_\_\_

III. If any have been painted in Texas give:

a. City \_\_\_\_\_ b. Building \_\_\_\_\_

c. Address \_\_\_\_\_

d. Date begun \_\_\_\_\_ e. Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

f. Size \_\_\_\_\_

g. Theme \_\_\_\_\_

IV. By whom was the mural financed? government? independent? \_\_\_\_\_

V. Is the mural done in:

a. Temp ra \_\_\_\_\_

b. Oil \_\_\_\_\_

c. Fresco \_\_\_\_\_

VI. Was the mural painted on the location or in the studio? \_\_\_\_\_

VII. Give your method of attacking the problem as to:

a. How historical information was secured \_\_\_\_\_

b. What medium was used in making the small sketches \_\_\_\_\_

c. How many small ones made \_\_\_\_\_

VIII. Give any other remarks on method or medium \_\_\_\_\_

IX. Give approximate cost of the finished mural \_\_\_\_\_

X. Was work done in collaboration with another? \_\_\_\_\_

XI. Are photographs obtainable? \_\_\_\_\_

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

XII. Your main objectives as to subject, color effect, etc. in the architectural setting were: \_\_\_\_\_

XIII. Did you accomplish them? \_\_\_\_\_

XIV. Difficulties and problems encountered in this particular mural as to technical, political, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

XV. Were there any architectural difficulties? \_\_\_\_\_

XVI. Have you ever painted any murals that were never attached to a wall? \_\_\_\_\_

XVII. How would you classify your style of mural painting? \_\_\_\_\_

XVIII. Was mural done in a style greatly different from your usual studio style? \_\_\_\_\_

XIX. In your opinion what qualities should a mural possess that an easel painting need not \_\_\_\_\_

XX. Do prefer mural painting to easel painting? \_\_\_\_\_

XXI. What is the general attitude toward murals in your city? \_\_\_\_\_

XXII. List Texas murals you consider especially outstanding \_\_\_\_\_