SELLING ART IN THE AGE OF RETAIL EXPANSION AND CORPORATE PATRONAGE: ASSOCIATED AMERICAN ARTISTS AND THE AMERICAN ART MARKET OF THE 1930s AND 1940s

by

TIFFANY ELENA WASHINGTON

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Dissertation advisor: Anne Helmreich

Department of Art History

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CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Tiffany Elena Washington

candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree*.

(signed) Anne L. Helmreich
(chair of the committee)

Catherine B. Scallen

Jane Glaubinger

Renee Sentilles

(date) 2 April, 2012

*We also certify that written approval has been obtained for any proprietary material contained herein.

For Julian, my amazing Matisse, and Livia, a lucky future artist's muse.

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Selling Art in the Age of Corporate Patronage and Retail Expansion: Associated American Artists and the American Art Market of the 1930s and 1940s

Abstract

by

TIFFANY ELENA WASHINGTON

This dissertation analyzes Associated American Artists, a business that sold American art at affordable prices through department stores, its own mail-order catalogues, and its own galleries. During the period of this study, 1934 to 1945, Associated American Artists' founder, Reeves Lewenthal, capitalized on several conditions in order to effectively promote the sale of his art, several of which were directly in-line with his own personal beliefs and aspirations. These conditions included the growth of the consumer-driven retail economy evidenced by the popularity of department store shopping in large cities and the success of catalogue shopping across the nation; the need for an uplifting and positive art to calm the fears of those who were hit hard by the effects of the Great Depression; the burgeoning development of color advertisements in popular magazines, often including reproductions of fine art; and the interest of several major industrial corporations in repairing recently-damaged reputations by hiring fine artists to serve their various needs.

Throughout this time period Lewenthal promoted the originality of his firm's strategies in selling its five dollar signed prints and other artwork, and also the methods of sale he utilized and his collaborations with corporate industry. Many of these

corporate commissions resulted in the mass distribution of reproductions of artwork in the form of calendars, corporate literature, and advertisements. This mass distribution had an impact on the public's reception of the artwork, which, as will be seen, was both positive and negative. I explore these issues and evaluate both the critical and praiseworthy comments made by artists, executives, and critics in order to determine the ramifications of the various corporate programs with which Associated American Artists was involved.

My critical assessment of Associated American Artists is the result of careful study of the firm's activities as well as a comparison with its predecessors and contemporaries, as described in the secondary literature on the art market in the United States and Europe. The history of advertising, consumerism, and Regionalist art also played a role as I analyzed the relevant literature pertaining to those topics. The dissertation contributes greatly to a clearer understanding of Associated American Artists and its relationship to the social-historical context of the 1930s and 1940s.

Introduction

Associated American Artists was one of the most successful, innovative, and culturally influential commercial American art galleries of the primary market in the 1930s and 1940s.[1] And yet, when compared to its contemporaries, Associated American Artists has not, until very recently, received extensive scholarly attention from art historians, advertising historians, or print specialists. My study of Associated American Artists connects changes in the art market to America's early to mid-twentieth century surge in consumerism. It also provides scholars with a greater understanding of the infrastructure of the primary art market at this time, and reveals an important episode in what could be understood as the democratization of art. This examination of the firm and its selling practices adds a new financial lens to the scholarship on such significant topics as Regionalist art, advertising, and corporate involvement in art. This case study of Associated American Artists will be of interest to interdisciplinary studies as it draws upon cultural studies of New York City, explores Reeves Lewenthal's Jewish background as an impetus for his program to sell Regionalist art, and discusses issues relevant to the Great Depression.

I argue that the director of the firm, Reeves Lewenthal, adroitly capitalized on shifting trends in American consumerism to develop further the market for art. His firm's approach of commissioning artists specifically for prints to be sold by catalogue and acting as an agency between artists and corporations called into question the distinction between high art (for the museum or wealthy buyers) and non-high art (for the

[1] The primary market shall be understood as the first time an artwork appears for sale upon creation. Any sale after the artwork is sold by its original owner marks the work's emergence into the secondary market.

magazine page and the living rooms of the middle class). Though the debate was inevitable considering the twentieth century's explosive technological advancements, the popularity of Associated American Artists' sales techniques brought the question to an early critical point in both the art market and artists' circles.

Though the dissertation does not focus on delineating between high and non-high art, the debate over the place and role of artwork and artists, as well as the sometimes defensive reactions of artists themselves, were consequential throughout this period. In the unique environment of the United States between the 1920s and 1940s, Associated American Artists had to contend with and capitalize on new economic niches in which art and artists were finding themselves.

* * *

Associated American Artists, which operated as late as 2000, had its most significant period of development from its founding in 1934 to 1945. This period of time is the focus of this dissertation. The firm is perhaps best known for its sale of signed prints as autonomous works of art, though the firm eventually expanded to sell paintings, artist-designed fabrics, neckties, pottery, ceramics, and even greeting cards.

The inimitable American cultural climate of the early 1930s provided an opportunity for the firm's founder to test his marketing and sales methods. Lewenthal hoped art could become a means to elevate a buyer's social standing. He also believed that his firm's democratized sales tactics could support the growth of the market for American art and develop a more widespread culture for appreciating art. During the

difficult years of the Great Depression, for example, many Americans showed an interest in art that called to mind mythic simpler and more successful days of the past. They preferred artworks that looked forward to a stronger future. Lewenthal and his firm's specific espousal of Regionalist art offered both themes to potential buyers. The dissertation offers explanations about why his choice of artists and styles were profitable for him. Some of the most important connections between the Regionalists and the growing number of art buyers (on which the firm capitalized), were the virtues of ruralism, Americanism, and even democracy.

Lewenthal's sales discourse was almost akin to a call-to-arms for the American public, encouraging his patrons to take part in the exciting opportunities he provided, whether it be assisting housewives to decorate their family rooms, supporting large corporations in repairing their damaged reputations by sponsoring artistic competitions for the public's enjoyment, or helping museums grow their collections of prints by purchasing from his firm. While his interests were largely driven by profits (and were influenced by his own social background), his approach of celebrating America and increasing art ownership as a means to raise social status was attractive to a large segment of the population. Moreover, it afforded him great success at a time when a considerable percentage of his audience was struggling financially.

Contribution to the Field

This dissertation focuses on Associated American Artists' influence on the primary New York art market. It investigates the impact of its marketing and sales strategies on the firm's artists and their customers and how these strategies reinforced the notion of selling art as a commodity. Because the firm located its main gallery in New York City, I assess the cultural geography of this location and discuss the politics of the New York art world during the period in question. In addition, this study elucidates the tactics Reeves Lewenthal utilized when attempting to broaden the audience for collecting the firm's art by marketing to a wide range of social classes as well as corporate industry. The investigation of these tactics is important because it helps situate Associated American Artists within the greater context of the market for selling art between 1934 and 1945, and it also reveals crucial information about Reeves Lewenthal's personal reasons for the choices he made in marketing Regionalist art. Through examining Lewenthal's rhetoric and the strategies he implemented in his efforts to sell his firm's art to as large an audience as possible, this dissertation helps clarify how and why these tactics were successful.

The firm achieved success, in part, by making its product accessible to buyers who had proximity to department stores or the firm's galleries, or had interest in participating in mail-order shopping. This accessibility, including the considerable energy and resources the firm spent promoting the use of artwork in corporate advertising, is one of the reasons for its drop in esteem in the eyes of some critics and artists. Lewenthal argued, in response, that mass reproduction and increased accessibility was helpful to artists and their public. The resulting controversy sparked by the wider

dissemination of the firm's artwork bears striking resemblance to the predictive analysis of German cultural critic, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), in which he wrote of a coming change in the reception of an artwork that is reproduced in multiples, specifically lithography.

Though Lewenthal founded Associated American Artists a year prior to Walter Benjamin's seminal 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," it is helpful to examine Lewenthal's characteristic sales method through the lens of Walter Benjamin's theories. Lewenthal did not have access to Benjamin's essay as it was not translated into English until the 1960s and he did not speak French or German, but Benjamin made comments directly relevant to Lewenthal's practice. Analyzing Associated American Artists' dispersal of lithographs and other reproduced artwork to large audiences through a Benjaminian lens yields thought-provoking ideas about American art culture in the 1930s and 1940s.

Benjamin addressed the unique relationship that developed between art and technology under the rise of capitalism. His salient points bear close resemblance to Lewenthal's business model and the art-marketing machine he created.[2] Benjamin is known for being the first cultural critic to analyze extensively, and to theorize about, the significance of the new techniques of mechanical reproduction developed in the nineteenth century. These, he felt, had changed the fundamental nature of art-making.[3]

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[2] Benjamin's manuscript *Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project)* also examines the relationship between art and technology, specifically the impact of photography on art in the nineteenth century. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999).

[3]Susan Buck-Morss contends, "Due to the distorting effects of capitalist social relations, the mass culture in which art and technology converged did so to the detriment of both. On the side of art, production methods began to resemble those of any commodity: needing to compete with photography, artists were forced to

Though Benjamin wrote primarily about film and photography, he did comment on the technological advancement of lithography as creating the opportunity for a work of art to reach mass audiences.

The advent of "mechanical reproduction" initiated an environment in which large groups of people were able to view a reproduction of an artwork (i.e. a print or a photograph) because of its existence in large numbers. Benjamin contended that the reproduction of art into multiples stripped the original artwork of its 'aura' or true essence. The latter was only possessed by the original because it carried with it a mysticism and cultic meaning.

Benjamin's definition of aura is rather ambiguous, but essentially he suggested it is "the unique phenomenon of distance, however close it may be."[4] According to historian Dirk Baecker, Benjamin "attributes the loss of aura, on one hand, to the passionate desire among contemporary masses for closer contact with things both spatially and humanly, and, on the other hand, to new possibilities of technical reproduction, many of which entail the loss of tradition or cult."[5] Yet, as historian Ulla Link-Heer points out, multiple originals of numbered and signed etchings or prints are unique because their authenticity is not confined to one original or copy.[6]

Considering the distinction of signed multiple originals (though Benjamin himself did not make it), the loss of aura thus also paradoxically coincides with a new kind of

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speed up production, mimic mechanized reproduction by hand…." Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 134.

[4] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 222.

[5] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Michael Marrinan, eds., *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 11.

[6] Ibid., 128.

closeness between the viewer and the work of art, not necessarily collapsing the aura. This new closeness of the print to the viewer, made possible by technology and marketing, is what Lewenthal capitalized on, bringing works by famous artists directly into homes across the country. This concept of selling items in massive quantities to large amounts of people was particularly important during a time when the New Deal was in full effect because many of the government's programs aimed to distribute sizeable amounts of prints throughout the country. This government-sponsored democratization of art helped pave the way for Associated American Artists' success and widespread sales. Associated American Artists was taking advantage of the public's desire to participate more intimately, "both spatially and humanly," with works of art.

According to Benjamin, the commodity culture that surrounded the new forms of technology, and which had direct bearing on art making and art viewing, caused an artwork to change from having "cult value" to having "exhibition value." Cult value refers to artwork's function as an instrument of magic often hidden from view (for example certain icons of the Madonna or cult statues in a cella). Exhibition value is defined by the practice of freeing the artwork from its cult value, which diminishes as the object's exhibition value increases, due to its accessibility to the masses.[7]

Curiously, however, the opposite also seems to occur. Works of art gain aura by being reproduced (as figures such as Reeves Lewenthal and Andy Warhol cleverly recognized). Rather than devaluing works of art, the age of mass reproduction has led to

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[7] Benjamin stated "Just as the work of art in prehistoric times, through the absolute emphasis that rested on its cult value, first became an instrument of magic which was only later recognized as a work of art, so today, through the absolute emphasis that rests on its exhibition value, the work of art becomes a form with entirely new functions." Cited in Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and History* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 23.

escalating art prices and the ability of large audiences to view and own works of art. Speaking in Benjaminian terms, Lewenthal strove to both uphold the cultic value (as well as the critical appreciation) of established American artists and to profit from their exhibition value by bringing their artworks, through corporate advertisements and mail-order prints, into the common home.

Organization

My assessment of primary and secondary source material, as well as a close reading of Associated American Artists' sales methods and choice of artworks brings to light the benefits the firm reaped when selling affordable artwork to the masses. It capitalized on customers' developing interest in accessing cultural capital through the purchase of prints.

In the following chapters, I analyze the culture, methods, and background of Associated American Artists from its founding in 1934 to 1945. It is important to take notice of the complicated system of marketing and selling art during this period of study. Dealers, critics, and auctioneers worked both independently and, on occasion, synergistically, within a system that supported the commodification of art. As I show in chapter 2, the roles of these figures shaped the primary market for selling art prior to the founding of Associated American Artists. Distinguishing the supporting elements of this infrastructure (e.g. art dealers and their galleries and auction houses) helps to situate Reeves Lewenthal within the primary market for selling American art. In turn,

examination of Lewenthal's role within this infrastructure reveals helpful information about the changing nature of that market.

In order to effectively situate Associated American Artists among its contemporaries in the sale of American Art, in chapter 1 I examine Lewenthal's role as a dealer who spent considerable effort crafting a public image of his firm that he deemed necessary to promote the sale of his art. Lewenthal's rhetoric suggested his practices were unique in every application, yet the history I provide in chapter 2 disproves this by detailing the marketing practices of art that came before the firm's founding. Scholars have either ignored his rhetoric or refrained from questioning it. I chart a new course throughout the forthcoming pages by analyzing key passages of his sales promotions, which reveal the nature and aim of his motives as a dealer and tastemaker.

In addition, in chapter 1 I offer an analysis of his formative years, focusing on his ethnic Jewish background. Lewenthal's heritage was, in my opinion, one of the driving forces behind his motivation to promote the type of art that put forth messages of prosperity and the American dream. These notions were foreign and unattainable to people of his Eastern European Jewish background, but elicited similar behavior in a multitude of notable Jewish-Americans who promoted comparable notions of American utopian principles in ways that I discuss later in this dissertation.

Chapter 1, in sum, clarifies the history of Associated American Artists. A published timeline of the firm does not exist and, as a result, my work provides a thorough and necessary basis from which to compare Associated American Artists' accomplishments and projects with those of its contemporaries.

Dealers contemporary to Associated American Artists grew in number, as I show in chapter 2, and ranged in their offerings depending on the interests of their clients, their owners and managers, or the changing nature of the market in general. Commercial galleries held a firm role in the art market as their owners and/or managers promoted the sale of their art to select audiences, organized exhibitions, attempted to educate the public, and played a significant role in influencing the public's taste. The galleries themselves helped to shape taste through their décor and marketing materials targeted to their ideal clientele.

Nineteenth-century art critic Sheridan Ford suggested that art was viewed as a commodity by the middle of his own century. While he pointed a finger at art dealers, the role of art critics in the continued commodification of art should not be ignored. During the first eleven years of Associated American Artists' existence, art critics' spoke through a large network of print media (such as magazines and newspapers). As a result, an increasingly larger public read critics' opinions on the sale and display of art. Critics were thus influential to artists, dealers, and the public. Well aware of this importance critics had for the market, Lewenthal used their impact to his advantage by, for example, cleverly quoting Thomas Craven in his catalogues. Craven was an art critic who supported Regionalist art because of its native origin (he was strongly opposed to European art) and also approved of the sale of art in department stores. Lewenthal's emphasis of Craven's support for his firm's artists, coupled with the public's awareness of Craven's comments printed in newspapers and art magazines, underscored the relevance of the firm's artwork. Craven's endorsement of the methods of marketing and

sales Lewenthal practiced reinforced further the trends that Lewenthal promoted to his audience.

Lewenthal's firm was one of many to sell art in New York City and, though I did not uncover evidence that he maintained close or significant relationships with other gallery owners or auctioneers, it would be imprudent to suggest that he was unaware of their actions or that he remained uninfluenced by their modes of operation, especially since other dealers represented many of the artists he eventually hired.[8]

City directories of New York City for this period of study suggest that a few art auction houses existed.[9] An example is Van Brink's Auction Rooms, which, according to the auction house's 1929 advertisement in *Le France: An American Magazine*, sold "Modern Masters, Old and Modern French Bronzes, French Period Furniture, Rugs, Art Objects."[10] It is important to note that auction houses existed in the space between the primary and secondary markets as they sold both newly-created artwork given directly by the artist as well as previously-owned artwork. With the closing of the American Art Union and the American Art Association during the second half of the nineteenth century and second decade of the twentieth century, respectively, selling art at auction became less viable in New York City as art galleries came to populate the city in ever growing numbers. Buying art at auctions gained a greater following in New York City beyond the

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[8] None of the archival material consulted for this study includes correspondence between Reeves Lewenthal and auctioneers or art dealers. His daughter indicated that his private papers were burned and, therefore, evidence of this potential correspondence does not remain. Interview with Lana Reeves, Author's Collection, 9 November, 2006.

[9] I did not uncover detailed information about the art they sold or the type of consumer toward whom they marketed.

[10] *The New France, An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Franco-American Relations* 2, no. 1. (1928): 372.

period of present study, however, when auction houses Christies and Sotheby's opened branches there.

Chapter 2 provides a history of the marketing and sale of art in New York City from the early nineteenth century through the 1930s, concentrating on the period closest to the founding of Associated American Artists. This chapter provides information on the changing methods of marketing and selling American art by examining the dealers, auction houses, and artists who were responsible for its dispersal. My study incorporates the cultural geography of New York City, which continued to shape the growing sale of art and also to influence the targeted audience for its consumption.

Associated American Artists' sale of Regionalist prints and the social classes toward which it marketed are the subject of chapter 3. In addition to capitalizing on the popularity of Regionalist art, Lewenthal had his own personal aims for choosing to sell this type of art as opposed to the other options available to him. I show how the themes of Regionalism were appropriate both to him and his audience. My research uniquely highlights the purchasing habits of the firm's patrons and pays particular attention to the effect the ownership of Associated American Artists' prints had on their purchasers and collectors.

Chapter 4 outlines the details of Associated American Artists' sales through department stores, the firm's own mail-order catalogues, and its New York gallery. In addition, this chapter provides pertinent information on the gallery's décor, layout, and services offered. I contend that the straightforward display of art and the space devoted to the sale of frames and portfolios reinforced the message Lewenthal promoted in his catalogues: that his prints were ready for display and decorating. These notions were

geared toward the same sector of the population to which many department stores also catered. To date, art historians studying American art have sometimes ignored the important influence of department stores on art galleries, despite the fact that, in several cases, American department stores displayed and sold art in their own galleries. My research reveals department stores—acting especially as a bridge to less wealthy patrons and increasing not only accessibility, but also basic distribution—held a major role in the education of their customers.

Chapter 5 discusses Associated American Artists' relationship with corporate industry, another strategy Lewenthal adopted to expand the marketplace for his firm's art. I offer four case studies and explore the projects that incorporated the artwork made by the firm's artists. These case studies feature the various methods that the firm employed with the industrial corporations that hired Associated American Artists, yielding helpful information regarding the impact these uses had on the artists' reputations and the marriage of fine art and corporate industry. I contend that while artists received both gain and improved distribution through their work as corporate advertisers, the practical capitalistic use of their artwork pushed both artists and critics to question artworks' and artists' place in society.

Lastly, in the conclusion I assess the result of Reeves Lewenthal's marketing and sales strategies, explaining their influence on the firm's reputation and those of its artists, which, as I illustrate, changed over time. Reeves Lewenthal founded Associated American Artists at a unique time in this country's history. While Americans were dealing with the aftermath of the Great Depression and many middle and lower class families struggled to survive, some Americans explored the tempting environment of the

exploding retail scene, which came to inform the culture in ways that have still yet to be understood fully. The rise in Regionalist art's popularity, partly made possible by the escalating growth of magazine empires like *Life* and *Time*, coupled with the continued ease of mail order shopping and, for those consumers in major cities like New York, an impressive array of department stores promising to fill every consumer desire, created an environment in which the public was susceptible to Lewenthal's rhetoric. I assess his ability to tap into this unprecedented environment and market to the public's fears, hopes, and newfound desires and interests through careful research and a holistic approach to the study of Associated American Artists.

Archival Material

In an attempt to assess more fully Associated American Artists' role in the marketing and sale of its art I spent considerable time studying the entirety of the firm's archives held by the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, which houses Associated American Artists' most complete clipping file and archival material. Beginning in 2005, and again in 2010, I viewed the Archive of American Art's collection of microfilmed material relating to Associated American Artists, most of which was donated by Reeves Lewenthal's successor, Sylvan Cole, and thus not helpful to my period of study. I also spent time viewing private letters of correspondence in the collection of the Thomas Hart Benton Testamentary Trust. I personally collected many *Patrons Supplements,* which have greatly aided me in my study. Gail Windisch, author of the forthcoming *catalogue raisonné* of Associated American Artists' prints, shared a large amount of information

with me from her complete collection of Associated American Artists publications. Patricia Shaw, an independent scholar who corresponded with Reeves Lewenthal and interviewed executives from several of the corporations that partnered with Associated American Artists, shared her primary source material and notes from her interviews. Additionally I gathered helpful material while interviewing Lewenthal's daughter, Lana Reeves, in 2006. Lana provided me with copies of personal correspondence between Lewenthal and many of the artists he represented. Unfortunately, Lewenthal's personal papers were not saved and any material on the early days of the firm has yet to be uncovered; therefore, my study will greatly expand and enhance the work of the scholars whose studies I cite herein.[11]

It is important to note that the parameters of this study, a focus on Associated American Artists from 1934 to 1945, the primary American art market in New York City, and the case studies discussed in chapter 4, were determined by the availability of archival information to me.

State of the Literature

My bibliographic sources are broad in their range of subjects and are useful points of departure for continued research of this topic, but a selection from that list merits individual attention. The following critical analysis of the literature focusing on the primary American art market, the primary European art market, Associated American Artists, as well as a few pertinent sources on the history of advertising, highlights these

[11] Lana Reeves indicated that Lewenthal's second wife burnt his personal papers after his death.

contributions. My dissertation serves as a continuation of many of the studies discussed within this chapter, but is most relevant in its analysis of new material as well as an investigation of the retail strategies of Associated American Artists and the repercussions these strategies may have had for the reputations of the associated artists and the firm.

This study of Associated American Artists contributes to the literature devoted to the infrastructure and processes of the primary American art market. With respect to the history of the American market, the most relevant scholarship to date is the following references: Kevin Murphy's PhD dissertation "Economics of Style: the Business Practices of American Artists and the Structure of the Market, 1850-1910" (2005); John Ott's "How New York Stole the Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America" (2008); *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States*, by Malcolm Goldstein (2000); *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America,* by Sarah Burns (1996); A. Dierdre Robson's text, *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure: the Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s* (1995); and Sarah Greenough's *Modern Art in America: Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries* (2000).

Kevin Murphy's dissertation is as much a study of the supply of and demand for American and European art in the nineteenth century as it is an art historical and market analysis of the socio-economic factors that instigated the changes he illuminates. This study includes an economic analysis of the alterations seen in the market during the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, allowing a clear view of the market untainted with the bias often found in histories that include anecdotes from critics and artists. His dissertation underscores the need artists had to find new ways to expose the public to

their art in order to succeed at a time when commodity sales were down and there was a major influx of European art in America. Murphy devotes a large part of his dissertation to discussing of Winslow Homer, Albert Bierstadt, and Worthington Whittredge in order to understand the impact their business decisions made on their artistic careers. Murphy sheds light on marketing strategies used by artists and/or dealers as well as the various relationships between artists and dealers between 1850 and 1910. This information is helpful because it reveals that the promotion and sale of artwork was handled in various ways, depending on the desires of the artist, whether he or she worked with a dealer, or spent their own efforts on these elements of the business. The three artists he studied worked through various methods of promoting and selling their art, and, Murphy explains that Winslow Homer even tailored his art to the demands of the public in order to generate more sales.

Murphy's dissertation is complete with detailed graphs and charts showcasing the rising prices of art in the United States during the period of his study, which reinforces his thorough research and provides the most complete set of facts and figures outlining the historical business of making, selling, and buying art between 1850 and 1910. Perhaps of equal importance is the fact that Murphy establishes that art was generally not strongly marketed to middle-class Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

John Ott outlines the reorganization of the art market to meet the new needs of the antebellum elite in New York City in the late 19th century. He asserts that the auction house, the American Art Association, catered to the demands of its clientele by selling art in a luxury auction setting as opposed to a typical gallery setting. To support his

argument Ott provides compelling details that range from how the American Art Association marketed their products to the type of décor the firm used, both of which can be credited for helping to underscore the distinction between American Art Association's privileged clients and those who paid less for their artwork, and purchased it outside of the limelight. Ott's social history provides readers with an in-depth view into auction houses' selling practices in Victorian America. He relates these selling practices to the buying preferences of elite consumers of the time and gives a helpful analysis of how these methods played a role in the structures of social class.

Ott's examination of the buying patterns of California railroad executives, who were leading patrons of the American Art Association, is perhaps the most helpful concerning their collecting practices as extant archival materials are either misleading or unhelpful. He explained that these corporate elites "differentiated themselves from the merely well-off, who had to content themselves with second-tier commodities, like prints, drawings, or domestic paintings, and in less prestigious venues."[12] His study underscores that the association "created disincentive for middling buyers, which were not simply monetary," and highlights the lavish interior décor of Chickering Hall, the building where this art was purchased, as one of the elements that served as a deterrent for members of the middle or lower classes.[13] Ott thus establishes the class distinctions evident in the New York art market in the late nineteenth century.

Malcolm Goldstein's book provides a history of the social roles of painting dealers and museum administrators in New York from the Colonial period onward. He

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[12] John Ott, "How New York Stole the Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America," *Portfolio* 42 (2008): 137.

[13] Ott, 141.

does not significantly discuss their business practices nor give serious insight into the history of the American art market. Rather he offers a biographical study that interweaves facts regarding which galleries represented the different artists mentioned. His text is successful as a comprehensive contribution to the literature on the interrelationships of the key figures involved in selling art, but offers little analysis for those seeking to situate any of the firms mentioned within the broader marketplace of their time. The exception is the American Art Union, of which he provides a helpful detailed history. In addition, he omits Associated American Artists, though he does discuss the firm's contemporaries.

The chapter entitled "The Artist in the Age of Surfaces" in *Inventing the Modern Artist,* by Sarah Burns, gives important insight into the relationship between artists, their dealers and their representatives in Gilded Age America. Burns discusses the American art market as it relates to the marketing strategies of artists and dealers, giving specific accounts of the evolving importance placed on artist's studios as places to lure in and captivate potential buyers. Burns presents the issue of commodity in this chapter, not just with respect to the art for sale at the time, but also the carefully self-crafted re-imaging of the artist. She reveals how artists would shape his or her identity to help boost their reputations in order to facilitate greater sales. Through various case studies Burns describes what, in her view, had become almost a celebrity culture in so far as the new level of control Gilded Age artists exerted on their public image and the marketing and display techniques utilized to sell their art. As a whole, her contribution rests heavily on an analysis of the aesthetics and stylistic elements that went into selling art in the Gilded Age, which serves as a helpful contrast to my later discussion of the vastly different

preferences in the visual aesthetics surrounding many of the New York galleries of the 20th century.

A. Dierdre Robson's book, *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure, the Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s* (1995), provides an excellent, but very condensed history of the art market in New York before 1930, but does not offer a complete picture thereafter. She also offers detailed analysis of the differences between the various modes of the dealer/artist relationship in New York as compared to the models practiced in Paris. Robson discusses the minimal role auction houses played in the New York art market, and gives an in-depth assessment of the museums and private patrons whose purchases influenced the market or helped set trends. Furthermore, she includes a brief discussion of the corporate patronage of art in the 1940s as well as the broadening audience for art due to purchases made by the middle class.

Robson does not attempt to define the middle class she refers to when making claims such as "It was expected that art collectors would be drawn from a wider socioeconomic profile, particularly from the middle class rather than from the ranks of the very wealthy, which were thought to be much reduced by the Depression."[14] She continues, "It was hoped that these collectors would be less at the mercy of various commercial interests, and would be better able to make their own judgments."[15] She quotes Spencer Samuels, director of Parke-Bernett, "Art education through picture books, movies, and well-planned museum exhibitions [has] contributed much toward liberating

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[14] A. Dierdre Robson, *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure: The Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 219.

[15] Ibid.

the client and boosting his confidence."[16] Robson astutely suggested that the Works Progress Administration ("WPA") might have also contributed to a greater open-mindedness in these new collectors of the 1940s, likely sparked by exposing communities to original art. She does not mention the efforts of Associated American Artists in appealing to a larger audience for the purchase, and/or, collection of original art. In fact, her only mention of the firm is in her discussion of their contract with Standard Oil and, as a result, her assessment of the New York art market in the 1930s and 1940s is somewhat incomplete in that regard.

A more specific study on the sale of art in New York City is *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries*, Sarah Greenough's catalogue written to accompany the National Gallery exhibition on the topic. Though the catalogue focuses specifically on the history of Stieglitz's galleries, photography, and publications in a historical-biographical approach, it cannot be ignored as a vital contribution to the literature on New York's art market of the early twentieth century, given the importance of Stieglitz in that milieu. In addition, her discussion of Stieglitz's exhibition "Alfred Stieglitz Presents Seven Americans: 159 Paintings, Photographs, and Things Recent and Never Before Publicly Shown by Arthur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Charles Demuth, Paul Strand, Georgia O'Keefe, Alfred Stieglitz" is useful as it serves as a reminder of the strong impact Stieglitz had on the American primary market during the early twentieth century. Greenough's seminal catalogue is particularly helpful as a resource for my own research in its discussion of Stieglitz's decision to end promoting European artists (the original focus of his early career as a dealer and patron) and instead

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[16] Ibid.

focus entirely on promoting an American identity in art, primarily through the seven artists he continually displayed at his various galleries from 1925 to 1946.

More specifically, however, Greenough's catalogue, as well as the numerous other studies on Stieglitz, serve to highlight the lack of scholarly attention paid to Reeves Lewenthal and Associated American Artists, namely in their impact on the art market. Though Stieglitz and Lewenthal had very similar aims (and similar backgrounds, i.e. sons of Jewish immigrants who lived and worked in New York City, and championed the cause of promoting the sale and appreciation of American art) their *modi operandi* could not have been more different. Stieglitz was deeply invested in pairing each work with whomever he considered was its rightful and deserving owner, which meant that he did very little marketing for his shows. Aside from publishing small pamphlets to announce his gallery's exhibitions, his sales techniques were rather secretive because he felt very strongly about not promoting art as a commercial commodity.[17] If he felt an interested patron might be worthy of ownership of one of the artworks on display he would ponder the possibility of a sale to such lengths that most buyers would either become offended or lose interest, which ultimately left him with only the most sincere and interested patrons. Reeves Lewenthal, on the other hand, was intent on reaching as large an audience as possible, advertised in mass media, and had no issue with selling his art to the nameless, faceless masses.

Reeves Lewenthal and Associated American Artists make regular cameo appearances in biographies and studies of American artists in the 1930s and 1940s, such as books on Thomas Hart Benton or Grant Wood. Aside from magazine and newspaper

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[17] Elizabeth Mankin Komhauser, Amy Ellis, and Maura Lyons, *Stieglitz, O'Keeffe and American Modernism* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1999), 16.

articles written about the company in the 1930s and 40s, and a handful of articles in the 1970s and 1980s, nothing monumental has been published that specifically focuses on Associated American Artists.

Associated American Artists has been usefully analyzed in the context of other studies, such as Erika Doss' PhD dissertation, "Regionalists in Hollywood: Painting, Film, and Patronage, 1925-1945;" her article "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958;" (1991); Leo Mazow's article, "Regionalist Radio: Thomas Hart Benton on Art For Your Sake;" *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (1989) by Henry Adams; *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (2004) by Helen Langa; *American Lithographers: 1900-1960: The Artists and their Printers* (1983) by Clinton Adams; Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream, Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (1985) and Michelle Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (1995).

Erika Doss' dissertation on Associated American Artists and Hollywood is the first study to deal with the firm. Doss' dissertation does not provide a complete history of the Associated American Artists nor does it discuss the print aspect of the organization.[18] Her primary focus is on Associated American Artists' Hollywood projects and the major directors and producers who began to collect the work of many Associated American Artists' artists in the 1940s—topics relevant to my dissertation but not the focus of my study, which concentrates on the retail strategies of the firm. In addition, she was the first scholar to address the importance of magazines as both

[18] For a brief, but informative discussion of the print aspect of the firm, please see Clinton Adams, *American Lithographers, 1900 to 1960: the Artists and their Printers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

advertisements for Associated American Artists' projects and also as patrons for many of the artists working for the group.

While Doss' dissertation and article provide a useful starting point, some of her conclusions can be amplified. For example, by quoting Leo Rosten, she reasonably suggests "movie stars and film directors displayed art in their living rooms to show their taste for the finer things in life. Movieland's nouveau riche were culturally uneasy about their social standing."[19] She explains that the art they collected was "already designated tasteful, to indicate their cultural refinement and to tender an image of aesthetic credibility (both personally, and professionally) to the rest of the world."[20] Doss gives several examples of artwork collected by Hollywood individuals, such as Marion Davies; whose collection included Jean Honore Fragonard's *Winter* and François Boucher's *Mme de Pompadour,* and director George Cukor, who collected Renoirs and Roualts. But then Doss goes on to explain that the "paintings in Ms. Davies' collection are also indicative of the kind of art favored in movieland in the 1920s and 1930s."[21] I would argue that the collecting habits Doss describes as favored in movieland are generally representative of what was preferred by most of America's serious art collectors at the time. By contrast, the "Modern Masters," i.e., Regionalist painters, who became popular among several Hollywood directors as well as an increasingly large segment of the population as a whole, were generally not on the lists of the traditional art collectors in America. Most patrons of art at this time were more interested in purchasing European paintings, the

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[19] Erika Doss, "Regionalists in Hollywood: Painting, Film, and Patronage, 1925-1945," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1983), 171.

[20] Doss, 171.

[21] Ibid., 172.

"traditional" preference during the early decades of the twentieth century, while far fewer were seeking to form a collection of Regionalist art.[22]

Doss's article "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958" provides a helpful overview of the firm's corporate projects. She espouses that Associated American Artists "played a significant role in the marketing of modern American art as a middle-class commodity and a vehicle for corporate publicity."[23] Though Doss does not include a history of the use of fine art in advertising, she does credit Lewenthal as being the "cultural broker" who linked modern American art with consumerism.[24] In addition, the article mentions some of the problems the firm encountered with these corporate projects, namely Thomas Hart Benton's difficulties with the Lucky Strike campaign, which will be discussed in full in chapter 5. Doss does not, however, mention the relationship Associated American Artists developed with Abbott Laboratories, its most productive corporate partnership, nor does she offer specific reasons for these corporations to embark upon such ventures. Doss' cites American businesses' initiative only being an image-repairing attempt that was sparked by the blame many Americans put on business for the stagnant economy of the 1930s. Chapter 5 contains a more detailed account of this situation.

The gaps in Doss's coverage are discussed in slightly more depth in Henry Adams's study of Thomas Hart Benton, the most complete study of the artist to date. He was the first scholar to discuss how the Regionalist artists moved from obscurity to

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[22] See Robson for more on the collecting patterns of this period.

[23] Erika Doss, "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958," *Winterthur Portfolio* 26 (1991): 143.

[24] Ibid., 145.

national fame through their use of mass-media publications such as *Time* and *Life*.[25] Adams also was the first to discuss Benton's major mural projects and their relationship to popular films. Nonetheless, while Adams provides a good overview of this process, his discussion of Associated American Artists is incomplete as he does not provide much information about how Lewenthal lured the Regionalists away from other dealers and launched a new promotional approach.[26]

Leo Mazow recently published a superb article in *The Art Bulletin* on "Regionalist Radio," discussing a radio broadcast of the 1930s on the work of Thomas Hart Benton.[27] The article makes a very convincing case that Regionalist painters such as Benton, who have often been dismissed as retardetaire, had innovative notions about new media and popular culture, and that these ideas were imbedded in the very fabric of their art. The themes explored by Mazow closely parallel those of this dissertation. While Mazow examines a single radio broadcast, however, this dissertation examines the activities of Associated American Artists more comprehensively.

Helen Langa's book studies the artists working as printmakers in New York City during the 1930s who shared similar political and social interests. In her words, their "social viewpoint" art can only be understood through the study of the context that surrounded the artists during their time of creation. She thoroughly researches an impressive amount of primary and secondary source materials and identifies material that

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[25] Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 208.

[26] Adams briefly discusses how Associated American Artists' lithographs were sold, mentions the projects involving Hollywood movie propaganda, and also briefly notes Benton's *Year of Peril* series of paintings which Lewenthal sold to Abbott Laboratories.

[27] Leo Mazow, "Regionalist Radio: Thomas Hart Benton on Art For Your Sake," *Art Bulletin* 90, No. 1 (2008):101-122.

remains to be assessed, leading to an insightful landscape of the New York print scene during this decade. She situates Associated American Artists in the broader context of other printmaking and selling firms of the 1930s by discussing the firm's role in marketing Regionalist art at a time when other galleries were showing more radical subjects in protest of war or racism. Langa's text is also helpful in pointing out Associated American Artists' notion that their prints were commodities to be enjoyed by all classes of Americans. In general, the text is useful for my purposes in providing a comparative study between firms like Associated American Artists, which marketed their prints to the masses, and other galleries and clubs with a leftist, political agenda, which will be discussed later.

American Lithographers 1900-1960: The Artists and Their Printmakers, by Clinton Adams, is a thorough history of American lithography with respect to the artists and printmakers who helped propel the medium to its popularity. His account of Associated American Artists is most helpful as many of the details included have not been found in other texts, specifically the names of the printers the firm used and the numerical statistics involved in the printing process. Adams's book is perhaps the most complete compilation of material focusing on printmaking of this time period thus far and is a valuable resource in providing comparative material on print cooperatives contemporary to Associated American Artists.

Roland Marchand's book, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (1985), and Michelle Bogart's *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (1995) stand out as remarkable examples of the best scholarship on the history of advertising and the use of fine art in advertising. Marchand provides keen

insight into the psychology behind what became well-known techniques of advertisers to appeal to various desires and modes of thinking of American consumers. He contextualizes the stereotypes behind advertising campaigns, thus shedding invaluable light on the mentality of American consumers in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Michelle Bogart's study includes a history of illustration, the use of fine art in advertising, a history of the corporate use of art, and a discussion of the issues that arose with them. Her pithy discussion of the corporate projects Lewenthal developed in the late 1930s and 1940s is the most complete study to date. Bogart continues the discussion of art and advertising with examples of the eventual separation of the two in the 1950s, citing a mutual relaxation between fine artists, advertisers, and illustrators regarding the limits of their creativity and a lack of intense competition between the two disciplines.

Currently the field is missing a thorough analysis of the American art market in the 1930s and 1940s, the market for Regionalist art, and the market for prints during this time. Several scholars have either written histories of the market, but have not discussed detailed issues concerning the marketing and selling of art in the early twentieth century, or they have not provided sufficient evidence for the reasons various changes took place. As a result, one must sift through each individual gallery's publications or catalogues to gain insight into who was selling what to whom and for what price. This is time-consuming and inconclusive as there is, at present, no source that properly examines the market of this time as a whole or outlines the varying influences from one gallery and/or dealer to another, an issue which is of utmost importance when making any broad claims about the market in general.

As I point out, a plethora of material on Alfred Stieglitz and his 291 Gallery exists, but the current literature only provides a cursory and sporadic examination of Associated American Artists, Reeves Lewenthal, and the period during which they were most successful. It has been the trend of art historians to examine the personas of figures like Alfred Stieglitz, whose efforts have been the focus of countless romanticized monographs and cameos in nearly every published text discussing the art and its market in the twentieth century. Reeves Lewenthal's name, however, is scarcely mentioned in the context in which it most belongs.

Though this dissertation focuses on the American market, the literature on the British and European markets provides crucial information about the history of the practices established in Britain and the continent and that permeated the American market. These sources are valuable for providing insightful background on the methods of marketing and selling art that often became established prior to their use in America. The literature on the American primary art market is rather isolationist in that scholars do not acknowledge models for marketing and selling art, the notion of prints and other artwork as commodities, and the sale of art in department stores as being first developed in Britain and Europe. Transatlantic travel, print culture, increased literacy, and the influence of transatlantic firms such as Goupil offered Americans a clear picture of the art market in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition, the sojourns of American artists in the studios of prominent British and European artists in the late nineteenth century also contributed to this understanding of the European art market. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the useful literature on the themes of the British and European art market that bear similarity to my own study as a point of

reference for the origins of many of these issues. Lastly, Reeves Lewenthal spent a brief time working in London for Douglas Chandor and, I believe, may have been influenced by the established English methods of selling art and the venues in which it was sold, such as the prominent display and sale of art in department stores and the use of fine art in advertising.

Keeping in mind the likely awareness American artists and art dealers had of the customary British and European models for art sales and marketing, the following studies have served as helpful references for my own research: Robert Jensen's *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (1994); Andrew Stephenson "Strategies of Situation: British Modernism and the Slump, c. 1929-1934" (1991); Martha Tedeschi "How Prints Work: Reproductions, Originals, and their Markets in England, 1840-1900," PhD dissertation, Northwestern University (1994); and Martha Tedeschi '"Where the Picture Cannot Go, the Engravings Penetrate,: Prints and the Victorian Art Market" (2005).[28]

Robert Jensen's text focuses on fin-de-siècle Europe and its critical consumers of modern art. His study of cultural politics asserts that the Impressionist artists' interest in control of the markets at a time when the *Salons* were beginning to fail helped propel their popularity, due in large part to their abandonment of the *Salons* and their partnerships with dealers like Durand-Ruel. He emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the typologies of certain dealers (especially Durand-Ruel) who elevated themselves above the then popular image of dealer as merchant. Durand-Ruel

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[28] Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siécle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Andrew Stephenson, '"Strategies of Situation": British Modernism and the Slump, c. 1929-1934, *Oxford Art Journal* 14, (1991); 30-51; Martha Tedeschi, "How Prints Work: Reproductions, Originals, and their Markets in England, 1840-1900," (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 1994); Martha Tedeschi, '"Where the Picture Cannot Go, the Engravings Penetrate": Prints and the Victorian Art Market, *Objects of Desire, Victorian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, special issue of Museum Studies* 31.1 (2005); 8-19, 89-90.

metamorphosed from a typical entrepreneurial dealer concerned with the bottom-line to an ideological dealer. His genuine interest in art led him to be seen as a lover of Impressionism, not for the sake of making a sale or promoting and manipulating public taste, but rather as a passionate connoisseur who promoted a group of artists who all shared similar artistic endeavors. This transformation helped him create an interest in the new free market of selling art. Ultimately, Jensen's book stresses that artists were not apart from commerce, but rather held a firm hand in their new market, free from state control, which he aptly demonstrates through his use of detailed examples.

Andrew Stephenson discusses the fall in the British art market of the early twentieth century as a result of the Great Depression. His social history aims to exhibit the overarching impact of the political and economic climate in Britain between 1929 and 1934 (a period known as the Slump) on the social and political roles of the artist, including changes in the type of art that was produced, new methods of marketing the sale of art, and a reorganization of the ways in which artists were trained and educated. He includes a discussion of the rise of new venues for advertising and selling, such as the department stores Harrods and Selfridges. Stephenson also discusses the use of new marketing practices that were modeled on the notion of brand-identity, which was equally popular in Britain and the United States of the 1930s. Ultimately the article is a thorough account of the trial-and-error strategies of the British in their quest to create a sustainable system during a period of economic volatility. It serves as a crucial resource when examining this time period, especially when considering the restructuring of art patronage that occurred during the Slump.

Martha Tedeschi's dissertation provides an excellent outline of the structure and infrastructure of the print trade in England and explains the characteristics of the market, including the sources that fueled the market and how artists factored into this framework. Her dissertation also discusses the middle-class patrons of etchings and the elevated social and intellection position that was thought to be attainable upon ownership of etchings. This notion of elevating one's social status through the ownership of art will be explored in chapter 3 as I discuss Reeves Lewenthal, Thorstein Veblen, and Pierre Bourdieu's commentaries on the ownership of art and luxury goods. Lastly, Tedeschi's dissertation explains Walter Benjamin's pioneering essay "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility" as it pertains to the British market for reproductive prints, another topic explored in my own research of Associated American Artists.

Tedeschi's article emphasizes the role of prints in strengthening the middle class aspirations to become art collectors, as opposed to buyers of occasional artworks, a trend made popular in Great Britain and which likely had major impact on the market for prints in the United States. Another point Tedeschi argues is the preference of the middle-class for genre scenes or imagery of the English countryside and scenery, which she suggests underscored nationalism. This bears striking resemblance to the similar preference for the subject matter of Currier and Ives prints, American genre painting, and, eventually, Regionalist prints sold by Associated American Artists during the early years of the firm's operations.

While direct correlation between the primary British and European art markets and the primary market for selling American art in New York City cannot easily be made, the aforementioned studies lay out the various modes of marketing and selling art as well

as the relationships between artists, dealers, and the public that were, in some cases, concurrent with similar practices in the United States or preceded these practices in America.

This study offers insight to historians of the primary New York art market of the early twentieth century as well as the print market of the time. It adds to the existing sparse literature of the selling and marketing of Regionalist art to a broad range of social classes. Of equal importance is an examination and assessment of the target audience that the marketers and sellers of Regionalist prints were trying to attract during the 1930s and 1940s and their reasons for making these choices. This assessment is necessary to determine why Lewenthal's marketing message appealed to this audience and why they were susceptible to his rhetoric and selling techniques.

Chapter 1

The Biography of Reeves Lewenthal and the History of Associated American Artists to 1945

This chapter explores the significance of Lewenthal's biography for his role in the art world of the 1930s and 40s and sets forth the chronology of Associated American Artists from its inception to 1945. The goal is to situate Lewenthal's strategies within the firm's overall history. More specifically, this chapter investigates the personal motivations for Lewenthal's engagement with the specific kind of art that Associated American Artists sold and assesses Associated American Artists' effect on, and role within, the primary art market of New York City. Many of the firm's projects require only brief comment within this context as they are analyzed more specifically and at greater length in subsequent chapters.

Reeves Lewenthal (1910-1987) founded Associated American Artists to sell original prints to the American public (Figure 1). Lewenthal was born in 1910 in Rockford, Illinois, as Heim Rieven Lewenthal and later changed his name, though the date of this change and his motivation for it are unknown.[1] His grandfathers were laborers in sweat shops and push cart vendors who sold fruit and flowers. Though Lewenthal was only nine years old when his father died, his father's career path left an impression on him. According to Lewenthal's daughter, her grandfather left the house each morning in a suit, only to change into work clothes and work as a laborer, a reality he kept from his wife and children to preserve their respect for him.[2] Reeves Lewenthal

[1] Interview with Lana Reeves, 9 November, 2006. Author's collection.

showed signs of industriousness from a very young age, as demonstrated by the nights he spent earning two dollars for working in a bakery until five o'clock in the morning so he could help support his mother financially. He also rather smartly offered the manufacturer of baseball jerseys an opportunity to put their company name on the back of the jerseys of his Little League team as advertisement in exchange for free jerseys.

Reeves Lewenthal's first job was a reporter. He then spent several years as a journalist in Chicago, Denver, Detroit and St. Louis. Lewenthal joined the art world in 1931 when he spent four months studying old masters and contemporary artists while traveling throughout Europe with Douglas Chandor, a British portrait painter. He became Chandor's press agent and gained a strong interest in promoting the arts. His time in Europe with Chandor fostered his education in art, but also increased his distaste for European culture.[3] The aversion to European culture later developed into nationalistic pride, leading him to his art sales almost exclusively or American art for the first decade of his firm's existence.

Shortly after his work with Chandor, at an undetermined date, he served as Public Relations Counsel to the National Commission to Advance American Art, the National Academy of Design, the Fine Arts Federation of the City of New York, the Allied Artists of America, the Society of American Etchers, the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, the Beaux Arts Institute, the American Watercolor Society, and

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[2] Lana Reeves was unsure of further details at the time of our interview. Interview with Lana Reeves, 9 November, 2006, Author's collection.

[3] Interview with Lana Reeves, 9 November, 2006, Author's collection. Lana Reeves suggests Lewenthal felt a sense of alienation from European culture. Erika Doss believe that such alienation "had been brought on by several unpleasant years of foreign schooling and the unsatisfying presswork he had done in London for Chandor." Erika Doss, "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958," *Winterthur Portfolio* 26 (1991): 154.
Lana Reeves did not believe her father had foreign schooling. Interview with Lana Reeves, Author's collection.

the National Sculpture Society. In these years he gained invaluable experience both networking and familiarizing himself with American art culture and sales methods.

At the time Lewenthal joined the American art scene, magazines such as *Time* and *Life* were beginning to popularize Regionalist art. Though Lewenthal was aware of this rising popularity, I argue that he chose to promote this type of art for reasons beyond its increasing fame. Lewenthal's Jewish background and his upbringing in a poor household served as a stark contrast to the utopian images of middle-class American prosperity that Regionalism offered. Despite this contrast, or rather because of it, Lewenthal was attracted to Regionalist art. An examination of similar trends exhibited by other notable Jewish men living in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century, demonstrated by such studies as Daniel Bell's 1961 article "Reflections on Jewish Identity" and Neal Gabler's book, *An Empire of their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (1988), explains this dichotomy.[4]

Bell and Gabler describe a rejection of Jewish cultural traditions as a result of anxiety brought on by the cultural results of family immigration. This anxiety appears to have been heightened, and its after-affects displayed prominently, by sons of immigrants who came to maturity between 1910 and 1930. Bell and Gabler trace this anxiety to feelings of shame, guilt, and hostility toward their fathers. These men launched a cultural patricide in order to eliminate any similarities between themselves and their fathers. They thus hoped that they would not repeat their fathers' failures, whether they be financial, social, or otherwise. Both Bell and Gabler outline the tendency many Jewish men showed for fashioning a lifestyle opposite of that which was normally accessible to them at a time of strong anti-Semitism and beneath the shadows of their fathers. Their

[4] Daniel Bell, "Reflections on Jewish Identity," *Commentary* 31 (1961): 471, 476.

goal was to assimilate and be accepted into American culture by erasing their past and creating new identities. Gabler shows that this even entailed changing their names, just as Reeves Lewenthal did.[5] The hope of these men was not entirely distinctive to the Jewish community, but was sometimes stronger than that of many other ethnic immigrant communities at the time. The American lifestyle these Jews sought for themselves was one that, especially during the 1930s, was largely unattainable even for non-Jews who came from established families.

In his history of Jews in Hollywood, Gabler describes a certain skill set that allowed Jews to excel in the film industry (and which, I believe, Lewenthal also possessed, and which set him apart as an art dealer in New York City in the 1930s and 1940s).[6] Gabler asserts that the Jews who invented Hollywood "understood public taste and were masters at gauging market swings, at merchandising, at pirating away customers and beating the competition."[7] Gabler contends that movies appealed specifically to Jews because films satisfied their hunger for assimilation and, essentially, they were able to create their own country through the movies they made. He suggests that

> they would fabricate their empire in the image of America as they would fabricate themselves in the image of prosperous Americans. They would create its values and myths, its traditions and archetypes. It would be an America where fathers were strong, families were stable, people attractive, resilient, resourceful, and decent.[8]

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[5] Even though Bell and Gabler make generalizations, Lewenthal did indeed exhibit many of the characteristics they describe as typical for his milieu.

[6] In chapter 3 I expand upon Lewenthal's Eastern European Jewish ancestry and family background as being very different from that of Alfred Stieglitz, who came from a privileged German-Jewish family.

[7] Neal Gabler, *An Empire of their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988), 5.

Gabler's assessment of the Jews in Hollywood and their movement away from their indigenous cultural identity closely describes Lewenthal's behavior both in his lifestyle and in the choice of artists he chose to represent, and as well those artists he deliberately did not hire. I contend that Lewenthal's ethnic heritage, and his admitted embarrassment about his Eastern European Jewish ancestry, played a major role in the way he marketed art as well as the type of art he chose to sell.

In my interview with Lewenthal's daughter, she described her father as being very conservative, very interested in money, and very proud of being American. Lewenthal's actions as an art dealer exemplify these traits, which I explain throughout this dissertation.[9] In short, his actions as an art dealer show him to be nationalistic. He chose to work with the artists he did because they not only represented popular appeal but also painted what he hoped for the future of the country. By involving artists with corporations, he also showed his hope for the democratic rise of corporate/industrial America.

Lewenthal's commitment to Regionalism was manifested at the very moment the idea of his own gallery emerged. According to a 1938 publication by Associated American Artists, Lewenthal and twenty-three important American artists met in Thomas Hart Benton's Manhattan studio on a hot July morning in 1934 with the intent to foster a broader interest in American art. They sought to accomplish their goal by developing a lucrative market for art, as Lewenthal made clear throughout his writing about his marketing schemes. Lewenthal's experience in public relations afforded him the ability

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[8] Gabler, 6.

[9] "For him, money was everything. And the other thing was that he was very ashamed of being Jewish." Interview with Lana Reeves. 9 November, 2006, Author's collection.

to exert influence over people and successfully promote his ideas. Lewenthal decided the best way to develop a lucrative art market was to start his own print publishing firm named Associated American Artists. The firm began by selling prints by Regionalist artists such as Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood, and John Steuart Curry. Department stores were the first to sell the prints, but the firm eventually opened a gallery located on Fifth Avenue in New York City, followed by locations in Chicago (1945) and Beverly Hills (1947).

In order to gauge possible interest in his ideas, Lewenthal had met with a total of 740 artists (over an undocumented time period, likely 1934 through the 1940s), though only forty agreed to join him in founding Associated American Artists. The group was actually not an association at all, despite its name implying a print collective. The individual artists had no voice in the sale or commissioning of their works, nor did they have any power over how the firm was run. The inclusion of the term 'Association' in the firm's title was perhaps meant to lure buyers into thinking that the group was more of an artists' cooperative than an agency with a corporate component. This appellative ploy is indicative of Lewenthal's subtle and effective marketing acumen, which was consistent throughout his years at Associated American Artists, as will be seen. Lewenthal, and co-founder and financial backer, Maurice Liederman, were the sole owners of the gallery and were the only two persons to profit from it. Lewenthal, however, held the dominant role in managing the business for nearly two decades. Artists neither shared in the profits of the gallery nor ever played a role in its management.

Lewenthal's strategy was first put in place on October 15, 1934 when he sold pencil-signed etchings and lithographs printed on hand-made rag paper, all guaranteed

authentic, to department stores in fifty participating American cities for $5 each, a price Lewenthal set himself. He heavily promoted the event in newspaper and magazine advertisements nationwide in preparation for the sale and also took a bus across the country in order to sign contracts with department stores to secure their participation.[10] Department stores in major U.S. cities, such as New York City and Philadelphia, which had for decades been attracting the public to view and purchase art, seemed especially receptive to Lewenthal's plan.

Both painters and printmakers comprised the initial group of Associated American Artists' artists. To advertise his wares, Lewenthal published catalogues listing the works for sale. (Today these are invaluable resources for researching the firm.) The first catalogue offered works by printmakers Peggy Bacon, Adolph Dehn, Gordon Grant, and Luigi Lucioni. It also featured prints by the following painters: Loren Barton, Thomas Hart Benton, Elmer Browne, Alice Standish Buell, Philip Cheney, John Costigan and John Steuart Curry.[11] The second catalogue of prints included works from these artists in addition to Alex Blum, Roselle Osk, and Frederick L. Owen.[12]

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[10] Both B. Altman and Wanamaker's in New York City, Marshall Field (Chicago), Thalheimer's (Richmond), Bullock's (Los Angeles), and several other department stores around the country, agreed to sell Associated American Artists' prints.

[11] The following painters also made prints for the first catalogue: Lewis C. Daniel, Adolph Dehn, Christian Dull, Churchill Ettinger, Don Freeman, Gordon Grant, J. Knowles Hare, William Heaslip, Albert Heckman, Irwin Hoffman, Andrew Karoly, Robert Lawson, W.R. Locke, Margaret Manuel, Joseph Marguiles, Jerome Myers, Earl McKinney, Ira Moskowitz, Frank Nankivell, H. Amiard Obertueffer, Henry C. Pitz, Chauncey Ryder, Margery Ryerson, George Shorey, Yngve E. Soderberg, Louis Szanto, C. Jac Young and Henry Ziegler. Many of the artists represented by the firm had at least some experience making prints since several fledgling print groups existed prior to Associated American Artists' founding.

[12] Grant Wood, who was an original member of the Associated American Artists board of directors, did not complete his first lithograph until 1937. I have been unable to uncover information about the firm's board of directors.

Of the initial group, Benton, Curry and Wood were by far the most well-known of the Associated American Artists' artists. Lewenthal used their popular esteem to his advantage when he described the firm's focus on American art with language such as: "Here is the first real movement against the flood of cheap foreign prints of little artistic or other value."[13] Lewenthal's thus reinforced his interest in promoting what he considered to be quality American art.

The artists contributed a maximum of ten plates or stones that were printed in black and white. 250 editions were printed in addition to ten artist's proofs, which became the self-titled '250-edition program'. The size of Associated American Artists' editions was larger than was common at the time. Each artist received $200 per print, the fee only rising to $300 after the edition sold out. The fee would rise to $400 if the artist doubled their production of impressions.

George Miller printed the lithographs while Andersen-Lam produced the etchings. Occasionally Lynton Kistler and Lawrence Barrett also printed etchings or lithographs for Associated American Artists.[14] On a few occasions some of the firm's artists printed their own images and, in these cases, they would receive a small payment for the printing costs in addition to their $200 fee. At the time of the firm's founding, Lewenthal decided that one free 250-edition print would be given to purchasers each time they bought five 250-edition prints at once.[15]

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[13] "Making Fine Prints Popular," *Prints* 5 (November 1934): 17.

[14] The printing was twenty-five cents a print at George Miller. Oral interview with Sylvan Cole, 2000 June-Oct, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Sylvan Cole became President of Associated American Artists when Reeves Lewenthal left the firm.

[15] I have drawn on all available information concerning artists-proofs, editions of prints, types of printmakers and have been unable to find any further information on the types of paper used, the ratio of

The 250-edition program received quick critical acclaim when John Costigan's *Group of Figures* and Irwin Hoffman's *Fiesta* were selected for the Fine Prints of the Year Award in 1934, sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum. Soon afterward, Lewenthal added other well-known artists, such as Aaron Bohrod and John de Martelly, to Associated American Artists' roster.

In 1935 Associated American Artists transitioned its sales from department stores to mail-order catalogues. In order to supplement falling department store sales, an advertising campaign was created to gain the attention of people who lived "in those sections of the nation not as yet reached by the program" to encourage readers to send for an illustrated catalogue.[16] This catalogue advertised forty prints from thirty-six artists.[17] Lewenthal ceased department store distribution when Thalheimers, a department store in Philadelphia, lowered their prices for individual prints to $3.98 and thus breached their contract with Associated American Artists.[18] Later Lewenthal suggested mail-order was always his intended vehicle of primary sales.[19]

Associated American Artists publicized its mail-order operation through advertisements in newspapers and magazines. According to Lewenthal, Associated American Artists' first advertisement for the program garnered 9,000 responses, which

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etchings to lithographs, etc. Based on close examination of Associated American Artists' prints held by the Cleveland Museum of Art, it appears that these prints were made directly on the stone rather than on transfer paper.

[16] Associated American Artists' Patrons Supplement, n/d, author's collection.

[17] *Prints* 5 (January, 1935): v.

[18] Some of the prints sold out immediately while others were not in such high-demand, leading to the likely explanation that Thalheimer's was trying to move merchandise by lowering the cost of the less desirable prints.

[19] Fred Ferretti, "The AAA and How it Grew," *Art News* 73, no. 2 (February, 1974): 57.
According to Sylvan Cole, Lewenthal spent $400 on an ad in *The New York Times* advertising his original art by mail. This brought in $9,000.00 of business. Ferreti, 57-59.

prompted the firm to send out 9,000 catalogues. The mail-order catalogues featured a brief biography of each artist; the biography was also included with each 250-edition print. Associated American Artists continued this practice of including biographical information on their artists for the next 49 years and the inclusion of this material remains a hallmark for collectors even today. This information was likely included to help the public become familiar with the firm's artists and to lessen the obscurity of a work of art. For many customers, purchasing art through catalogues may have been the first contact they had with the artist or even with fine art. In addition, as we will later see, Lewenthal also professed an educational role for his work: he was in effect bringing not only art but also its appreciation into the homes of the public.

In April of 1935 Associated American Artists' operations moved from its "12-a-month hole-in-the-wall office" at 11 West 42nd Street to 366 Madison Avenue, which provided a much larger space from which to run the mail-order business.[20] Associated American Artists made a $50,000 profit in 1935, which was a drastic improvement from its $30,000 loss (due to upfront costs and other expenses) in 1934, the year of its founding. The drastic one-year turn around seemed a sure sign that Lewenthal's strategies were not only timely and signified an accurate reading of contemporary culture, but also were based on sound and highly successful business strategies.

One year later, in April of 1936, Associated American Artists moved to an even larger space that allowed for a gallery, soon to be a characteristic feature of the firm, at 420 Madison Avenue. Visitors could view artworks on display, a benefit its artists also enjoyed. 1936 also marked the year Associated American Artists issued the first

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[20] Walter Adams, "Nobody too Poor to Buy a Masterpiece," *Better Homes and Gardens* 24 (December 1945): 30.

catalogue they entitled *Patron's Supplements* and which was referred to as such from 1936 onward.[21] The title reflects Lewenthal's practice of referring to his firm's customers as "patrons," a decision likely made to raise the esteem of these buyers and link them to the traditional patrons of the arts whose support of artists and museums put them in an exclusive and often prestigious category. The *Patron's Supplements* served as annuals of available inventory, and also announced the purchase of prints and artwork by galleries, museums, and universities as well as information on awards received by Associated American Artists' artists. A letter by Reeves Lewenthal is found in most of these catalogues as well as a newsletter. Catalogue contents include reprints of articles written about Associated American Artists; news regarding the firm, its staff, and its artists; an order form for the prints; and a description of additional purchase options such as frames or gifts.[22]

Associated American Artists hired the Schwab and Beatty agency in 1936, which was a popular and effective advertising firm that had experience working for other mail-order companies, to help attract new subscribers to their mailing list. The resulting ads, including full pages in *The New York Times* magazine section, featured phrasing such as: "Is your home picture poor?" or "You too can own original works of art for only five dollars."[23] *The New York Times* magazine was printed every Sunday with articles "intended to appeal to intelligent readers and printed on coated paper for good

[21] The *Patrons Supplements* were generally undated. Because the firm often offered the same works of art for sale in consecutive catalogues it is hard to provide concrete dates for some of the catalogues.

[22] For further details, please see the Oral Interview with Sylvan Cole, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[23] Oral interview with Sylvan Cole, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

reproduction of photographs."[24] This Sunday magazine was the first U.S. based publication to include color images and was known for its popular features contributing to style and fashion, as well as articles by prestigious authors such as Thomas Mann, Gertrude Stein, and Tennessee Williams. Associated American Artists' ads were keyed with a coupon, which facilitated a growth in sales and popular interest and also let the firm know which of their advertisements was responsible for each order of prints.[25]

In addition to publishing its catalogues in 1936, the firm also published its first two books: *Understanding Prints,* by Aline Kistler, and *Irwin D. Hoffman,* by Associated American Artists. Kistler's book attempts to demystify what she considered to be common misconceptions of prints by non-collectors: how prints are made; how to read prints; and how to judge prints. Her intention was to make a general audience comfortable with talking about prints and understanding them. Again, Lewenthal was aware of the need to not only reach out to potential customers, but also cultivate them so they could appreciate the particular form of art he was selling. In 1936, three large format prints by Thomas Hart Benton were published as well as the firm's first annual holiday catalogue (a seasonal version of its regularly-published catalogue) and a series of Christmas cards, which were henceforth issued annually.

Associated American Artists expanded its offerings through the creation of its Special Services Department "for collectors and for those who wish to add particular

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[24] Jack Rosenthal, "5,000 Sundays, Letter from the Editor," *The New York Times* (April 14, 1996): SM47.

[25] Each mailing had a code that was used to alert Associated American Artists where the mail had originated from, i.e., NYT ad, etc. This allowed Associated American Artists' advertising agency to properly quantify which advertisements generated the most business. Oral Interview with Sylvan Cole, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

types of art to their homes" in 1937.[26] Margaret Sullivan, who formerly ran the Macbeth Gallery, headed this department. While the details of this department are unclear, the *Patrons Supplement* states that Sullivan was able to obtain artwork from several "leading collections" of American art and offer it to Associated American Artists' customers, who were given the opportunity to sample the art free for ten days in their home before deciding whether to send payment by check or return the art.[27] This practice seems to have been the first example in the art world of a free trial experience of the art object, and later became common policy for catalogue and television shoppers. This department was initially unproductive until the Art for Advertising Department was formed as an offshoot of the Special Services Department the following year.

The Art for Advertising Department opened with a project involving DeBeers Diamond Corporation, which hired Associated American Artists' artists to create imagery for its magazine advertisements. The department's second project was longer-lasting: Abbott Laboratories commissioned 47 of the Associated American Artists' 123 artists "to make a permanent art record of the war—its agony, sacrifice and heroism" in 1941.[28] These artists documented "the beaches at Tarawa and Bougainville, the foxholes of Normandy, the jungles of Burma, and the frozen Aleutians."[29] Additionally, Abbott hired Associated American Artists' artists to provide all the imagery for their *What's New*

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[26] Associated American Artists pamphlet, n/d. 23. Author's collection.

[27] I have been unable to uncover any further details of Margaret Sullivan's work or this particular program. Details about whether these were originals or reproductions were not included in the pamphlets.

[28] "Abbott hired Associated American Artists in 1939 and, when the U.S. entered the war, the firm's artists began creating a series of war-related public relations paintings," according to Michelle Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 276.

[29] Frances Rockmore Velie, "Fine Art for the Masses," *Coronet* 18, no.6 (1945): 93.

magazine, which was sent free to physicians across the United States. These high-quality magazines were Abbott's main form of advertising as each issue included full-color ads for its products, based on paintings by the chosen artists, as well as artwork for the magazine's covers. Significant writers such as Archibald MacLeish, Carl Sandburg or John Steinbeck often included short fiction and poetry. Associated American Artists served as the liaison between the writers and poets and Abbott.[30] Abbott hired Associated American Artists' artists to illustrate direct mailers sent to physicians, the company's greeting cards, and brochures sent with their products. Abbott also initiated circulating exhibitions of the artwork they purchased from Associated American Artists.

In addition, the Art for Advertising Department established the collaboration between Associated American Artists and the American Tobacco Company, Encyclopedia Britannica, Sears Roebuck, Standard Oil, Steinway Pianos, and United Artists. These businesses collected artwork for display within their headquarters and commissioned Associated American Artists' artists for advertisements and charitable purposes as well as tax advantages.[31] Many Associated American Artists' artists were commissioned to create advertisements for Lucky Strike Cigarettes, Maxwell House, Imperial Whiskey, National Steel and Green Giant.

Life and *Fortune* magazines commissioned Associated American Artists' artists to create art for their magazines and, as a result, both of these publications became an asset to the firm in terms of exposing the public to its endeavors. Perhaps the most well-

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[30] According to Reeves Lewenthal, Associated American Artists was a meeting place for artists and writers during the 30s and early 40s (interview with Patricia Shaw, approximately 1985, collection of Patricia Shaw).

[31] Bogart, 274.

known image *Life* commissioned for its magazine was Thomas Hart Benton's *Hollywood*, 1937 (Figure 2), which was inspired by his time on the Twentieth-Century Fox set and illustrates movie production.[32] Ultimately, however, the magazine rejected the painting for its corporate collection, though it was published in the magazine in 1938 within an article featuring it as the winner of the Carnegie Institute Art Exhibit.[33] Benton was more interested in the men and machines who, behind the scenes, created movies than he was the glitz and glamour to which many Americans were attracted.[34] Erika Doss aptly suggests, "The heir of a political ideology of social progress, Benton was obviously interested in a better future."[35] Doss views Benton's *Hollywood* in a manner similar to how she describes his rural farm scenes as depicting a "vision of a better world where America's producer tradition was restored."[36] In a manner reminiscent of church-commissioned art, Associated American Artists' artists were asked to produce art which corresponded to a particular corporate or nationalistic vision. Lewenthal, in effect, was using his artists to sell specific ideas rather than using his marking ingenuity to sell the

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[32] For more on Associated American Artists' artists and their promotion of movies, see Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991) and Erika Doss, "Regionalists in Hollywood: Painting, Film, and Patronage, 1925-1945," (PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1983).

[33] *Life* rejected Benton's painting because it emphasized the workers involved in making movies as opposed to painting the mythical movieland of glamour and stars. See Larry May, *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 209.

[34] Erika Doss explains, "Benton's focus on movie unionists and a racy nameless blonde, rather than on specific glamorous Hollywood stars, was considered inappropriate for *Life,* which depended upon motion picture advertising and could not afford to slight one of its better clients." Erika Doss, "Borrowing Regionalism: Advertising's Use of American Art in the 1930s and 1940s," *Journal of American Culture* 5, no.4 (1982): 13.

[35] Doss, *Benton, Pollock*, 203.

[36] Ibid.

ideas of the artists. This is worth noting because it reinforces the ends to which Lewenthal worked to promote ideas that were important to him.

Henry Luce, *Life's* founder, hired Benton through Associated American Artists to create images of the United Auto Workers' strike in Flint, Michigan. Soon afterward, the magazine commissioned several of the firm's artists to depict scenes from American history of the last 25 years. Edward Laning's *T.R. in Panama*, 1939; John McCrady's *The Shooting of Huey Long*, 1939; Reginald Marsh's *The Death of Dillinger*, 1940; and John Steuart Curry's *Hoover and the Flood*, 1940. All of these images abided by the preferences of *Life* editor Daniel Longwell and Reeves Lewenthal to promote an optimistic future for the country by reinforcing positive reactions to its recent historical past. Edward T. Laning's *T.R. in Panama* (Figure 3) illustrates the overarching theme of Americans overcoming trials and tribulations that particularly appealed to Henry Luce. Laning's painting, for example, celebrated "the triumph of engineering that led to the Panama Canal's bisection of the isthmus and simultaneously commemorated the first overseas visit by a U.S. president in 1906."[37] The painting depicts men at work next to a steam shovel, emitting a cloud of dark smoke into the sky of the middle ground. On the far right of the painting, in a train's caboose decorated in patriotic ribbons, a well-dressed couple stand waiting to exit the train and join Theodore Roosevelt and his group of officials surveying the scene. The American flag soars above the scene. Modest wooden crosses mark a series of graves at the bottom right corner of the painting and merely hint at the many native lives lost during the construction. A pair of men, suspended from a pulley's cable, dangle over the scene and take on a hovering position that is visually

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[37] Charles C. Eldredge, *John Steuart Curry's Hoover and the Flood: Painting Modern History* (Augusta, Ga.: UNC Press Books, 2007), 9.

reminiscent of an apotheosis. In all, the painting is in line with Luce's devotion to promoting an optimistic view of America through its people overcoming difficult challenges and looking toward a positive future.

Associated American Artists pioneered a new series of color reproductions in 1938. Successful sales of lithographs and etchings prompted the introduction of "gelatones" created through the use of a half-tone screen to reproduce paintings in color with as much detail as the originals after which they were modeled. Associated American Artists published forty different gelatone prints between 1938 and 1946 and these became highly collectable among its patrons.

In 1939 the company expanded to handle oil paintings and opened a new 30,000 square foot public gallery space devoted to exhibitions at 711 Fifth Avenue, which supplemented the print showroom on Madison and 49th Street (Figure 4). Upon the opening of these two sites, sixty-one artists were represented by the Associated American Artists, with ninety-two items on display at the Madison Avenue gallery.[38] At this point Associated American Artists employed 21 staff members and was selling prints, watercolors, oils, and sculptures. The company used a rotating panoply of exhibitions, a technique devised by nineteenth-century dealers, to draw attention to their wares. To celebrate its expansion Associated American Artists had an opening exhibition and a

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[38] On May 27, 1939 92 items were displayed at Associated American Artists' new gallery, including: Max Weber (*Reading)*, Waldo Pierce (*The Ordway Barn)*, Ernest Fiene (*Thistles)*, Criss (*Rhapsody in Steel)*, George Biddle (*William Groper)*, Isabel Bishop (*Seated Nude)*, Arnold Blanch (*The Chosen People)*, Philip Evergood (*Madonna of the Mines*), Kuniyoshi's *Girl Thinking*, Doris Rosenthal (*Sacred Music)*, Peter Blume (*Lilies),* Elsie Driggs, Adolph Dehn, Thomas Hart Benton (*Planting),* John Sloan, Raphael Soyer, Gaston Longchamps, and Richard Lahey. Also, there were sculptures by Dorothea Greenbaum, Minna Harkavy, and Zorach (*Bathing Girl).* October 14, 1939 marked the first George Biddle exhibit at Associated American Artists.

major retrospective of the works of renowned Missouri Regionalist painter, Thomas Hart Benton, which was a major critical and financial success.

Upon learning that John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* was to be made into a film by Twentieth-Century Fox, Reeves Lewenthal met with Fox's chief publicist, Harry Brand, and Darryl Zanuck (an actor, director, writer and producer) in order to convince them that Thomas Hart Benton could create an ad campaign that would alleviate any hostility toward making a movie based on a novel banned in a large part of the United States. Advertisements for the movie read: "The nation is excited about works of art. The Benton art provides you with an exceptional, timely opportunity to ride the crest of this art-appreciation and make it work for your playdate of The Grapes of Wrath."[39] In all, Benton created six lithographs as promotion for the film.[40] Benton's lithographs depicted the artist's version of what he thought Hollywood's audience would understand as stereotyped images of the film's main characters, Okie migrants (Figure 5). *Life* utilized its in-house ad copy more often than Benton's imagery, due in part to jealousy its own art staff felt over Benton's involvement and Zanuck's unfavorable reaction to Benton's images. Zanuck responded to the lithographs by remarking, "Who the hell did this? It's awful. Why is everything leaning? People don't look that way."[41] Despite Zanuck's reaction, this was the first of a series of instances in which Lewenthal tried to forge a further symbiosis between the art market and the film industry.

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[39] *The Grapes of Wrath Clipping File*, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, Beverly Hills.

[40] For more, see Erika Doss, "Borrowing Regionalism," 13.

[41] Quoted from Erika Doss's interviews with Harry Brand and Reeves Lewenthal, cited in Doss, "Borrowing Regionalism," 13.

1940 marked the year that nine of the firm's most well-known artists, including Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood, received commissions through Associated American Artists to paint promotional scenes for the movie *The Long Voyage Home*, which was based on Eugene O'Neill's play and featured John Wayne. Critics praised the film and it was nominated for several awards, but it was a box-office bust, likely because it veered away from the romantic and more light-hearted war films that moviegoers of the time preferred. *The Long Voyage Home* was close to film-noir, which ultimately became a popular film genre of the 1940s and 1950s, but which Americans didn't appear ready for when it was released.[42] Moreover, the Regionalist artwork created for its promotion was in stark contrast to the film's bleak cinematography and unflattering realism. Furthermore, Benton and Wood upheld an isolationist preference in regard to American foreign policy, which was unlike that of the film's producer, Walter Wanger. Brothers Ivan LeLorraine Albright and Malvin Marr Albright were similarly commissioned through Associated American Artists to paint images to be used in the film *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Also in 1940 Orbach's, J.L. Hudson, and Gimbel Brothers, department stores in New York, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, respectively, commissioned artists through Associated American Artists to create a series of paintings with regional themes to be displayed in their stores and within traveling exhibitions.[43] Associated American Artists also partnered with Steuben Glass Company, which commissioned several Associated

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[42] Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock,* 252.

[43] For more, see Marian M. Ohman, "The Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney Art Collection" in James W. Goodrich, ed*., Missouri Historical Review* (Columbia: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1999), 165-185.

American Artists' artists, including Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood, to create works of art in glass. Associated American Artists published a catalogue for the project in 1940.

By 1941 Associated American Artists was considered, according to Lewenthal, a $500,000-a-year business and "the largest commercial art gallery in the world."[44] The firm expanded sufficiently to do business with Pepsi-Cola Company, which hired Associated American Artists in 1942 to create a full-color calendar featuring paintings by American artists. Francis Criss, Adolph Dehn, Gordon Grant, James Perrin, John Costigan and Edna Reindel were commissioned to paint six canvases for the 1944 calendar. Pepsi maintained that the paintings were not of the best quality for reproduction, which prompted the company to create a competition with the following goals: to promote contemporary artists to the general public, provide assistance to the artists through the prize money afforded, give artists a free annual exhibition where paintings could be viewed and purchased by the public, and to make the exhibition available in larger cities to promote art to people in these locations. These initiatives launched the first "Portrait of America" exhibition under the auspices of Artists for Victory.[45] Here we have a clear example of Associated American Artists forging the initial direct link between a successful for-profit company and American artists, which, in this case, fuelled Pepsi to establish a lasting relationship with contemporary art.

Though beyond the scope of this dissertation, in the interest of providing a clear history of the firm's major projects during the period of study, it is important to

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[44] "Money in Pictures," *Time* (April 21, 1941): 71.

[45] Elizabeth McCausland, *Work for Artists: What? Where? How?* (New York: American Artists Group, 1947), 141-143.

summarize Associated American Artists' program relating to the U.S. War Department and Abbott Laboratories. Associated American Artists and Abbott collaborated with the War Department Art Advisory Committee and the Corps of Engineers in 1942 to create a list of civilian artists to create a pictorial record of the U.S. Army's involvement in the war through the Combat Art Program, which was conceived by Reeves Lewenthal. Abbott financed the project, while the War Department provided transportation and lodging for the artists overseas, and Associated American Artists administered the program and secured the 23 artists. The Army Corps of Engineers handled the project, which was made possible by Lewenthal's connections within the government as well as those of George Biddle, one of Associated American Artists' artists. Biddle was FDR's roommate in college and was able to help establish a connection between Associated American Artists and the War Department. Lewenthal created a North American version of the project for those artists who were unable to receive governmental approval to travel overseas because of their leftist political views.[46]

Though Congress cut the project's funding after only four months, over two-thousand pieces of art were completed under this program, most of which were exhibited in the nation's museums.[47] Reeves Lewenthal was named Expert Consultant on Art to the

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[46] William Gropper and Henry Varnum Poor were among the participants in the North American version of the War Artist's project.

[47] The other works were returned to the artists. The art not returned to the artists was initially sent to the Wart Art Unit of the Historical Branch, later given to the Corps of Engineers, however, its keeping was later the responsibility of the Pictorial Division of the Public Information Division. In February of 1945 it was transferred to the War Paintings Office in the Bureau of Public Relations. In May, 1945 the War Paintings Office had received 1300 paintings, with the expectation to receive 700 more. Soon after, the Secretary of War transferred the responsibility for the art to the Office of Army Headquarters Commandant where the Historical Properties Branch was established in order to take charge of collecting, processing, and preserving Army paintings and objects of similar historical interest. In 1950 the art activity was transferred to the Historical Division of The Special Staff, which was later renamed the Office, Chief of

War Department and organized the first group of artists as war correspondents. More than two-dozen artists went into battle as combat artists with the Army, Navy, Naval Medicine, Naval Aviation, Submarine Warfare, and Amphibious Operations. Some of the artists included Lawrence Beal Smith, William Draper, Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, Paul Hurd and Aaron Bohrod. The artists concentrated on specific themes, such as "Army Medicine" or "Navy Aviation."

The Treasury Department for Bond Drives requested posters for the Third and Fourth War Bond Drives, which were sponsored by Abbott Laboratories. They supplied the slogans "Back the Attack" and "Let Em Have It," hoping to promote the war effort and identify their cooperation with American patriotism. The Fifth War Loan Drive, also sponsored by Abbott Laboratories, consisted of material that resulted from a contest of the company's 12,000 employees who submitted slogans and subject matter for the best poster. Associated American Artists solicited "celebrity" judges, such as Arnold Weissberger, Thomas Craven, Clifton Fadiman, Rex Stout, Julian Street Jr., and Helen Hayes, to choose the posters they liked best.[48] The paintings were displayed as individual shows in museums and public art galleries throughout the U.S. Abbott Labs donated the collection to the War Department, which dispersed each artwork to the branch of service with which it corresponded.[49]

Together with Abbott Laboratories, Associated American Artists sponsored seven different war projects between 1942 and 1945. In cooperation with the Surgeon

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Military History. The artists were assigned to other Army duties where they continued to create for the War Art Unit under the Historical Branch.

[48] Letter from Augusta Arnold of Associated American Artists to Arnold Weissberger, Feb. 15, 1944, Author's collection.

[49] Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham, *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II* (New York: TV Books, 2000).

General's Office, Associated American Artists and Abbott sent a group of artists to make a visual catalogue of the efforts of Army doctors and nurses in the field. This idea of documenting the efforts of Army medical staff came from Lt. Col Howard Baer who worked for the Medical Administrative Corps. (not to be confused with Abbott-hired artist Howard Baer). Lt. Col. Baer presented the idea to capture the medical team's efforts in art to artist Baer. It was his suggestion to consult Reeves Lewenthal, who secured Abbott's sponsorship. The artists recorded the Medical Department's activities in theatres of the Pacific, India, Burma, Europe and China as well as on the home front. Many of the paintings served to illustrate the importance of advanced medical technology to the civilians at home, who often viewed them in pharmacies, five-and-dime stores, or in catalogues printed and distributed by Abbott Laboratories. In all, 144 paintings were made of these medical scenes. Abbott presented them to the Army in 1945.[50] Though Associated American Artists' relationship with the War Department will not be further analyzed in this dissertation, it serves to show the wide variety of corporate and governmental ties Lewenthal established for artists.

Another of the more explicitly political moves that Associated American Artists took in this period was distributing Benton's work on anti-fascist themes in Kansas City. Some of the most visually dramatic images created at this time were Benton's anti-fascist series of cartoon posters, entitled *Year of Peril*, which he made in 1942. He intended to hang the posters in Kansas City's Union Station after talking it over with the

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[50] Abbott's president, S. DeWitt Clough, has said that the gift of these paintings were "a tribute to the tremendous accomplishment of the Army Medical Department in saving the lives of scores of thousands of American soldiers who would be dead today but for the vast improvement of medical service in this over any previous war." DeWitt Mackenzie, *Men Without Guns* (Philadelphia: The Blakiston Company, 1945), 12.

superintendent. Benton said, "I would try to wake up the Middle West to the grimness of our national situation." He wanted the "milling travelers" to see them and "be shocked, maybe by the violence of their subject matter, into a realization of what the United States was up against." Lewenthal, however, had his typically grander and much farther reaching vision for distribution. He responded to Benton's marketing naïveté: "Don't you do that. We can make money out of this work. This is no local affair you have here. It's a national one, forget the Union Station business. Leave these pictures to me and I'll put them over the whole country."[51] They went to Chicago and sold the project to Abbott Laboratories. Benton received $20,000 for it. Lewenthal hired Archibald MacLeish to write a forward for the book, entitled *The Year of Peril*, explaining the rationale behind Benton's anti-fascist paintings.[52] The first showing of Benton's series took place in New York City at the Associated American Artists' galleries on April 6, 1942 and was sponsored by the Office of War Information. More than 75,000 people attended the first few weeks of the exhibition and Paramount films created a newsreel of the event, which was shown in theatres across the United States. One hundred million posters and stickers were made and sent around the world. Hundreds of thousands of reproductions of the posters were made by the government.[53] The Office of War Information cancelled the exhibition shortly after the press harshly judged the paintings.[54]

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[51] Douglas Brinkley, "Painting to Sound the Alarm in the Wake of Pearl Harbor," *The New York Times* (December 8, 2003): E1.

[52] Tape was put over MacLeish's name because, after serving as Librarian of Congress, he worked as Director of the War Department's Office of War Information, which legally prohibited him from making this kind of commentary.

[53] Paul Cummings interview with Thomas Hart Benton 23/24 July, 1973 in Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Estimated 18,000,000 copies were made of these images.

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In preparation for the postwar world, which would likely have different art interests than the prewar world, Associated American Artists opened a gallery in Chicago at 816 North Michigan Avenue in 1945 to focus specifically on the sale of contemporary art (Figure 6). Frank J. Oehlschlaeger replaced the gallery's first director, Floris Ferwerda, in 1946. Lewenthal's plan for the Chicago gallery was to provide revolving exhibitions, one-man shows, and "periodic releases of the country's outstanding prints in black and white."[55]

The Chicago gallery did not generate enough profit to continue sales, however. Unlike his initial aims for the New York gallery, Lewenthal did not stress the importance of representing American artists through Associated American Artists' Chicago gallery. With this new venue came Associated American Artists' first experiment representing European as well as modern American artists. Lewenthal approached Jackson Pollock in the hopes that he would agree to embark on creating imagery for advertisements as Benton and other artists had, but Pollock was not interested.[56] This sudden change from exclusively promoting art of the Regionalists caused a major shift in Associated

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[54] The federal government feared that young soldiers would go AWOL upon seeing what the press called "bad paintings."

"There will also be excellent collections of watercolors and drawings; and facilities are provided for display of the finest sculpture the country has to offer. For those who wish to bring the lasting beauty of great art into their homes at a fraction of the cost of the originals, a group of Gelatones—the best possible facsimile reproductions—is exclusively available through these Galleries. Unlike a Museum, the Galleries of the Associated American Artists offer for purchase every work exhibited. In a sense the Galleries will be a "museum for Museums;" for Museum directors from the entire country will choose, from the paintings to be exhibited first in these Galleries, those paintings which will hang permanently upon their own walls." Associated American Artists pamphlet, 1945. Author's collection.

[56] Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock*, 409.

American Artists' focus and, as a result, several of the Regionalists terminated their contracts with Associated American Artists. Additionally, the new direction of the firm (promoting types of art other than Regionalism), in general, did not support enough revenue with the added burden of start-up costs for the Chicago gallery, which closed in 1947.

As seen, Lewenthal and Associated American Artists, from inception in 1934 until the late 1940s, strove to experiment with and diversify models of selling art. Associated American Artists' multiple approaches linked artists to diverse corporations and governmental agencies in ways that served to change the artist's relationship with his or her works of art as well as the art-buyer's and art-viewer's relationships with works of art. Lewenthal's personal motivations played a significant role in the decisions he made as an art dealer which, I have shown, also corresponded closely with the interests of the customer base toward which he targeted.

Chapter 2

Selling Art in New York City Prior to Associated American Artists' Founding

In order to test Lewenthal's claims of innovation against the historical record it is important to understand the history of selling American art in New York City from the mid-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century. The intent of this chapter is to showcase the business practices and models that were established before the founding of Associated American Artists. Though cities such as Philadelphia and Boston had established venues for selling art during this period, I focus on New York City because it was the location of Associated American Artists' first gallery and the headquarters of its catalogue sales operation. My chapter builds on previous studies, emphasizing marketing rhetoric and advertising and selling strategies.

When Associated American Artists was founded, the art world in New York City was well established and many venues were in place from which the public could purchase American art. Associated American Artists borrowed techniques, artists, and ideas from several of its contemporaries and predecessors, i.e., it was not the first to sell art through department stores, but its marketing of these methods helped make them appear unique and set them apart from other art sellers at the time.[1]

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[1] For more on the display and sale of art in department stores, see Thomas Craven, "Art and Department Stores," *New York American* 33 (January 30, 1935), and John Wanamaker, *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores* (New York: John Wanamaker, 1911).

Though frame shops, artists cooperatives, auctions, and art galleries existed in New York City prior to 1846, I begin my history with a discussion of Knoedler's International Art Union, founded in that year, because its methods of sale and operation were to prove of significant influence on the New York art world going forward.[2] Knoedler's, the New York offshoot of the famed Maison Goupil Gallery in France, was founded to publish prints and sell paintings, namely European art, in New York City. Though it focused primarily on the sale of European art, the gallery did sell American art as well. Knoedler's showed works by artists such as Frederick Church, Daniel Huntington, and William Sydney Mount. The public was pleased that there was no entrance fee, unlike many other galleries, and dealers became regular clients because they were still able to obtain the most competitive prices, which, in turn, fueled the secondary market.[3] When Knoedler's began selling photographic reproductive prints in 1858 their client base expanded exponentially.[4] Railroad barons and middle-class Americans alike were intrigued by the prints and collecting them became a phenomenon within the United States. Knoedler's success was partly due to their sales advertisements in newspapers and magazines, which drew larger crowds to their location than to places like the Century Association (which will be discussed later) or other similar clubs which did not utilize aggressive marketing techniques because the sale of art was not their primary function.

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[2] Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 33-35.

[3] G.P. Putnam and Sons, *Putnam's Magazine, Original Papers on Literature, Science, Art and National Interests* (New York: Putnam, 1869), 636.

[4] DeCourcy E. McIntosh, "*Goupil's Album:* Marketing Salon Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century." Petra Ten-Doeschate Chu, and Laurinda S. Dixon, eds. *Twenty-First-Century Perspectives on Nineteenth Century Art* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 2008), 79.

In 1849 the firm determined it would support American artists by paying them to embark on two years of study abroad. Its catalogue from the previous year explained "we desire to identify ourselves, as far as we may be encouraged, with the productions of American artists, seriously contemplating to engrave in Paris the most remarkable works of the American School of Art."[5] Knoedler's offered to send William Sydney Mount abroad several times, but the artist declined. His painting, *The Power of Music*, was the first American painting sent to Paris for engraving, however, and the resulting print sold for $5 at Knoedler's. Several of Mount's other paintings were sent to Paris for engraving as well.

In 1858 Goupil introduced the *Galerie photographique*, the first photographic series of reproductions of works of art, to his clients in Paris.[6] Knoedler's imported the line for display in their window at 170 5th Avenue (in the Madison Square area, a prominent retail and residential neighborhood around the so-called Ladies' Mile), and continually ordered more impressions of the prints as their popularity grew.[7] Timoleon Lobrichon's *L'instruction Obligatoire* was among the public's favorite of these prints. With the exception of George Bingham and James Henry Beard, all of the other artists whose works were reproduced were either French or had studied and/or worked in Paris.[8] Interestingly, Knoedler's prints often preceded a painting's appearance on the market, which enabled the print to also serve as an advertisement for the original artwork. This

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[5] Goldstein, 36.

[6] DeCourcy McIntosh, "New York's Favorite Pictures in the 1870s," *Magazine Antiques* 165: 4 (April, 2004): 3. See also McIntosh, "*Goupil's Album,"* 79.

[7] One year later, in 1859, Knoedler's moved to Broadway and 9th Street, in the center of Greenwich Village, not far from what was to be Avery's gallery a few years later.

[8] McIntosh, "New York's Favorite Pictures", 3.

practice worked well for both Goupil and Knoedler. Knoedler's clients demanded prints with such enthusiasm that the firm came to be known as one of the largest print dealers in the United States during the third quarter of the nineteenth century.[9] The selling of prints brought Knoedler's success until 1878, at which time the owner of the company died, and his successors began to rely heavily upon selling other wares, such as art books and magazines, in addition to original works of art.

Knoedler's model of selling reproductive prints, including advertising its art in popular magazines, and the success it garnered in drawing a large range of social classes to purchase its prints may have impacted Reeves Lewenthal when he devised his own business model decades later. Though it is impossible to determine whether Lewenthal actually studied Knoedler's art-selling methods, this examination of Knoedler's operative strategies highlights some of the precedents in place prior to Associated American Artists' arrival on the art scene.

Many clubs and organizations became successful in New York City during the nineteenth century. Though their direct impact on the art scene was minimal, they are worth mentioning because of the exposure they gave to American artists. William Cullen Bryant, Asher B. Durand, Winslow Homer, John Frederick Kensett, Stanford White, and Judge Charles Patrick Daly founded The Century Association in 1847 as a club for authors, artists, and amateurs of letters and the fine arts. This group evolved from The Sketch Club, which began in 1829 under the direction of William Cullen Bryant. The Association's notable collection includes many paintings by Hudson River School artists as well as genre paintings by William Sydney Mount, such as *The Power of Music*. The

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[9] Ibid.,3.

Century began to display American art in temporary exhibitions once a month in 1870. Though these exhibitions were popular amongst members, they did little to fuel the market because they did not advertise aggressively and it is possible that the general public would not have access to these displays, since the Century Club was only open to members and their guests.[10]

The formation of the American Art Association ("AAA") in 1853 provided a new option for buying art. This auction house stressed the concept of luxury and marketed itself to the upper class. This auction house made most of its profits selling modern European paintings to elite Americans. Although purchasing art through the AAA was more expensive than other means of purchasing, it carried with it a high amount of prestige. The artworks were viewed and selected for purchase on Twenty-third Street and the auctions were held at Chickering Hall, a posh and luxurious setting on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 18th Street in Union Square's entertainment district that boasted of wealth and entitlement.[11] The firm specifically promoted segregation between those who could afford the price of admission and purchase and those who could not. Auction sales were listed in local newspapers and stressed the private nature of the experience. As John Ott suggests, the AAA promoted a "heightened prominence of art consumption through print culture and public spectacle, which combined with its increased exclusivity, demonstrates that major clients wished a larger audience to witness

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[10] For more, see A. Hyatt Mayor and Mark Davis, eds., *American Art at the Century* (New York: The Century Association, 1977).

[11] John Ott, "How New York Stole the Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America," *Winterthur Portfolio* 42 (2008): 143.

but not participate in their collecting practices."[12] Works sold at AAA were promoted as objects loftier than commodities.

Currier and Ives, by contrast, aimed to promote the sale of art to all classes of people through the notion that art should be affordable and collected by all. They began their partnership, which sold hand-colored lithographs, in 1857 and closed in 1907.[13] The firm changed addresses many times throughout its existence, but began at 300 Broadway, moved to 152 Nassau and finally settled on Spruce Street between 1896 and 1907. Their business is an important one to consider because of their unique success in sales. Though historically never considered to be works of fine art, their lithographs were highly collectible and could be seen decorating homes and businesses alike both in the United States and in England. Currier and Ives advertised themselves as "Publishers of Cheap and Popular Pictures." The firm did not sell limited edition prints and, generally, only made prints if at least one hundred impressions could be projected to sell. Slower-selling impressions were discontinued and the stones were ground for other uses while better selling impressions were made with two stones to speed production and sales. Because multiple stones were often used the quality of printing varied widely.

Currier and Ives employed artists such as Fanny Palmer, George Henry Durrie, and Arthur F. Tait as well as more noteworthy artists like George Inness and Eastman Johnson to produce black and white lithographs of subjects that were American in nature. These prints, produced after paintings, could be hand-colored. The firm aimed to sell as

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[12] Ott, 147.

[13] Morton Cronin, "Currier and Ives: A Content Analysis," *American Quarterly* 4. No. 4 (1952): 317-330. See also Harry Twyford, *Currier and Ives, Printmakers to the American People* (New York: Arno, 1976); Bryan LeBeau, *Currier and Ives: America Imagined* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

many prints as possible to as large a demographic as they could. In all, the firm produced more than 7,000 different lithographs. Their prints, often showcasing subjects such as hunting, war scenes, scenes of railroad expansion, steamboats, the American West, peasant scenery, Christmas images and landscape panoramas, were sold cheaply (between five cents and three dollars or $6 for a hundred black-and-white prints) through pushcart vendors, bookstores, and prepaid mail order.

Currier and Ives' popularity, as well as its methods of sale left a lasting impression on the American art market, as evidenced by both the vast number of prints that remain today and by the adoption of its selling strategies by later dealers of prints, i.e., Associated American Artists, which also sold, among other subjects, prints of rural imagery at affordable prices in an accessible manner.

Selling Art During and After the Civil War

Some artists found it more viable to promote the sale of their own art than rely upon galleries or dealers during the second half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the best example of a group of artists taking responsibility for the promotion and sale of their own work at this time was the artists who resided in the Tenth Street Studio Building, the first building in the city devoted to provide housing exclusively for artists, such as Albert Bierstadt and William Merrit Chase. The Tenth Street Studio Building was designed by Richard Morris Hunt and constructed in 1857, just north of Washington Square Park in

Greenwich Village.[14] It served as a location for its resident artists to sell their works to the public by appointment, as advertised in magazines such as the *Crayon*, a graphic arts journal. The Tenth Street Studio also functioned as a gallery. A few times each winter, the building would open its doors to the public, giving visitors the opportunity to browse the various studios of its tenants. These "reception days" began in 1858 and continued through the end of the century. Invitations and tickets were sent and music and refreshments were provided during these receptions. These receptions were particularly useful in promoting the sale of American art at a time when dealers and galleries that heavily promoted American art were uncommon.

Since artists of the Tenth Street Studio building sold their art from their studios, the decorating of their spaces played a large role in their marketing strategies. In addition to the necessary utilitarian items required for living, artists often displayed souvenirs from travel, props, antique furniture, and their own collections of art, all of which formed a visual feast for the visitor and, ultimately, served as a signifier of the tastes and aesthetics of the artists themselves. In some cases artists would invite people to their showrooms for dinners and exhibitions, occasions that were an unexpected experience for the visitors to these elaborately decorated spaces.[15] Several of the studio's artists maintained this high attention to detail in their own homes, often country houses, which

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[14] Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building: Artist-Entrepreneurs from the Hudson River School to the American Impressionists* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1997) and, see also, Annette Blaugrund, "The Tenth Street Studio Building: A Roster, 1857-1895," *American Art Journal* 14 (1982): 64.

[15] William Merrit Chase is perhaps best known for his opulently decorated studio, but Albert Bierstadt and Frederick Church were equally interested in displaying their decorative collectibles when they built their country estates. "The evolution from simple to elaborate décor for Church is emblematic of general changes in taste from the 1860s through the 1880s and a manifestation of the emergence of the American artist as a collaborator in the decorative arts." Ibid., 58.

they also operated as studio spaces. These preferences can be attributed to the improved status of the artist, as is evidenced by their increasing ability to maintain ownership of property outside of the city in addition to their studio space in Manhattan.

The concept of The Tenth Street Studio was unique in that the space essentially functioned as both gallery and studio and the artists functioned as both artist and agent. Until this space was created artists had the option of selling art themselves, selling through a gallery, or creating art to be sold at auction. Thus, patrons were able to choose the level of attention and help they received during the buying process dependent on where they purchased their art. If the patron chose to purchase directly from the artist they would typically assume the responsibility to seek out the artist's studio, and also educate themselves on the artwork for sale.

Even the best American artists were left to promote their own work for several decades after the Civil War. Dealers played a role in the sale of art, but typically no exclusivity clauses were arranged, which meant that artists still played a large role in their self-promotion, and were unable to rely solely on their dealer for support, advertising, and display of their works. American artists thus continued to be entrepreneurs and sought to find the best methods of promoting their works while also garnering profits. Several artist associations were formed in order to call broader attention to their exhibitions. The Society of American Artists and the Ten American Painters were perhaps the most well known groups of this sort.[16]

Other American artists received considerable support from dealer Samuel Avery. Around 1860 Avery began his career, which he practiced for twenty-five years, as an engraver and publisher of engravings. William T. Walters, a Baltimore art collector, hired

[16] See William Gerdts, *Ten American Painters* (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 1990).

Avery to assist him in developing a collection of American art. Walters fled to Paris in 1861 to avoid arrest when it became known that he sympathized with the South, but retained contact with Avery, sending him works of art to sell in New York. From that point forward Avery worked as a dealer and opened his own gallery in 1864, located on Broadway and 4th Street. He received financial backing from Walters, who intended to help foster an interest in American art. Avery's experience as an engraver and publisher helped him establish a rapport with several leading artists of the time.[17] Collectors, notably John Taylor Johnston, soon began to seek Avery's advice. In 1867, Avery served as Commissioner of the American Fine Arts section at the Paris Universal Exposition. Artists such as Bierstadt, Church, Homer, Inness and Whistler were represented, but reviews of the group were disappointing. The only American painting awarded a medal was Frederic Church's *Niagara*, which received a silver medal.

In 1868 Avery moved his gallery to a larger space at 86-88 Fifth Avenue, on the edge of Union Square Park, then a very high-profile neighborhood with excellent pedestrian visibility for a storefront. Within the same year he held two auctions, which included watercolor paintings and works he had purchased while traveling in Europe. One year later he auctioned off his gallery's entire inventory and gave the business to his son, Sam, Jr. Soon after, Avery was approached by a group of Union League men with the intent of developing a museum of art in New York City. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 and Avery served as a trustee from 1872 until 1904. Avery's contribution to the New York art market was most helpful in that he helped foster an

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[17] See Madeleine Fidell Beaufort and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Some Views on Art Buying in New York in the 1870s and 1880s," *The Oxford Art Journal* 5:1 (1982): 48-53.

interest in collecting even if he eventually strayed from his original path of focusing primarily on American painters.

The move from artists maintaining sole responsibility for promoting and selling their works to the inclusion of the third party (either the dealer or the auction house) was a gradual one and, even in the later part of the 19th century, some artists preferred to handle all of their business alone. As the number of artists and their levels of production increased throughout the 1880s and 1890s, however, it became more common for artists to have dealers handle the sale and promotion of their work than it had in previous decades. The public came to prefer purchasing from dealers (perhaps because of greater variety of work or because it was less personal) toward the end of the century and fewer artists maintained the responsibility of handling the business side of things entirely on their own.

In 1883 a group of American artists founded the American Art Union in order to promote the sale of their art. American collectors of this time still favored European art. The American Art Union's formation intended to counter this trend. Though its existence was short-lived (the American Art Union shut down in 1885), its founding created an opportunity for its artists to promote their work in a more commercial environment.[18] A group of artists, as opposed to businessmen, ran the American Art Union, which offered its subscribers a chance to win a work of art through the group's lottery system, a business model not unlike the earlier American Art-Union. The latter was founded in

[18] Craig Houser, "Disharmony and Discontent: Reviving the American Art-Union and the Market for United States Art in the Gilded Age," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 11, Issue 2 (2012). http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/summer12/craig-houser-disharmony-and-discontent (Accessed 23 July, 2012).

1838 as the Apollo Art-Union, but renamed the American Art-Union in 1847.[19] The later-formed American Art Union attempted to take on a larger role in expanding the market for American art by hosting exhibitions in its New York gallery on 14th Street and planning traveling exhibitions as well. However, its location in what was then considered the arts district of New York City was nonetheless unfavorable because its fourth floor location offered low visibility to foot traffic.

Though the AAU existed for only one year it, maintained its journal, *Art Union,* until 1885. The journal was influential by boosting nationalism in art and attempting to broaden the art market. They also sought to make the public aware that many dealers still heavily promoted the sale of European art. The AAU dissolved for the same reason its predecessor shut down—its lottery system was found to be illegal.

The dealer William Macbeth eventually embraced this trend toward supporting American art. Macbeth opened his gallery at 237 Fifth Avenue in New York City in 1892. From its inception through 1898, the Macbeth Gallery sold primarily European art.[20] By the turn of the century, however, when the demand for American paintings increased considerably, he became dedicated to promoting solely American art, exhibiting artists such as Arthur B. Davies, Homer Dodge Martin, Alexander Wyant,

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[19] The American Art-Union ("AAU") was run by businessmen and offered European Old Master works through its lottery system. Ultimately the AAU dissolved because its lottery practices violated state laws, as determined by the state Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals.
See Lyndel Saunders King, "The Art Union of London, 1837-1912," (PhD dissertation, The University of Minnesota, 1982); Joy Sperling, "Art, Cheap and Good: The Art Union in England and the United States," *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide* 1 (2002). http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/spring02/196--qart-cheap-and-goodq-the-art-union-in-england-and-the-united-states-184060 (Accessed 30 July, 2012).

[20] The demand for American paintings increased considerably during this time, as suggested by Kevin Murphy, "Economics of Style: The Business Practices of American Artists and the Structure of the Art Market, 1850-1910," (PhD dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005), 87.

George Inness, Winslow Homer, and several of the Hudson River School painters as well as many American Impressionist artists.[21] Macbeth's was the first firm to specialize successfully in the marketing and sale of American art and his gallery supplied many of the works bought by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[22] Macbeth traveled the country establishing relationships with dealers and museum curators. From 1896 to 1930, he published *Art Notes*, which focused on the New York art scene.[23] In this journal, he published information about the artists he featured, his own commentary about current art exhibitions, and issues relevant to the art scene at the time. *Art Notes* was more than simply a marketing strategy, it was written in a tone all classes could understand, sent around the country, and it helped fulfill Macbeth's goal to democratize the art market.[24]

In his April 1897 issue of *Art Notes* he stated: "I must confess I have never had much sympathy for the collector who buys pictures in the hope of seeing their value increase in the course of time; and yet why should a man not buy pictures as an investment?"[25] Just one decade later he commented on the profitability of American art over that of its European counterparts, indicating he now saw art collecting as more of a business than a hobby.[26] Macbeth's commentary on the issue of art as a commodity

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[21] Ibid., 87.

[22] Goldstein, 59, 73.

[23] Victor G. Wexler, "Creating a Market in American Art: The Contribution of the Macbeth Gallery," *Journal of American Studies* 25, No. 2 (1991): 252.

[24] Ibid, 253.

[25] Goldstein, 65.

[26] "The greatest change in the attitude of the public towards American pictures has occurred in the past four or five years…. It has been shown in the auction room that well selected American pictures have been very profitable investments, while on the other hand the average foreign picture, as a dividend earner, has proved to be a snare and a delusion….So it seems reasonably certain that the buyers who think more of the

heightened collectors' awareness of the value and the power of strategic buying. This led consumers to think carefully about their purchases as well as their role in the marketplace.

Macbeth's gallery was located on Fifth Avenue near Madison and serves as a good example of the trend of many art galleries moving slightly north to midtown Manhattan and, eventually, closer to the wealthy neighborhood that formed around Central Park in the late nineteenth century. Avery moved his gallery space several blocks north near Union Square Park on Fifth Avenue, a prominent and impressive retail area filled with high-end boutiques, clothiers, and impressive residences. Artists' studios were generally located below Canal Street and lower Broadway remained a favorite area for framers, dealers, and artists to create and sell their wares. As the nineteenth century drew to a close and more galleries opened in the early part of the twentieth century, art dealers paid higher prices for locations that carried a certain amount of prestige, such as areas near Park Avenue and 57th Street, garnering easy advertising as tourists and residents passed by their large storefront windows.

Selling art in the 20th Century

Alfred Stieglitz, one of Macbeth's fellow art dealers in New York City, also championed the cause of promoting American art. Stieglitz, a German Jew from a privileged and well-educated family, began his career as a photographer and enthusiastically endorsed the legitimacy of photography as a worthy and valuable art

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money value of a picture than of its artistic quality will in future be found competing with the few who have always recognized the good in native art." *Art Notes* 19 (April 1902): 190-91.

form when he became vice-president of The Camera Club of New York. As contributing author to the club's journal, *Camera Notes*, he developed a name for himself through his technical and critical writings. Stieglitz continued to promote his photography throughout the first decade of the twentieth century and, in 1905, opened his gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue, named *The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession* for the Photo-Secessionist movement he helped to initiate several years earlier. Initially the gallery focused on exhibiting photography and it was successful in doing so, drawing fifteen thousand visitors during its first year.[27] Soon afterward, however, in 1907, illustrator Pamela Coleman Smith showed her work at the gallery and the exhibition's success marked a turning point for Stieglitz, for after this time he became a promoter of modern art.

Financial troubles caused him to close his gallery in April 1908; upon reopening later that year, he renamed the gallery *291*, in reference to its address on Fifth Avenue, a location in the heart of Manhattan. Stieglitz immediately set to work organizing exhibitions of art, photography, and sculptures with the intention of creating a dialogue amongst European and American artists of all varieties. 291 was perhaps the most productive venue in New York City for showcasing the works of modern artists such as Marius de Zayas, Marsden Hartley, John Marin and Alfred Maurer. When 291 closed in 1917, Stieglitz showed the works of these artists and others at galleries owned by Stephane Bourgeois, Charles Daniel, and Newman Montross along with the Weyhe Gallery and the Anderson Gallery.

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[27] Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (NY: Little, Brown, 2005): 11–22, 214, 281, 382, 400.

Though Stieglitz staged exhibits at 291 he suggested his gallery was a noncommercial enterprise and he was not an art dealer.[28] 291's secretary, Marie Rapp, is quoted as saying "291 was not a gallery for selling things; it was to show the world what was being done by Americans."[29] William Inness Homer suggests that Stieglitz continued to view 291 as a laboratory "but it gradually became a kind of private club devoted to an artistic elite. More and more, he rejected commercialism, especially the kind he found in the New York galleries established in the wake of the Armory Show."[30]

The Association of American Painters and Sculptors, under president Arthur B. Davies, organized the International Exhibition of Modern Art in 1913, often referred to simply as "The Armory Show" for its venue at the 69th Regiment Army headquarters in New York City. The month-long Armory Show was the first large-scale exposure of avant-garde art to American audiences. While the exhibition garnered ridicule and negativity in the press and even scorn from President Theodore Roosevelt, it helped to shape the direction of new American art.

Several of the artists Stieglitz represented grew weary of the lack of sales due to his disinterest in marketing art. The Modern Gallery at 500 Fifth Avenue was opened in 1915 by Marius De Zayas, Agnes Ernst Meyer, Paul Haviland and Francis Picabia, who attempted to sell their own art in the "spirit of 291." Stieglitz became even less interested in promoting or selling art since increasingly "he saw his role as spiritual nurturer of creative genius, not as dealer. True art, according to Stieglitz, is created as a composite

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[28] William Inness Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1983), 79

[29] Interview with Marie Rapp Boursalt, 13 Jan., 1973, quoted in Homer, 80.

[30] Homer,173. Known for being the first large-scale exposure of avant-garde art, the exhibition garnered ridicule and negativity in the press and even scorn from President Theodore Roosevelt.

spiritual and scientific search for truth that cannot be compromised by conventions of taste imposed by the marketplace."[31] Stieglitz warned his artists of the danger of allowing the concern for selling their art to impact its creation.[32]

In order to facilitate the business, the Modern Gallery proposed a very different method of sale and, unlike Stieglitz, actively promoted the artwork represented.

> We feel that the phase of our work which has resulted in arousing an interest in contemporary art in America has reached a point where, if it is to fulfill itself, it must undertake the affirmative solution of a problem which it has already negatively solved. We have already demonstrated that it is possible to avoid commercialism by eliminating it. But this demonstration will be infertile unless it be followed by another: namely, that the legitimate function of commercial intervention—that of paying its own way while bringing the producers and consumers of art into a relation of mutual service—can be freed from the chicanery of self-seeking….it is the purpose of the Modern Gallery to further, by these means, the development of contemporary art both here and abroad, and to pay its own way by reasonable charges.[33]

Stieglitz maintained association with the Modern Gallery primarily because he was interested in the economic welfare of its artists with whom he had become friends. For years he had given his artists stipends, but was unable to continue this practice. He ended his relationship with the Modern Gallery only months later on account of his frustration with the emphasis on commercial success in the gallery's priorities.

The Modern Gallery was successful with the public, but it was not financially profitable, largely due to the fact that De Zayas was not in the practice of keeping records. When the Modern Gallery closed De Zayas opened his own gallery, the De

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[31] Homer, 96, 141-42.

[32] Sue Davidson Lowe, *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), 132.

[33] *Camera Work*, no. 48 (1916): 63-64.

Zayas Gallery, which lasted from 1919 to 1921, with financial help from Walter and Louise Arensberg, who were major collectors of modern art.[34]

Though neither the American Gallery nor the De Zayas Gallery held a lasting place in the New York primary art market, their outgrowth from 291 brought important issues regarding the commodification of art to light. The dramatic juxtaposition between Stieglitz's careful, introverted and spiritual promotion of the spirit of American art and the beliefs of the Modern Gallery owners that art could be sold as a commodity, allows for a privileged view into the climate of the primary art market in the years following the Armory Show.

The Anderson Galleries, located on Park Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street in New York City and known for selling modern European art, invited Stieglitz to organize a monumental exhibition on American art in 1925, which he named Alfred Stieglitz Presents Seven Americans: 159 Paintings, Photographs, and Things, Recent and Never Before Publicly Shown by Arthur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Charles Demuth, Paul Strand, Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz. The show ran for three weeks and was well attended, but only one work of art sold—a small painting by O'Keeffe. Stieglitz exhibited at the gallery in a single room set aside for him until he decided to open his new gallery, the Intimate Gallery, a few months later.

The Intimate Gallery, a gallery space Stieglitz borrowed from Mitchell Kennerley, owner of the Anderson Galleries, was also devoted to selling and promoting American art and lasted for four years until the building in which it was housed was torn down. As a replacement, Stieglitz opened An American Place in 1929 on Madison Avenue at Fifty-

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[34] Marius De Zayas, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York,* ed*.,* Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 131-132.

third Street, where he devoted his space to showing and selling artwork made by John Marin, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, Paul Strand, and Georgia O'Keeffe. Conceived as an artists' cooperative and communal meeting place, Stieglitz's last gallery became more of an elitist sanctuary.[35] The core group of artists represented at An American Place looked to the American landscape for inspiration in the 1930s, and sought to draw their viewer into what would become iconic representations of America, i.e., Charles Demuth's *My Egypt* (1927) and Stieglitz's own *From My Window at the Shelton, North* (1931). While Stieglitz continued to steadfastly support this group of seven artists, mounting regular exhibitions at his gallery, he maintained a rather idealistic stance on American art, promoting that it could remake American society. Sarah Greenough suggests Stieglitz endeavored for American art to replace American society's "materialistic values with more spiritual ones" which, during the Great Depression, "seemed hollow and out-of-touch with the dire economic realities of daily life."[36] An American Place closed in 1946 just weeks before Stieglitz died.

The excitement of the Armory Show had prompted several other galleries focusing on American art to open in New York City. The Rehn Gallery (1917-78) was established by Frederick Knox Martin Rehn at 6 West 50th Street and represented the following artists: Edward Hopper, Elsie Driggs, George Biddle, Reginald Marsh, George Luks, and Charles Burchfield.[37] Frederick Rehn's gallery was known for hosting Edward Hopper's first solo artist exhibition and continued to represent him throughout his

[35] Sarah Greenough, *Modern Art and America, Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 328.

[36] Ibid., 322.

[37] In 1930 the gallery moved one block south to 683 Fifth Avenue.

career.[38] The Ferargil Gallery (1915-63) was founded by Frederic Newlin Price and Thomas H. Russell and located at 63 East Fifty-Seventh Street. It was known for being the location of Grant Wood's first one-artist show as well as for representing Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry before Reeves Lewenthal lured them over to Associated American Artists.[39]

Edith Halpert, a Ukrainian immigrant, shared similar intentions with Stieglitz in promoting and selling American art. Halpert opened The Downtown Gallery in 1926 on West Thirteenth Street in Greenwich Village.[40] Her offerings included Peggy Bacon, Stuart Davis, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Charles Sheeler, and William Zorach as well as American folk art, which she eventually sold through her business, the American Folk Art Gallery. In the 1930s the Downtown Gallery represented a large selection of American Scene paintings from artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Jack Levine, and Ben Shahn. She was never a direct competitor with Lewenthal and Associated American Artists because she represented different artists and media.[41]

As mentioned in chapter 1, relatively little scholarly literature has been written on the trends in art sales in the United States. Even less discussed are the reasons for the changes that took place from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. The procedures

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[38] Catherine S. Gaines, *A Finding Aid to the Frank K.M Rehn Galleries Records, 1858-1869,* in the Archives of American Art. http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/frank-km-rehn-galleries-records-9193/more (Accessed 2 December, 2011).

[39] Goldstein, 139.

[40] The Downtown Gallery was relocated to 43 East Fifty-First Street in 1940 and then to the basement of the Ritz Tower Hotel on Park Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street in 1965.

[40] According to Halpert, the sale of folk art was the most profitable portion of her business. Goldstein, 142.

[41] Though less successful, the ACA Gallery (American Contemporary Artists), which was founded by Herman Baron in 1932, also represented American Scene painters, among them were Philip Evergood, Robert Gwathmey, Anton Refregier, Joseph Solman, Moses Sawyer, and William Gropper.

established for selling art, as mentioned throughout, included the artist acting as his or her own agent, selling through their studio or consigning their art to retail establishments (such as frame shops) to be sold in an environment that may not have been geared specifically toward the selling of art. Artists could also opt to hire agents to market and sell their art, or to work directly with art dealers and galleries. Some artists even created artwork to be sold in auction houses or through vendors such as Currier and Ives, who were responsible for direct dealings with the public. While it is obvious that many of the new directions artists took while trying to gain visibility for their art can be attributed to experimentation, we must look at the overarching patterns established through time in order to determine what prompted many of the directional changes that occurred when artists were struggling to make a living on the sale of their art alone.

A dramatic and divergent path in the course of the market for American art occurred from the mid-1930s onward. The art scene in New York City immediately prior to Associated American Artists founding was growing at a rapid pace, offering both longtime and budding collectors a plethora of American and European art for sale. Purchasers of art also grew increasingly aware of international trends in art sales as magazines and newspapers continued to report on such news. Associated American Artists played a significant role in the changing market. Part of the firm's distinction is credited to its arrival on the art scene during a time of major economic upheaval during the Great Depression. A discussion of Associated American Artists' model of marketing and sales, as well as the products they sold comprises the balance of this dissertation.

Chapter 3

Associated American Artists' Marketing and Sales Strategies

This chapter explores the audience toward which Associated American Artists marketed. By examining the purchasing and collecting habits of the social classes in New York City of the 1930s, we gain a clearer understanding of the reasons why Associated American Artists' prints were enticing to them. Additionally, this chapter discusses the subject matter and stylistic elements of Regionalist art and highlights its appeal to the firm's audience and its founder alike.

Part of the success of Associated American Artists can be attributed to its ability to tap into a class of consumers who typically only made an occasional art purchase, and historically were not accustomed to creating collections of art. Art historian A. Dierdre Robson provides an explanation of the difference between collecting and purchasing art: "Collecting in the true sense continues over an extended period, and means acquiring works with some regularity; it also implies that the person concerned has the requisite knowledge or educational experience to make purchases, a certain level of wealth, and a willingness to spend relatively large amounts of money."[1] Robson continues,

> If one looks first at the question of socioeconomic status, one finds that collecting is generally restricted to a sector of the population that has a relatively high disposable income or wealth: ergo, the upper and possibly upper-middle classes. In the United States, in the mid-twentieth century, this equated with the upper reaches of the top income quintile (those with incomes in excess of $10,000). Below these strata, the level of disposable income is not generally sufficient to allow collecting.[2]

[1]A. Dierdre Robson, *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure: The Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 135.

Purchasers of art, then, would qualify as those people whose disposable income was above subsistence, but not large enough to participate in the sustained activity of collecting art. Associated American Artists' success was achieved through Lewenthal's keen observation of his target audience, which consisted of those who made purchases, but did not necessarily form collections of art. Eventually, however, Lewenthal suggested his customers purchase several of his prints to be hung in groupings, which, he explained, would help solve home decoration problems. He demonstrated a good understanding of this audience's interests and purchasing habits when he implemented and developed strategies for gaining the attention and patronage of a wide range of the American public. At present, there are no studies of the art-collecting patterns of the middle and lower classes prior to Associated American Artist's founding, hence their buying patterns continue to be either generalized or ignored among scholars. An exploration of these issues offers clarity for understanding art-buying and selling patterns in America of the 1930s and 1940s as well as advertising ideas and consumer goods within this period.

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As stated earlier, Reeves Lewenthal's working class immigrant background helped further his interest in adopting the American lifestyle and promoting the nationalistic American style of the Regionalist artists. He implicitly rejected socially-

[2] Ibid.

charged artwork created by artists prominent in New York graphic circles.[3] Lewenthal saw the opportunity to promote the sale of art to a larger audience than the smaller circles of wealthy collectors, and, because of his business and personal interests, which were rooted in his background as a press agent and publicist for various art agencies, he became very successful in doing so.

To underscore his marketing strategy of selling art to a wider audience, Lewenthal included the following explanation in several Associated American Artists catalogues:

> Love of art is not confined to any class or any place. It is innate. You may say that a liking for works of art can be acquired, but that is inaccurate. More truly, it may be awakened. One who has not a taste for fine things is not likely to ever desire them, no matter how great his learning may be, regardless of the cultural influences surrounding him. On the other hand, his surroundings may be culturally barren, he may have no formal education, and yet his love for art may be deep, and only to be requited by owning works of art, or even a single work of art. The main point is that to admire an artist's creation, and want to possess it, is not related to any type of person or any locality. It can exist in anyone and in any circumstance. The recognition of this fact is one main reason why Associated American Artists won an immediate success.[4]

Ever the crafty corporate manager, Lewenthal is here quick to identify and capture a prospective client base by reinforcing their innate ability to recognize the value of art. Through cleverly placed advertisements in magazines and newspapers and through the sale of art in department stores, Lewenthal attempted to make it easy for all classes of people to collect and purchase art. He wanted to turn occasional or potential purchasers

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[3] Interview with Lana Reeves 9 November, 2006, Author's collection. As I show, Lewenthal remained committed to promoting Regionalist art more than any other artistic style throughout the period of this study. I discuss the exception to this trend later in this chapter.

[4] *Patron's Supplement,* Associated American Artists, n.d. Author's collection.

of art into collectors of art, and he wanted to meet them at their socio-economic level, proving collecting was not defined by income alone.

Using accessible phrasing and populist sensibility, this message was repeated by Associated American Artists in its seasonal catalogues by emphasizing not only the importance of purchasing and collecting art, but also the ease with which all people should be able to do so. This innovative strategy of strong public outreach was apparently unprecedented in the historic record to this date. Art dealers did not typically delve into such editorializing upon the merits of collecting as an activity for wealthy and middling audiences alike, although William Macbeth is an important precedent. Within his own catalogues, Lewenthal professed that collecting his artists' artwork would fill a cultural void.

Lewenthal, as tastemaker and dealer, was also playing the role of educator. By selling prints for five dollars and marketing them to a wide audience, Lewenthal endeavored to bridge the gap between the wealthy and the rest of the population through the sale of something many Americans, even during the Depression, could afford. Modest Americans, so Lewenthal's logic went, could feel on par with the upper class if they too had a collection of art even if the art they collected was not in the same vein.

Lewenthal's reasoning resonates with what advertising historian Roland Marchand called "the parable of the Democracy of Goods," an advertising strategy used in the late 1920s. The Democracy of Goods illustrated to consumers that they were able to afford products (i.e., Listerine toothpaste, silk stockings, Hoover vacuum cleaners) that were also purchased by the very rich.[5] A 1931 advertisement for Pond's Soap, for

example, contains images of high profile, wealthy American women, including Gloria Vanderbilt, Anne Morgan, Violet Astor, etc., and gives descriptions of their impressive pedigrees as well as their attractive complexions. It thus implied to viewers that if they too use Pond's Soap they would have much in common with these wealthy women (Figure 7). Lewenthal's rhetoric and practices suggested to readers that by acquiring an item also purchased by the upper class, the middle and lower classes could feel as if they were climbing the social ladder, if only by what one could call 'retail association'. His espousal of this philosophy is clear in his democratic marketing practices.

Class Dynamics and Associated American Artists

Art historian Erika Doss suggests that Lewenthal's intended audience was the middle class, while Lewenthal's rhetoric stressed that he was making art affordable and accessible to "all" classes. Responding to the title of the 1940 *Newsweek* article, "Nobody too Poor to Buy a Masterpiece," that described Associated American Artists' program, Doss explained "Now middle-class Americans could purchase and display modern art, turning their homes into veritable domestic museums."[6] Doss uses the term "middle class" without offering a definition or economic profile to differentiate their lifestyle, purchasing habits, or education from the upper or lower classes of the 1930s and 1940s. In order to understand best the audience Reeves Lewenthal targeted throughout his marketing campaigns, I will discuss what has loosely been defined as the "middle

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[5] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 292.

[6] Erika Doss, "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958," *Winterthur Portfolio* 26 (1991): 151.

class," with a focus on New York City in the 1930s to be consistent with the geographic framework of this study.

Defining this blanket term has notoriously eluded historians since the shifting structure of the social classes in the United States has not traditionally followed what many scholars have considered to be the standard for judging class distinction provided by the scholarship of Karl Marx. Membership of the middle class cannot be easily defined by a study of income, source of income, profession, educational status, land ownership, use of etiquette, the relationship of this group of people to other social classes, or even a combination of all of these elements although these are significant factors. Determining the boundaries of the middle class in the 1930s is an even greater challenge because the Great Depression significantly altered the lifestyle of a large segment of the United States population, pushing people across class boundaries and, mostly downwards.

The creation of the New Deal in the late 1930s helped differentiate the middle class from the lower class when the middle class saw a rise in wages and more regular employment, two elements that further distinguished them from the lower class.[7] The creation of income tax, which was made permanent by the 16th Amendment to the Constitution in 1913 and by the 1930's had developed more than fifty tax brackets, further served to both define and confound who fell into the category of middle class.[8] In 1932 taxes were raised and the lowest earners were taxed four percent, up from one and a

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[7] For more information see Lloyd W. Warner, *Social Class in America: A Manual of Procedure for the Measurement of Social Status* (New York: Harper, 1960).
Paul Fussell, *Class: A Guide through the American Status System* (New York: Harper and Row, 1996).

[8] http://www.loc.gov/rr/business/hottopic/irs_history.html (Accessed 19 December, 2011).
The earners of the lowest tax bracket (up to $3,999.00/annual) were not charged a surtax. All earners were eligible for the same deductions (spouses and dependents).

half percent while the top of the scale saw an increase from twenty-five percent to sixty-three percent.[9] The top rate income tax was applied to income over $5 million dollars, in compliance with the Wealth Tax Act of 1935, and only had one payee—John D. Rockefeller. The middle class fell somewhere into the wide range between these two brackets.

Neither does the average reported income in the United States in 1934, which was $1,506.00, help us define the middle class, as wages were inconsistent in the volatile financial climate of the early thirties. For reference, a loaf of bread cost $0.08 and eggs were $0.33 per dozen. The average hourly wage for workers in finance, insurance, and real estate was $0.78, and $0.49 for construction workers in 1935.[10]

American culture in general, and more specifically in New York City, became increasingly consumer-oriented, especially after the New Deal's wage increase took effect. The possession of funds to consume non-essentials, which was achieved by many more Americans during this period, is often considered one of the hallmarks of middle class.[11] The popularity of the department store created an environment that beckoned people to spend more time in the city, which, in turn, established the opportunity for people to take notice of, and adopt, various shopping and lifestyle habits based on the examples set by the rapidly expanding consumer environment thrust upon them. These lifestyle habits, while less concrete than tax brackets, may serve to best establish a set of parameters within which the middle class of 1930s New York City can be bound.

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[9] James Gwartney, Richard L. Stroup, Russell S. Sobel, and David MacPherson, *Economics: Private and Public Choice* (Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning, 2006), 324.

[10] www.bls.gov (Accessed 10 March, 2011).

[11] See Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 35-36.

Retail merchandising in New York City in the 1930s exposed people to a multitude of opportunities to define their social standing. Simply by virtue of awareness of the décor and retail offerings in department stores, New Yorkers were educated on the trends that today's social historians have used to define their habits and, as a result, their social standing. A matching set of silver-plated flatware, for example, "became a standard possession of the American town dweller. This act of ownership was a way to consider oneself part of a larger group, and became an identifier of a group sharing such rules of etiquette," because restaurants, hotels, and department store cafes in New York City, and other major towns, maintained accounts with large flatware manufacturers such as Reed and Barton.[12] Time spent in hotels, department stores, and clubs introduced people to a preference for certain lifestyle habits as well, such as private bathing chambers, which economic historians Bledstein and Johnson suggest were "increasingly granted a designated space of their own within the middle-class American home, and large investments were made in the fixtures that furnished these rooms."[13] Thus, middle class standing was not achieved by mere financial assets but also by the outward exhibition of consumptive capability.

Cultural activities, such as participation in the Book of the Month Club, listening to radio programs centered on literary criticism, exposure to symphonic music, and collecting full-color posters from art magazines have been cited as defining the middle class of the 1930s.[14] These opportunities, especially successful because of the new

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[12] Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston, *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 178.

[13] Ibid.

consumer mentality that arose in the early twentieth century, made various forms of both "high" and "low" art and culture accessible to a broad range of the public.

Because members of the upper class and the upper strata of the lower class had "middle class" habits, such as participating in book clubs, listening to educational radio, or making "middle class" purchases, bracketing the classes along these characteristics is problematic. For example, owning a house with a parlor may be said to signal upper class status, but many middle class homes also included a parlor. Close examination of the contents of these parlors is more telling of the social class of the homeowner, specifically if the parlor includes items to be used in leisure time, such as instruments, various types of furniture, books, or curios. The presence of leisure time is a helpful indicator of social standing as it indicates the lack of a need to maintain difficult working hours. Unlike material objects, leisure time cannot be purchased, although income allows it, e.g. hiring servants to take care of household chores, and therefore can serve as a defining factor in class stratification, however difficult to measure.

While acknowledging the difficulties of clearly defining the middle class, for the purposes of this dissertation, I have taken the middle class of the 1930s to be those people whose leisure time was not large, but which was often spent in pursuit of the many cultural activities that were offered in New York in the 1930s; whose income allowed a modest ability to employ household help; and whose retail habits were partly determined by their interest in emulating the consumption pattern of the upper class. It is important to recognize that no concrete definition for this social class exists and social historians

[14] Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 5.

continue to seek material that will shed light on the lifestyle trends, buying habits, and educational and career accomplishments of this group.

A discussion of the philosophies of both Reeves Lewenthal and Thorstein Veblen, a scholar well known for formally linking art with the ownership of luxuries, sheds light on Lewenthal's point of view it was somewhat similar to that of Veblen. Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" to highlight patterns of art collecting among the wealthy. His theories, published as *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899, explained the motive of those who purchased art in order to signal their place in the upper-class segment of society, and to show further that their status afforded them sufficient leisure time for the education required to pursue an interest in art collecting. Though Veblen's theories were published decades before Reeves Lewenthal founded Associated American Artists, I believe they maintain relevance for analyzing the audience that Lewenthal marketed. Veblen cited two motives for the consumption of conspicuous goods: "invidious comparison" and "pecuniary emulation." The first situation describes the practice of the very rich making unnecessarily expensive purchases to distinguish themselves from members of the lower class and emerging middle class, while the second action occurs when a member of the middle or lower class consumes conspicuously in order to appear as though he or she is a member of the upper class.

Lewenthal, however, suggested that people do not need money or education to appreciate or purchase art. For Lewenthal, art transcended potential class boundaries and he reinforced this notion within his marketing campaigns in order to sell his art to the largest possible audience. And yet, despite his philosophical repudiation of the necessity for someone to have leisure time to appreciate art, Lewenthal capitalized on the practice

of pecuniary emulation, in which middle-class parvenus sought to introduce a touch of affordable upper-class distinction into their homes via "high art." This social adoption of one class's pursuit by another seems to have driven Lewenthal's marketing scheme. Understood through Veblen's theory of pecuniary emulation and the practice of conspicuous consumption, the "middle class" of the 1930's seems, in some cases, to have attempted to bridge the gap to the upper class. This bridging was done, in part, by purchasing art.

At this juncture it is also helpful to consider the theme of elevating one's social status by purchasing art, as Lewenthal suggested was possible, through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's philosophy of art consumption. Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), a French anthropologist, philosopher, and sociologist, asserted that "aesthetic stances….are opportunities to experience or assert one's position in social space, as a rank to be upheld or a distance to be kept."[15] This notion that owning or purchasing art was a signifier of social status was established long before Associated American Artists' founding, and was reinforced when some of America's notably wealthy individuals (John D. Rockefeller, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, J.P. Morgan, and Duncan Phillips, etc.) began to collect art (generally Old Masters or Impressionist paintings in emulation of their European peers) and their pursuits were widely reported in the press.[16] In order to establish commonality with such groups, members of the lower stratum of the upper class and, to some extent,

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[15]Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction—A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (New York: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1984), 57.

[16] Robson, 138.
The Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 195: 58 reported J.P. Morgan's purchase of a Vermeer painting for $100,000 in 1922. This is just one reporting of many of his purchases, which were equaled by other business magnates and wealthy socialites mentioned by Robson.

members of the middle class, purchased and collected art on a much more modest scale, in emulation of the class above them. A. Deirdre Robson suggests:

> To signal an acceptance of the values of the group, an individual participates in the cultural activities or acquires the kind of objects associated with the social circles into which he or she hopes to move. A kind of social climbing, it succeeds because of the possibility of art as a signifier of social cohesion and also of a special kind of elite cultural status. These attributes of arts consumption became particularly significant in the United States with respect to modern art once its support was noticeable among at least a few socially prestigious families, such as the Rockefellers and Whitneys.[17]

The upper class demonstrated a varied set of art-collecting habits during the 1930s and selected their purchases based on a multitude of factors, i.e., some collected artwork while vacationing abroad, some collected under the guidance of a dealer from whom they purchased, others collected artwork that appealed to them aesthetically, etc. Robson provides numerous detailed descriptions of the types of art purchased by the upper class in the 1930s and does not suggest the existence of dominant trends among this group.

Between 1940 and 1941 art sales in New York City rose. Robson suggests that Old Master works remained the most sought-after, and that Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings continued to garner high prices. The presence of European émigrés in the United States explains the lack of more dramatic changes to the preferences exhibited by the upper class in their art-buying habits and the continued penchant for European art. European émigrés constituted approximately one-third of all art purchasers in New York City.[18] In order to avoid war in Europe, they escaped to the United States—namely New York, between 1939 and 1941. They purchased art as an easily convertible asset with the hope that they would someday return to Europe. Their

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[17] Ibid., 138.

[18] Ibid., 220.

buying habits did not change once they came to America and remained centered on Old Masters and French nineteenth-century painting. In turn, wealthy Americans emulated these habits and chose to purchase art instead of investing in stocks.[19]

The sale of American art varied at this time as exemplified by the sale of both Grant Wood's *Parson Weem's Fable* (1939) and Thomas Hart Benton's painting, *Persephone* (1939), for $10,000 in 1940.[20] These prices are not reflective of typical native artists' sales figures, however, as evidenced by the pricing of Edward Hopper, Charles Burchfield, and Charles Scheeler, whose works sold between $750 to $3500.[21] Purchases of American art continued to rise in the 1930s and, when the United States entered World War II greater numbers of wealthy Americans purchased art.

In New York City, Americans outnumbered Europeans in the purchase of art in general. Improvement in the U.S. economy, due to America's entry into the war, allowed for an increase in personal wealth.[22] Wartime supply controls impacted the purchases and caused rationing in some sectors of the consumer economy, but art, jewelry, and other luxury goods were not influenced and thus more money was spent on these items.

When trade links with continental Europe were severed, American art sales escalated. This was due, at least in part, to the inability of dealers to obtain easily European art. Native-born artists were thus featured in New York gallery exhibits and

[19] Ibid., 221.

[20] *Life*, (February 19, 1940): 32.

[21] Robson, 224.

[22] Ibid., 221.

constituted higher sales at this time. In fact, sales of American art increased 400% between 1942 and 1944.[23]

In 1944 art critic Aline Louchheim suggested that new art collectors from the upper middle class were making a large impact on the art market, as much as up to one-third of all purchases.[24] The middle class's disposable income appears to have stayed beneath $500 for purchases of art, which narrowed the scope of availability in terms of the type of art they could buy within that price bracket.[25]

Though five dollars in 1934 was still a considerable amount for many Americans to pay for a work of art, nonetheless, many people were willing to purchase Associated American Artists' prints, which were much more affordable than, for example, Rembrandt's painting, *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer* (1653), which sold in 1936 for $590,000.[26] I contend that Lewenthal's strategy with Associated American Artists was to access the desire for esteem on the part of the wider public and convince his audience that owning a work of art would forge a bond between the middle class and the very wealthy.

As I have demonstrated, the upper-class art collectors of the 1930s and 1940s showed favoritism towards collecting European art and, in a few cases, contemporary American art. This undeniable trend does not appear to have undermined Lewenthal's attempts to forge a bond between purchasers and collectors of his Regionalist American art and the members of the upper class who purchased other types of art. Nowhere in his

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[23] Aline Louchheim, "Who Buys What in the Picture Boom," *Art News* 43 (1944-1945): 14.

[24] Louchheim, 14.

[25] Robson, 223.

[26] http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/110001844 (Accessed 9 December, 2011).
$5.00 in 1934 is equivalent to $85.85 in 2012.

advertising copy does he allude to knowledge of the purchasing habits of the upper class. Whether or not he did, in fact, have knowledge of the upper class's interest in art collecting, the important point is that he suggested that the art he sold was worthy of being collected by such notable institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Lewenthal prominently showcased the collectability of his firm's art by including a list of impressive academic and similar ivory tower institutions within many of his *Patrons Supplements*, thereby erasing any suggestion that his firm's art did not fit into the category of "high art."[27] The various institutions that purchased his art provided him with their imprimatur and added legitimacy to his claims as well as elevated the cachet of the art itself.

Lewenthal's buyers were likely a mix of urban, suburban, and rural individuals whose interests in his firm's art may have been highly varied. However, it is possible that his New York City buyers potentially had exposure to more varied kinds of art, including social realist art. While hard evidence about the distribution of these buyers has not yet come to light, I contend that Lewenthal's buyers held shared beliefs and aspirational goals. These shared beliefs and aspirational goals were, in my opinion, strong enough to explain the firm's successful sales in both the more advanced market for art in New York City as well as the rural and suburban environments in which many of his buyers lived.

[27] See Appendix I.

Selling Regionalism

Associated American Artists' initial introduction to the market was through its sale of signed, original prints created by Regionalist artists whose art varied in subject, but was characteristically optimistic and rooted in nationalism. As the United States was barely emerging from the Great Depression, imagery filled with hope and focused on utopian principles became popular and served as a common unifying thread among many Americans. Associated American Artists set its focus on selling Regionalist art from its inception in 1934, which marked the year that *Time* magazine coined the term "Regionalism" in its cover story on Thomas Hart Benton.[28] The pseudo-realistic portrayal of "things American," such as Grant Wood's *American Gothic* (1930), John Stuart Curry's *Baptism in Kansas* (1928) and Thomas Hart Benton's *Threshing Wheat* (1939), had finally come to the fore in popular appeal and was respected and collected for its familiar, stereotyped image of America. This Regionalist triumvirate of Benton, Curry, and Wood provided a counter-image to Depression-ridden America. Benton himself described this trend of nationalistic attitudes as expressed in art:

> The artistic projects of the New Deal were largely sparked by attitudes and already affirmed by Wood, Curry, and myself. Roosevelt's early social moves were, as I have said, overwhelmingly Americanist and were concentrated on the solution of specifically American problems. This Americanism found its aesthetic expression in Regionalism.[29]

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[28] Erika Doss, "Borrowing Regionalism: Advertising's Use of American Art in the 1930s and 40s," *Journal of American Culture* 5 (2004): 10.

[29] Several of Thomas Hart Benton's prints illustrated the government's efforts to improve the lives of Americans. For example, *Plowing it Under* referenced the one hundred million dollars in benefit payments that farmers received during the summer of 1934 in return for teaching their mules to trample on rows of cotton. See Erika Doss, "Catering,"155.

Benton's mention of Roosevelt's "early social moves" likely refers to Roosevelt's creation of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Farm Security Administration, and overall economic recovery.[30] The Regionalists were therefore in agreement with New Deal politics as evidenced by their subject matter and demonstrated interest in reaching the public by creating art that was accessible to large numbers of people.

Many of the Regionalists also supported the Federal Art Project ("FAP") (1935-1943), a division of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA), which aimed to employ out-of-work artists while also educating Americans by bringing art to them in a variety of ways, including murals in post offices and other public buildings; sending millions of patriotic prints to public schools across the nation; and the creation of posters featuring images of public parks, national landmarks, railroads, etc. As a result of these programs, numerous artworks were dispersed across the nation, which helped prepare Americans aesthetically for Associated American Artists' infiltration of the market.[31] In fact, Lewenthal's strategy of creating a new market for consumption while employing artists during difficult economic times was directly in keeping with the WPA's goal to battle under-consumption and support artists. Many of the early participating artists of the firm (including Benton and Wood, who would serve as Director of Iowa's WPA Public Works of Art Project) made great efforts to support the WPA through their employment in the FAP, which led to public mural projects. Their commitment to public

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[30] The Fair Labor Standards Act was initiated in 1938 to set nationwide minimum wage and child labor laws. The Farm Security Act was created in 1935 in order to combat rural American poverty. The FSA was responsible for purchasing land owned by poor families and relocating them to government-run homesteads in an effort to increase efficiency under government supervision.

[31] For more on this, see Francis V. O'Connor, *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975); and Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

outreach helps to explain their willingness to participate in creating artwork to be sold as commodities in large quantities to a broader range of the public.

In addition to serving as public art (both in subject matter and mass dispersal), Benton's art, as well as that of many of the other Regionalists, functioned as mythologized and idealized images of America.[32] Regionalist art, in a way, gave Americans a *Zerrspiegel*, a distorted mirror image or enhanced reality as opposed to the literal reality that was often brutally difficult during the 1930s and, for some, even into the 1940s. In 1932 America's steel plants were operating at 12% of their capacity with no indication of improvement. Unemployment was over thirteen million, and industrial construction dropped from $949 million dollars to $74 million dollars.[33] Therefore, it is understandable that many Americans preferred to collect art that was positive and uplifting (as is evidenced by the popularity of Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton's artwork). A *Coronet* article on Associated American Artists from 1945 quoted a housewife who collected artwork from the firm to keep her mind off the difficulties of her life: "At night I take out my paintings and look at them, and get courage to go on with the next day."[34] She purchased a two hundred dollar oil painting from Associated American Artists on the installment plan. Such a case was the fulfillment of Lewenthal's dreams for Associated American Artists and highlights the important message and positive impact this art had on many Americans during this challenging time period.

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[32] John Steuart Curry was the exception. His art often depicted images of floods, tornadoes, and drab details of farm life.

[33] *Iron Age*, CXXX (1932): 31; *Historical Statistics of the United States* (United States Bureau of the Census: Washington, D.C., 1960), 379.

[34] Francis Rockmore Velie, "Fine Art for the Masses." *Coronet* 18, no. 6 (October 1945): 91. *Coronet* was a general interest digest that featured articles about celebrities, poetry, and basic journalism.

The public's desire for art to illustrate an enhanced image of a selected reality was not unlike the preference shown for uplifting and positive imagery found in magazine advertisements of the 1930s and 1940.[35] The similarities between Regionalism and popular advertisements of the time allowed each to reinforce the success of the other. For example, an advertisement by the Company of New York and Dayton shows an image of dark storm clouds and lightning on the left of the scene with the words "clouds, thunder, rain" above it and, on the right side of the image a farmer plowing on dry, fertile ground with the caption, "and then the good fresh earth." This image is accompanied by the following message:

> Under the burning sun the earth shrivels and dries up, but after the storm it is renewed and fertile. Then every man who breathes its fresh damp breath feels stirring in him the old, old urge to dig. The fields in which we work like fertile, and there is the better knowledge of how to dig well (Figure 8).

According to the magazine *Advertising and Selling*, the company's publishing office was "ankle-deep with letters of praise for this inspirational copy."[36] In fact, Lewenthal secured commissions for many of Associated American Artists' Regionalist artists to create artwork for advertising purposes, which I discuss later.

Recognizing the appeal of Regionalist art, Lewenthal stated "I knew the Regionalists were popular because their names were in the art magazines all the time.[37]

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[35] Additionally, *Life* magazine editor of the 1930s, Daniel Longwell, intended for the magazine to shape "American optimism, in a dynamic, uplifting, and likeable magazine whose pages so often promised a glittering futureworld for their Depression readers." Quoted in Erika Doss, "Regionalists in Hollywood: Painting, Film, and Patronage, 1925-1945,"(PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1983),104.

[36] *Advertising and Selling* (Oct. 12, 1933): 8-9.

But they weren't popular enough, and they weren't making any money. Why, when I first went to Tom Benton's New York apartment he was living in utter squalor. I more or less rescued him."[38] Lewenthal served as somewhat of a "fixer" to the artists he represented. He took an interest in their well-being and often gave them loans from his personal accounts if they were having financial troubles.[39] Whether this rescuing of artists was philanthropic, for the good of the greater art-viewing public, or was because Lewenthal had his own and Associated American Artists' good primarily in mind, there is no doubt that he and his firm greatly benefited from both the Regionalists and their "pseudo-realistic" visions of contemporary America. This was entirely in line with Lewenthal's personal vision, since he himself attempted to escape the reality of his background and assimilate into the culture he and other Americans hoped would become a reality.

Lewenthal capitalized on marketing that had already been going on since the early 1930's throughout the popular magazines at the time—the Regionalists were frequently featured in *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Time, Life, Fortune, Esquire*, etc., which heightened Americans' exposure to their art and philosophy.[40] Issues from these

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[37] It is important to note that these magazines homogenized the art world by not exposing the public to more radical socially conscious art. Their widespread readership had a large impact on the public's fervor for Regionalism during the thirties. Regionalist art was socially conscious, but in a nonthreatening way. This particular advertisement was not unlike others of the time period, offering reassurance that the future held prosperity. See, Marchand, 320-325.

[38] Erika Doss Interview with Lewenthal, Allegheny Energy and Oil Company, New York, November 24, 1981, printed in Erika Doss, "Regionalists." Daniel Longwell, editor of *Life* was quoted as saying "*Life* in its five years of existence has presented several thousand paintings to whatever millions of people have cared to look at our magazine. It has been our privilege to act as a sort of national and continuing museum for people." Longwell, speech at "Art Luncheon," May 8, 1942. In the Daniel Longwell Papers, Box 32, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York. Reference cited in Doss, "Regionalists," 108.

[39] For more on Reeves Lewenthal's financial assistance to Grant Wood, see Wanda Corn, *Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 52 as well as the private letters of Grant Wood in box 3176 in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[40] For more on this, see Erika Doss, "Regionalists," 93-99.

magazines became so popular that Americans wrote letters to the editors in droves asking for more art, prompting the inclusion of full-page images that were meant to be removed and collected, ultimately leading to the framing and hanging of these Regionalist reproductions.[41]

The quality of these reproductions varied from one magazine to another. *Life* magazine used a four-color half-tone process and their accuracy was limited by the use of inferior paper, the coarseness of the screen, and often a poor choice of the four inks used to create hue and chiaroscuro. Ultimately, the distinctive qualities of each artist were lost due to averaging of tonality.[42] *Fortune* magazine used offset lithography, which utilized a finer screen and did not include the fine dots of color that half-tone printing used, leading to higher quality images.[43] Associated American Artists, however, surpassed both *Life* and *Fortune* with their gelatone prints, which reproduced details and colors very similar to the original work of art, allowing patrons and viewers to experience all of the nuances of color and shadowing of the original artwork. Although these technological advancements and the superior quality of their prints were important, Associated American Artists benefited chiefly from the new art-making and art-collecting trends in this period of America.

This practice was enhanced beginning in 1901 when the editor of *Ladies Home Journal* issued reprints of the magazine's illustrations, without the text, for the public to purchase. Edward William Bok, the magazine's editor, suggested that featured artist W.I. Taylor's reproductions were "works of art fit to hang beside any painting" if they were framed. *Ladies Home Journal* (January) 1901, 1. It is important to note, however, that the practice of including fine art images in magazines and journals was established much earlier in England. For example, the *London Art Journal* included fine art images as early as 1849. For more on this practice in England, see Anne Helmreich, "The Death of the Victorian Art Periodical," *Visual Resources* 27 (2010): 242-253, and *The Art-Journal* (London: George Virtue, 1849).

[41] "Letters to the Editors" *Life* 29 (April 12, 1937): 18, and 29 (April 26, 1937): 12, 14.

[42] Oliver W. Larkin, *Art and life in America* (New York: H. Wolff & Co., 1949), 467.

[43] Ibid., 467.

Having founded the Associated American Artists amidst the strength of the American Scene movement, Lewenthal was well aware of the strong push of the "Paint America" effort. The "American Scene," also called the "Paint America" movement and the American Wave, refers to the bitter reaction many American artists had to European modernism and is classified by their commitment to paint native subject matter and embrace the figurative tradition.[44] In many ways this movement was a rejection of modern European art and culture and it advocated the creation of purely American art with hopes and promise of an American Renaissance. Essentially, to support modern art was to promote European art, and to advocate for traditional art was seen as endorsing native art.[45] The effort was best described by Peyton Boswell, Sr., editor of *The Art Digest*, as a "movement looking forward to the production of works of art that, avoiding foreign influences, actually expressed the spirit of the land."[46] America's isolationist foreign policy during the early 1930s provided ample room for the grass-roots movement and simple, local subject matter promoted by the Regionalists, prompted also by the bitter reaction of many American artists to European modernism. This American-born

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[44] For more on the American Scene, see D. Wigmore Fine Art, *The American Scene Movement in Art of the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: 1983); and Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[45] Matthew Baigell, "The Beginnings of 'The American Wave' and the Depression," *Art Journal* 27, No. 4 (1968): 387-396, 398.
It is significant to note, however, that many elements of Regionalism, namely those expressed by Benton and Wood, displayed modernist tendencies. For example, these artists permitted their "figures and objects to flatten out as relatively abstract shapes on the surfaces of their paintings, the most self-defining factor of pictorial modernism in the opinion of Clement Greenberg," as stated by art historian James Dennis in his examination of the Regionalists in *Renegade Regionalists: The Modern Independence of Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1998), 8. Baigell also cites examples such as Grant Wood's use of ornamental patterning and Thomas Hart Benton's own essays "The Mechanics of Form Organization in Painting" as samples of the modernist understandings of the Regionalists.

[46] Matthew Baigell, *The American Scene: American Painting of the 1930s* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 18. Benton's use of "furrin'" is slang for *foreign*.

"democratization" of art, in which the nativist middle-class was featured as subject, appealed to and was affordable for the middle class. Benton himself suggested, "We came in the popular mind to represent a home-grown, grass-roots artistry which damned 'furrin' influence and which knew nothing about and cared nothing for the traditions of art as cultivated city snobs, dudes, and aesthetes knew them."[47] Benton's attitude was in sympathy with national trends. This suggests a turning away from "high class" aspirations on Benton's part and the public that supported him (although this may not have been the case for buyers of other types of art in places like New York City), which also accords with political trends. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, America maintained strict neutrality instead of joining to combat international aggression when other countries were on the brink of war.[48]

The 1930's also saw an increase in radical organizations, and a new popularity of the Communist Movement, prompting this period to be dubbed the "Red Decade."[49] The economic crisis brought on an interest in radical politics, as demonstrated by the rise of activist labor unions and the popularity of extremist newspapers like *Voice of Action, New Masses,* and *Art Front*.[50] The more sophisticated art audience in New York City likely showed greater interest in more radical art than Associated American Artists' customers or other purchasers of art who lived in the Midwest or other parts of the nation.

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[47] Thomas Hart Benton, *An American in Art, A Professional and Technical Autobiography* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1969), 150.

[48] See Jonathan, M. Nielson, *Paths Not Taken: Speculations on American Foreign Policy and Diplomatic History, Interests, Ideals, and Power* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000).

[49] See Paul Le Blanc, *Marx, Lenin, and the Revolutionary Experience: Studies of Communism and Radicalism in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 153-170.

[50] For more on this, see Susan Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930's: Modernism, Marxism, Americanism* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1999).

The popularity of Communism, and the art that referenced the movement's ideology, illuminates the fact that Lewenthal's brand of Regionalism was not the only type of art being offered during this time period. In fact, the presence of art that referenced or promoted Communism supports further that Lewenthal had his own agenda in endorsing an ideology that may not have been central or relevant to his New York gallery's audience. Lewenthal's decision not to promote radical art is, I believe, evidenced by his interest in endorsing alternative imagery despite clear evidence that societal ills, economic downturn, and racial tensions still abounded during the period of this study.

Much of the general public wanted to buy more seemingly neutral, optimistic American art, including the firm's patrons living in New York City. Helen Langa, author of *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York*, 2004, asserts that part of Associated American Artists' success can be attributed to its focus on the Regionalists as opposed to the more radical leftist, radical art encouraged by such groups as the American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism and the American Artists School.[51] Many Americans were not ready to support the more extreme social viewpoints presented by such groups until later in the decade. Thus we can see Associated American Artists capitalizing on an arguably populist vision of art—that it be available to the masses—without using radical rhetoric that would have been probably alienating to a middle class set on attaining a higher social stratum. James Dennis, in his description of Regionalism's rural imagery, suggests that this art "was a pictorial release from the

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[51] Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Langa asserts that Associated American Artists did not help "social viewpoint printmakers whose works presented radical or troubling subjects." Langa, 18.

turmoil of industrial growth and urban congestion."[52] Dennis continues, "At least at a pictorial distance, the barnyard looked better to the city dweller than either the traffic-jammed thoroughfare or the back alley."[53] Historian Susan Platt notes that Thomas Hart Benton and Thomas Craven's support of Regionalism alienated them from their more radical colleagues "Perhaps, in the end, it was their successful exploitation of the anxieties of the middle-class masses that most threatened and enraged an increasingly socially-concerned and economically starved art world."[54]

It should be noted, however, that critics, art historians, and artists who were contemporaries of the Regionalists, such as artist Stuart Davis and art historian H.W. Janson, accused the Regionalists artists of having Fascist sympathies.[55] These accusations were based on a narrow examination of the artists' subject matter, most specifically their images of farmlife and peasant scenery, as well as the similarities between Regionalist art and Nazi art.[56] Janson, Regionalism's most ardent detractor, formulated his widely-published opinions by narrowly focusing on Grant Wood's farmlife scenes (he contended this farmland similarity was evidence for the artist's fascist sympathies) and ignoring his, as well as Benton's and Curry's, broadly-ranging focus of

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[52] James Dennis, *Grant Wood: A Study in American Art and Culture* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 15.

[53] Ibid., 16.

[54] Platt, 61.

[55] Historian Susan Platt suggests that Benton's confrontation with the art world was only a fraction "of the cultural formation of the Americanist discourse in the thirties. In 1934 violence, nationalism and anti-Semitism were partnered, both in Hitler's Germany and in the United States with the mass media culture industry, an industry which magnified and escalated ideas that might otherwise have remained obscure." Platt, 61.

[56] Davis also accused Benton of racism though many black artists tried to work with Benton in the 1920s for the respect and prominence he gave black workers in his murals. Platt, 59.

subjects when describing their *oeuvre* as similar to the art produced by the *Neue Sachlichkeit,* which rarely focused on rural themes, but which indirectly influenced Nazi propaganda art. In fact, fewer than one-fifth of Wood's images focus on farmlife scenery.[57] Benton's *oeuvre* includes such diverse subjects as Hollywood movie imagery, images of locomotives and other machinery, images depicting musicians, etc. Janson also ignored the modernist elements present in much of the Regionalists' art. For example, according to art historian James Dennis, "the triumvirate permitted their figures and objects to flatten out as relatively abstract shapes on the surfaces of their paintings, the most self-defining factor of pictorial modernism in the opinion of Clement Greenberg."[58]

This preference for neutral, optimistic subjects in the 1930s benefitted Associated American Artists as well as those dealers selling older European painting.[59] Not until the mid-1940s and the dawn of the Abstract Expressionist movement was art with more modern subjects and less figurative styles collected in the United States.[60] Langa's assessment is analogous to my own—Regionalist art was safe, hopeful, and devoid of

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[57] Dennis, 78.

[58] Ibid., 8
Dennis cites Benton's own series of articles, "Mechanics of Form Organization in Painting" *Arts* (1926-1927), as further demonstration of his interest in the principles of modern art.

[59] Robson, 13. See also: Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2000), and Peter Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan: the Rise of the Modern Art Market* (New York: Random House, 1992) for a discussion on the popularity of American and European art.

[60] For more on this see Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

overt and heavy political leanings.[61] Its populist message was directly in keeping with the New Deal politics and arts initiatives that were becoming popular throughout the country.

An examination of some of the *Patron's Supplements* of Associated American Artists from 1935 to 1945 shows that Associated American Artists held an overarching preference for the themes of Regionalist art, though prints of other subjects were offered as well, such as images of animals, still life images, genre scenes, portraits, nudes, and etchings of French cathedrals and impressive American architecture and city scenes.[62] The vast number of prints offered in the Regionalist style far outweighs imagery of any other type within these pamphlets, suggesting that Lewenthal and his clients preferred the subject matter and imagery of the artists working in this style and that, for this group of clients, this type of art was very collectible.

An evaluation of the prints offered from the more popular categories (popularity of the categories is determined by the number of prints offered in these Patron's Supplements from the time period of this study), such as Regionalist prints, portraits, and animal studies, underscores Lewenthal's preferences in the types of art he promoted.[63] This examination is central to a more thorough understanding of the firm's offerings and, overall, the audience to whom these prints appealed. Rural farm scenes dominate the Regionalist prints the firm offered its clients. Georges Schreiber's lithograph, *Southern*

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[61] The major exception to the general neutrality of Regionalist art is Thomas Hart Benton's *Year of Peril* (1942) series.

[62] Inserts were not included for each of these catalogues.

[63] Until the catalogue raisonné of Associated American Artists' prints is published it is not possible to determine with complete accuracy whether the categories I cite as appearing to be the most popular were offered with the frequency I have noted in my examination of the catalogues. My research includes examination of 37 Patron's Supplements. Associated American Artists published 49 Patron's Supplements from 1935 to 1945. These Patron's Supplements belong both to my personal collection as well as the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution.

Siesta (1939), is a representative example (Figure 9). Schreiber's scene depicts a simple barn and farmhouse in the background of the scene with a series of small, orderly piles of hay leading from the background to a large pile of hay and a sleeping farmer in the foreground. The farmer rests with his hat shielding his face from the sun, bare feet exposed, and a pitchfork's handle resting on his stomach with its tines reaching toward a dirt path that bisects the field on the left from a small triangular patch of cornfield shown at the bottom right corner. Schreiber's lithograph most directly resembles Grant Wood's artwork in its subject matter, geometric orderliness (neat rows of small haystacks), and details, such as the leaves on the cornstalks and the blades of grass and wheat. Schreiber's landscape is flat, unlike many of Grant Wood's paintings and prints which often depict exaggerated rolling fields. Overall, the two artists share an interest in paying tribute to the hard work that made the American agricultural landscape.

John S. DeMartelly's lithograph, *Two Old Toms* (1938), features an old man seated in the corner of a room who plays the violin while a teakettle whistles atop a wood-burning stove and a cat keeps company at his feet (Figure 10). This genre scene recalls paintings and lithographs by Thomas Hart Benton, such as his 1938 lithograph, *I Got a Gal on Sourwood Mountain* and his 1934 painting, *The Ballad of the Jealous Lover of Lone Green Valley* (Figures 11 and 12). DeMartelly's musician does not evoke the dynamic sound of music (though we can imagine the whistle of the kettle) as do Benton's musicians, though it is possible Benton's art influenced DeMartelly. Benton's scenes suggest noise more effectively, however, because the musicians are accompanied by swirling landscapes, dancing figures, or in the case of *The Ballad*, a harmonica player as well. DeMartelly's violinist appears to be lost in thought, perhaps imagining days gone

by. This type of scene lends itself to nostalgia and would have been appealing to many of the collectors of Associated American Artists' prints as it, along with prints of one-room schoolhouses or covered wagons, filled the continuing demand for genre scenes.

Luis Quintanilla, along with Churchill Ettinger, Ernest Hart and others, created prints of animals in addition to focusing on other subject matter. Quintanilla's drypoint etching, *Deer and Fawn* (1940) is similar to his own watercolor paintings of animals that he created throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, in which animals were his sole subject (Figure 13). As with the other animal prints Associated American Artists sold, this print likely filled the niche demanded by nature lovers, but could also be seen as native art.

By way of contrast, the etching *Men of Steel* (1940), by S. L. Margolies, depicts two welders high above New York City helping to build the city's skyline by making a steel skyscraper frame (Figure 14). Margolies depicts the men from an angular birds-eye view and simplifies the skyline by eliminating details such as windows or nuances in the stylistic elements of the other buildings and emphasizes only the geometry of these structures in soft differences of shading and highlighting. Rays of sunlight stream onto the city; the men, as well as the steel frame they are building, are emboldened in strong, dark lines. Though an urban scene, this print can be read as applauding the impressive achievements of these unnamed (American) workers and thus, in intent, is linked to Regionalist art ideas.

The *Patrons Supplements* I examined from 1935 to 1945 do not exhibit changing trends in styles or subject matter in terms of the prints offered for sale and, within this sampling, are therefore not indicative of the changing art world in New York City in terms of the rise of radical political art, with one exception: William Gropper's *The*

Opposition, 1942, owned by the Cleveland Museum of Art (Figure 15). Gropper, a social realist artist, held radical political beliefs, especially compared to the other artists employed by Associated American Artists from this period of study, and created political cartoons for such radical publications as *The Masses*. *The Opposition* was Gropper's response to the demise of The Section of Fine Art, the Graphic Division of the Office of War Information, and the employment of artists as reporters for the War Department--actions which Gropper felt exemplified government censorship. Gropper's caricatured senators reveal his distaste for, in his consideration, social injustices.

While Gropper's lithograph was a clear departure from the Regionalist offerings Lewenthal favored, it remains true that the number of offerings in each of the categories Lewenthal offered appear to have been relatively consistent within this period of study. This general consistency indicates either that Associated American Artists' clients continued to show an interest in the same offerings over time, and/or Reeves Lewenthal saw continued profit potential in the prints he offered. The inclusion of Gropper's print within Associated American Artists' offerings is an indication that either Lewenthal saw the need to move forward with the changes in the art world and the New York art scene, and/or he somehow became aware of a more varied interest in this type of art by his customers.[64]

An examination of Associated American Artists' "exhausted subjects" (a term Lewenthal gave to prints whose demand was so great that they were unavailable soon after being featured in their catalogues) from 1937 to 1939 also reveals helpful information about the types of imagery that Associated American Artists' customers preferred. A list of exhausted subjects was included in many of the firm's Patron's

[64] This print was the only exception I came across in my examination of 37 Patron's Supplements.

Supplements beginning in 1936 and, in some cases, listed the geographical distribution of each print, i.e., how many of each print was sold in each state. A study of the exhausted subjects from this period yields a varied assortment of lush rural landscapes such as *Along the Hudson* (1939) by Arnold Blanch, *Threshing* (1939) by Adolf Dehn, and *Winter Evening* (1939) by Ernest Fiene, all three of which are landscapes in the Regionalist style (Figures 16, 17, and 18). Among the large assortment of exhausted prints of landscape subjects are prints that reference the past while others offer impressive views of New York City's new architecture such as Eugene Higgins's *Pioneers Resting* (1937) and Andrew Karoly's *Broad and Wall* (1936) (Figures 19, 20). In addition, the exhausted subject lists offer prints of fishermen, circus performers, and hunters. A brief examination of the exhausted subjects of Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood, the firm's most popular founding members, reveals that the images were typically simple in subject matter and easily understood by all classes of Americans.

Thomas Hart Benton created and promoted artwork that appealed to the general public. Benton, one of the first artists to join Associated American Artists, was born to a hardworking family in Neosho, Missouri, with roots in local politics. He was named after his uncle who was a prominent Missouri Senator. Benton chose to make art that addressed common issues and interests of the middle and lower classes as opposed to following in his family's footsteps of speaking on the stump. As a result, his down-to-earth nature informed the iconic rhythmic imagery of farmlands, banjo players, and local myths for which he became known. Benton had no interest in painting for museums or receiving lofty paychecks from high-end galleries. Prior to working for Associated American Artists he spent time executing murals for commissions such as the New

School, whose mural was viewed by twenty thousand people within the first two months of its unveiling.[65]

Benton's early exhausted subjects had titles that described rural scenes, such as *Ploughing* (1939)*, Kansas Farmyard* (1936), *Cradling Wheat* (1938)*,* and *Goin'Home* (1937)*. Cradling Wheat* (1939) is an image of old-fashioned wheat harvesting and cradling in East Tennessee (Figure 21). Three men and one young boy work diligently without the use of modern equipment as they tend to the seemingly endless fields of wheat, which Benton illustrates in the foreground. The remainder of the scene is a vast, lush, landscape of rolling hills and undulating cloud formations, typical of his rhythmic style and Mannerist and Baroque influence. The workers' faces are shrouded in shadow or turned from our view, but these men become the heroes of the scene and symbols of American productivity and everyman honest labor. Benton celebrated the simple work of laborers consistently, which served as a unifying thread between a large demographic of Associated American Artists' patrons and the figures that populated prints such as this one.[66]

Many of Grant Wood's prints also have titles that emphasize an agrarian theme, such as *Seed Time and Harvest* (1937), *Tree Planting Group* (1937)*,* and *January* (1940). Wood grew up mostly near Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His family made a living farming and was of modest education. His mother, with whom he was very close and with whom he lived for most of his life, encouraged his artistic abilities from a young age. Wood taught

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[65] Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (New York: Knopf, 1989) and Wanda Corn, *Grant Wood, The Regionalist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 160.

[66] An October, 1945 article in *Coronet* magazine entitled "Fine Art for the Masses" cites "A Midwestern farmer and his family wanted prints advertised by the Associated American Artists. Their budget was meager enough, but they cut the luxury of meat to pay for the luxury of beauty." Velie, 91.

painting at the University of Iowa and founded the Stone City Art Colony in order to help struggling students during the Great Depression.[67]

Wood's *Tree Planting Group* is a simple work scene in which two young men work together to dig a hole for a small tree, which is being held by a woman who braces two young girls observing the scene (Figure 22). The middle ground is anchored by a view of a home or schoolhouse with a simple wooden deck and stairs, serving as a stage for several school-age children to watch the planting. Three other figures quietly observe. The only implied sound is that of the shovel blades cutting into the earth in the neat patterns Wood has illustrated. Geometry plays a large role in this print, as it did in the Northern Renaissance calendar pages that influenced Wood. This is achieved, for example, by the conical shape of the discarded dirt sitting neatly next to the round hole just feet from the perfectly round root bulb of the little tree. The tree's trunk forms a loose triangle when visually connected with the outline of the woman's arm. The shape of the men's legs form triangles as they stoop to dig more earth and the pyramidal shape of the onlookers reinforces further this action. Though simple, this scene is filled with scrupulous detail, most obvious when examining the meticulous attention paid to the grass in the yard and the fields beyond, detail often seen in paintings by Albrecht Dürer or fifteenth-century Flemish painters.[68] Grant Wood celebrates the working class and also emphasizes simplicity and nostalgia by not including imagery of modern farm

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[67] For biographical information on Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood, see Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton*.

[68] As devoted to local themes and styles as he was, Grant Wood was also heavily influenced by Northern Renaissance artwork, which left a lasting impression on him and can be seen as inspiration for most of his artwork from 1930 onward. This assertion is mine, but see Corn and Dennis for more on Wood's Northern Renaissance influence.

equipment in the background or modern clothing. He thus allows the print to remain timeless.

This geometrically based imagery of simple Midwestern scenery comprised the bulk of Grant Wood's *oeuvre*, and ultimately became an easily recognizable and sought-after image-type of which Associated American Artists' patrons were fond. The simple, yet bold, compositions, repetition of pattern, and celebration of farm life are almost mythical in appearance. Moreover, Wood placed monumental importance on the everyday events such scenes illustrate. Wood's unfinished autobiography, "Return from Bohemia, A Painter's Life", underscores his artistic tendency to heroicize the common man and woman as well as the local towns, cities, and natural attractions near his hometown as if they belonged in folk tales or were destinations for ancient travelers.[69] These elements satisfied the nation's interest in promoting native imagery in a positive and uplifting manner during a time of political and economic unrest. I contend they also appealed to Lewenthal personally because they offered escape from the reality of his background and ethnicity.[70] Lewenthal capitalized on these newly popular and almost iconic image-types and, because he made them available as prints, he was able to supply the public with their demand for such artistic escapism by offering relatively inexpensive examples of Regionalism. The sale of Regionalist prints will encompass the next chapter.

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[69] Wanda Corn also comments on this in *Grant Wood: A Regionalist Vision*, 2. This evidence can be found in Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, microfilm reel D24/209.

[70] Lewenthal lived in an apartment on Park Avenue with his family. Mark Ashley, "Art for the Walls of America," *Esquire* (May, 1942): 98.

Chapter 4

Selling Prints

As we have seen, long before Associated American Artists' founding in 1934, many galleries and auction houses in New York City developed models and set precedents for the selling, marketing, and purchasing of art. Reeves Lewenthal drew inspiration from some of these models, but aimed to chart a new course for the art-buying public, or at least his rhetoric suggested he was developing original art-selling methods. Like many marketing strategies, his claim to innovation, along with clever distribution methods, was part of the strategy itself, which helped him effectively target a broad spectrum of the American public as potential purchasers of the firm's art.

This chapter explores Associated American Artists' sale of art via department stores, mail-order operations, and commercial galleries. Building on the histories of the New York art market provided in chapter 2, this chapter's spotlight on Associated American Artists' operating strategies will ultimately highlight its employment of existing models of art sales and marketing and also illustrate the course Lewenthal set in his sale of art. This study enriches and expands the sparse scholarship on the sale and marketing of American art in the first two quarters of the twentieth century, with specific attention to the commodification of art, the retailing of art, and the unique set of offerings provided by Associated American Artists' New York Gallery, focusing particularly on the firm's commitment to the print trade. I argue that Lewenthal's retail strategies met with success given the rising American middle class and their increasing interest in

acquiring cultural capital, which helped ensure successful sales during this period of study.

Associated American Artists' success can be attributed to more than Lewenthal's choice in selling Regionalist art. The choice of print media and the manner in which he marketed and sold them must also be examined. Lewenthal's decision to enter the market through the sale of prints instead of other media proved highly lucrative.[1] Prints were familiar to Americans as they had been enthusiastically collected prior to Associated American Artists' first wave of patrons. Through the popularity of auction houses and print-selling galleries in the late nineteenth century, many New Yorkers began to collect prints at such venues as the American Art Union and Knoedler's Gallery, as well as through Currier and Ives. Prints were generally cheaper to produce, purchase, and transport than works such as paintings and sculptures, further adding to their attraction and lending themselves better to beginning collectors. Journalist Zelda Popkin touched on the affordability of prints in her 1930 *Outlook and Independent* article in which she stated, "Impoverished, indeed, is that home which does not boast at least one signed original of the poor man's friend, the black and white etching."

A 1939 *Washington Star* article compared Associated American Artists' prints to Japanese prints stating, "prints should be the people's art, just as were those of the color block-prints of Japanese artists, and therefore those they issue are priced very low."[2] The

[1] Lewenthal had prior experience with prints while he worked with the Society of American Etchers, which taught him that prints were relatively easy and inexpensive to produce. Erika Doss, "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958," *Winterthur Portfolio* 26 (1991): 144.

[2] This quotation is taken directly from the article, which does not quote Associated American Artists, but rather describes their selling practices directly. *Washington Star* (November 12, 1939). Clipping without page number is located in Associated American Artists' Archives microfilm reel D 254, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

article mentions the benefit of collecting prints and points to two recurring themes that helped to promote the Associated American Artists' agenda—that art can and should be collected by all, and art should be affordable. Reeves Lewenthal managed to promote his affordable prints as highly collectible (which they proved to be) as well as easily available to all.

* * *

Selling in Department Stores, Catalogues, Galleries

> "The gallery system is doomed. The rich collector class is dying out. There is no use in the galleries sitting around and complaining and waiting for the few old collectors who are left to come in and buy an occasional picture. American art ought to be handled like any other American business."[3] - Reeves Lewenthal

Lewenthal's initial plan, which he put into practice upon Associated American Artists' founding, was to sell his firm's signed original prints through department stores. This was Lewenthal's first step in his plan to treat selling art as though it were any other business because he felt that marketing his firm's art as a commodity would make it more saleable and approachable. As mentioned previously, Associated American Artists' prints were first sold for five dollars each at fifty of the nation's participating department stores. New York City's stores were B. Altman's and Wanamaker's, which sold 1,300 prints the first day.[4] Advertisements for the sale of the prints were placed in major magazines and newspapers and excitement spread quickly.

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[3] "Art: Money in Pictures," *Time* 37 (April 31, 1941): 71-72.

Thomas Craven, a noted New York City-based art critic, author, and steadfast supporter of Regionalist art and Associated American Artists, wrote an article in January 1935 in the *New York American* entitled "Art & Department Stores: The Big Shops are the Hope of American Artists." Through this article Craven aptly introduced the environment in which Associated American Artists made its debut of selling and advertising American art in New York City.[5] Craven shed light on the practice of selling art through department stores, which, in his opinion, had not been handled properly, but which nonetheless held promise in its ability to reach a broader population.[6] Thomas Craven shared Lewenthal's opinion about the marketing and selling of art. Craven suggested, "My contention is that the marketing of works of art is, by nature, no different from the marketing of other commodities—it is a matter of business and should be treated as such."[7]

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[4] Frances Rockmore Velie. "Fine Art for the Masses." *Coronet* 18, No. 6 (1945): 92.

[5] Through several articles and essays in widely read journals and newspapers, Thomas Craven became one of Regionalism's staunchest supporters in addition to serving as a steadfast ally to Lewenthal and the artists he represented.

[6] "The art departments of most stores, until very recently, by corrupting public appreciation have been a detriment to the cause of art. They have been conducted, either through ignorance or established policy, on the assumption that popular art must necessarily be tawdry and second-rate; that nothing of intrinsic merit can be bought and sold at moderate prices. As a consequence department store art as a rule has been of no higher grade than the stuff sold by the five and ten-cent stores, a little more pretentious perhaps, but qualitatively just as low-imitation etchings: vile prints of fox hunters, flowers and dead game; hand tinted photographs; abominable reproductions of old paintings not worth remembering, and invariably Maxfield Parrish's chromatic puerilities with their filtered dish-water seas, their epicene figures and medicated cotton clouds. The effect has been the general vulgarization of art." Craven, "Art and Department Stores" *New York American* (January 30, 1935), clipping with no page number in Associated American Artists' Archives, reel D 254, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[7] Thomas Craven, "Art and Department Stores."
Craven went on to say "If it is not a sin to buy a book in a department store, then surely, it is not a spiritual crime to buy a print or canvas. The big shops are admirably equipped to handle art products: they have ample space in which to present pictures in settings equivalent to the rooms of private houses; they could afford to make smaller commissions of the artist, and hence to sell pictures for more reasonable prices; they know how to attract the public, and they are accustomed to advertising their goods as commodities within the reach of everyone, and not as luxuries for the few. There is money in art; the national interest is mounting daily, and the productivity of our painters is truly enormous."

To promote these prints, Associated American Artists created a Public Relations Department, which was uncommon for galleries of this period.[8] The Public Relations Department printed a four-page pamphlet, which was circulated among the department stores participating in Lewenthal's plan. The preface to the publication quoted French painter Jean-Joseph Benjamin Constant, who predicted in 1891 that America would become the world's art center. Lewenthal likely included this material in order to shed light on the necessary growth that the market for American art demanded, and also to serve as an indirect challenge for his readers to rise to the occasion and do their part to propel the growth of the American art market. Lewenthal's dialogue was also directed to the American artist, explaining that his or her position should be to reach out to the public with a quality product in an approachable manner. His preface strongly advised:

> During these few years the American artist realizes that he must, in order to fulfill the Frenchman's prediction, first overcome the disbelief and existing art timidity of his fellow citizens. The utilization, during the past few years, of platform, exhibition, and press in an effort to overcome timidity and induce the uninitiated to taste the pleasures and satisfactions of art understanding and appreciation has been of little avail. Yesteryears' phantom decrees which stamped the realm of art as being exclusively reserved for the wealthy have left their impressions of snobbery upon the majority today.
>
> The American artist further realizes that in order to bring about a better understanding and greater appreciation of artistic accomplishment that a direct and forceful contact with the public is needed. He realizes that he must somehow get good art into homes, for he believes that the possession of a piece of good art will stimulate an art interest. Too, the artist realizes that the uninitiated must be led gradually into art ownership—that as an inducement price must be very low and that the place of sale must be one which inspires confidence and with which the prospective art enthusiast is familiar.[9]

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[8] In my research of contemporaneous galleries I have been unable to uncover another gallery with a Public Relations department.

[9] Associated American Artists' Patrons Supplement, n.d. Author's collection.

Lewenthal mentioned, in another Associated American Artists catalogue, that Associated American Artists "believe…that art can function only through public insight; and that without public interest and insight the life of the artist is likely to be crowded into narrow corners and his art made correspondingly low."[10] His intent with Associated American Artists was to "fill the need in the field of art for an organization to bridge the gap separating the artist from his audience. We came into being to fill this gap."[11] His goal was clear: he intended to restore the public's interest in, and respect for, art. Essentially, he was pushing the idea that broad distribution of art would advance public taste.

Thomas Hart Benton agreed with Lewenthal wholeheartedly for the need to change the way art was being sold. In fact, he championed moving art out of museums and into the general public's view. He thought that art should be purchased, displayed, and enjoyed by all people. He is quoted, from an interview conducted at the Associated American Artists' New York gallery, as saying: "If it was left to me I wouldn't have any museums. I'd have people buy the paintings and hang 'em anywhere anybody had time to look at 'em. I'd like to sell mine to saloons, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs and chambers of commerce—even women's clubs."[12] He sought, along with Curry and Wood, to make public art about the life and history of Americans in an idiom they could understand. Benton, therefore, was a strong proponent of the major changes Lewenthal strove to

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[10] Associated American Artists' Patrons Supplement, n.d. Author's collection.

[11] Thomas Craven, *Thomas Hart Benton: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Thomas Hart Benton Spotlighting the Important Periods During the Artist's Thirty-Two Years of Painting* (New York: Associated American Artists, 1939), 62.

[12] "Museum No Place for Paintings, Says Benton," *New York Herald Tribune* (April 6, 1941): 40.

make within the art market. He was supportive of mass consumption of art, and thus implicitly, of the commodification of art that would become a theme of Associated American Artists.

Associated American Artists' business model was rather different from that of its contemporaries which did not outwardly promote the sale of their art as commodities to the degree that Lewenthal did. Lewenthal's strategy contrasted significantly with the more established manner of sale that promoted prestige and spectacle, as evidenced by such firms as the American Art Association. Alfred Stieglitz presented yet another method of sale, perhaps the starkest contrast to Lewenthal and vastly different from other contemporaries. Stieglitz opposed any promotion of the art for sale. Stieglitz is often viewed as one of New York City's most significant proponents of American art contemporary to Lewenthal largely because of the significance of the artists he promoted. In his magazine *Camera Work* Stieglitz is quoted as saying "Art is by the few and for the few," a sentiment that illustrates the opposite of what Lewenthal tried to suggest to the American public as he promoted the sale and collecting of his firm's artwork.[13]

As mentioned in chapter 2, Stieglitz's strong feelings against marketing his gallery's art led to the creation of The Modern Gallery (1915-1919) by Stieglitz-represented artist Marius de Zayas. This gallery grew out of an interest in promoting and selling native art. Despite all efforts to promote their sales, The Modern Gallery did not survive and adequate archival evidence pointing to a specific reason has not been uncovered. The dramatic juxtaposition between Stieglitz's careful, introverted and spiritual promotion of the essence of American art and the beliefs of the Modern Gallery

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[13] Alfred Stieglitz, *Camera Work*, Issue 37. (1910): 270.

owners, who promoted contemporary American art by acknowledging the increasingly popular view of art as commodity, allows for a unique view into the climate of the primary art market in the years following the Armory Show. This environment set the stage for Associated American Artist's debut as a firm dedicated to what Stieglitz would have considered extreme and inappropriate tactics.

In the early 1930s, Associated American Artists was the only firm I have been able to uncover that sold prints through department stores, although many department stores had art departments in the 1900s, some of which may have sold prints (evidence of this has not come to light), and Sears would go on to adopt the practice from 1962 to 1971.[14] The notion of selling art in a venue not solely devoted to the sale of art was well-received, as suggested by Jean Laurier, art critic for *The New York Evening Journal*. Laurier stated, "No one is afraid of the 'art' department of a great store, but many people think they dare not browse around in an art gallery unless they are near millionaires."[15] The department store allowed the customer to have a sense of anonymity, as they were not required to make an appointment to view the art, as was occasionally the practice in some galleries. In addition, selling art through department stores was accessible to Americans outside of New York City since many cities had department stores that sold Associated American Artists' prints.[16]

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[14] Marshall Field's sold paintings by John La Farge in 1902, but Wanamaker's store in Philadelphia was the department store most invested in selling fine art in the United States. See William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 136.

[15] Citation in Associated American Artists' Patron's Supplement, n.d, Author's collection.

[16] The Crescent in Spokane, Washington, Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Marshall Field in Chicago, Illinois were among the many department stores that sold Associated American Artists' prints.

Associated American Artists' prints were sold in the "Art" department of these department stores, but the methods of display and the décor of the interiors is not mentioned in the primary sources I have uncovered, including literature advertising their sale. Sold under the same roof as, but in separate departments from clothing, coffee, notebook paper, and tennis rackets, fine art was seen in a new guise—something all classes of consumers could obtain easily without an education in art or knowledge of how to purchase or collect it, which was exactly Lewenthal's plan when he founded Associated American Artists.

The rising popularity of the department store was a fertile ground for selling not only practical household goods, but objectified cultural capital as well, i.e., crystal, costly antique furniture and rugs. Department stores were first introduced to New York City when Marble Dry Goods opened as a four-storey location in Manhattan, near City Hall, in 1823. Lower Manhattan was dubbed "Ladies' Mile," for the retail focus it housed from 14th to 23rd Streets on 6th Avenue, including Siegel-Cooper and Company Dry Goods Store (founded 1896), Stern Brothers Department Store (founded 1878), B. Altman Dry Goods Store (founded 1877), Lord and Taylor (founded 1862), and R.H. Macy's Dry Goods Company (founded 1861).[17] Siegel-Cooper and Company featured an art gallery, theatre, and dentist's office. Shoppers could purchase everything from clothing, shoes, household goods, paper products, furniture, cosmetics, paint, hardware, toys, and jewelry, all displayed in individual departments separated by theme.

As they evolved at the turn of the century and competition amongst various companies rose, producers of goods, as well as the stores themselves, began to advertise

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[17] Pamela Klaffke, *Spree: A Cultural History of Shopping* (New York: Arsenal, 2001), 43, 44.

their products and their stores to entice customers to make purchases. In addition, department stores lavished attention on their interiors to attract customers and entice them to extend their stay (and thus spend more money). Most department stores established elaborately decorated restrooms, ladies' lounges, tea rooms, period rooms decorated with fanciful displays of various themes, and air conditioning to make shoppers feel comfortable while shopping. The path to the ladies' room in Macy's New York City store on Fourteenth Street allowed customers to pass through an art room which contained "a carefully selected line of onyx" and bronzes.[18] Some department stores offered art classes, cooking classes, and instructions on how to arrange furniture.

The display and sale of art in department stores became popular in the early twentieth century when stores like Wanamakers, Bamberger, Macy's, and Siegel-Cooper "could represent themselves as entrepreneurs of both civic and cultural missions, merchants in whose establishments the customer could improve her taste and the manufacturer his product."[19] Wanamaker's Department store held exhibitions of art by Walt Kuhn, Stuart Davis, Joseph Stella, George Ault, Guy Pene du Bois, and Jules Pascin in the 1920s.[20] These exhibitions exposed the public to art they would not likely see if they did not frequent art museums. In fact, a *New York Times* article suggested that members of the American Association of Museums felt that "the Fifth Avenue stores

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[18] Ralph M. Hower, *History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1909: Chapters in Evolution of the Department Store* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 284.

[19] Jim Collins, *High-Pop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 113.

[20] Collins, 142.

were 'the best museums in the world, because of the large crowds inspecting the window displays and the artistic quality of the displays'."[21]

Thus when Lewenthal began selling art in department stores the public had already been acquainted with purchasing art in this environment. Lewenthal's plan followed the practice of making prints obtainable to anyone, regardless of their social status or education on art. But this sales strategy was short lived. Thalheimer's department store breached its contract with Associated American Artists several months after the program began and lowered the price of their lesser-demanded prints, causing Lewenthal to pull out of all of the department stores in 1935.[22] In its first endeavor to change the shape of the primary marketplace, Associated American Artists had already made great progress by exposing a large variety of the public (the most prominent group being housewives who shopped in department stores) to their product in an approachable manner. Part of the appeal Lewenthal's customers may have found with the idea of purchasing his firm's prints in department stores was their opportunity to participate in a common culture of consumerism which, in the early 1930s in New York City, focused heavily on the retail opportunities provided by expanded department stores.

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[21] "Report on the American Association of Museums Annual Meeting of 1926," *New York Times* (May 19, 1926): 24: 8.

[22] According to "Nobody Too Poor to Buy a Masterpiece" *Better Homes and Gardens* (December, 1945): 30-33, 62-63, "Some of the stores let the mats get dirty and then sold them as seconds, and all but a few began to mark down for clearance those that didn't sell fast." Lewenthal immediately took an ad in *The New York Times*, which cost him $400, and offered his original art by mail—bringing in $9,000 of business almost immediately. Fred Ferretti, "The AAA and How it Grew," *Art News* (February, 1974): 57.

Mail order

Upon pulling his product from department stores, Lewenthal endeavored to continue selling American art to a broad audience and initiated a mail-order system to distribute his prints. Though he claimed to have intended this from the beginning, the mail-order component of Associated American Artists did not take effect until October 15, 1934.[23] Associated American Artists set itself up to be the first dealer to "sell fine art successfully by direct mail, the way Montgomery Ward sells bathtubs and catsup."[24]Advertisements were placed in newspapers and magazines throughout the country and the initial response was overwhelmingly positive, likely because the public was already familiar with the prints through Associated American Artists' earlier exposure to the market (Figure 23). The first advertisement garnered 9,000 catalogue requests and the next two years brought 120,000 more.[25]

Mail order was a business model instituted by Aaron Montgomery Ward in 1872, when he began to sell his products directly to his rural customers without the added cost of a middleman or shopkeeper.[26] Richard Sears, soon to follow in 1886, appeared as Ward's competitor in America's greatest business rivalry and also found selling through catalogues very lucrative. With the advance of free rural delivery, which started in 1896; the expansion of railroads, which lowered costs of transportation; and the invention of

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[23] Craven, 62.

[24] Walter Adams, 30.

[25] Walter Adams, 62.

[26] Robin Cherry, *Catalog: The Illustrated History of Mail-Order Shopping* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 116.

refrigerated railroad cars, which made a wider variety of goods available, mail order shopping became incredibly popular.[27] Its greatest success occurred between 1890 and 1910, when "commodity consumption by individuals and households was taking on greater economic and cultural significance."[28] The economy was stimulated by the creation of new jobs to support the facilities needed to organize and distribute these goods. Certain items gained prominence and popularity as Americans realized their usefulness through positive reviews by others. It was these experiences that created cultural shifts in lifestyle such as participating in book-of-the-month clubs.[29]

More than half of America's population still resided in rural areas even as late as 1920, which helps to explain the great interest in mail order catalogues. A substantial portion of Americans relied on mail order catalogues for goods as well as regarding them as almanacs, symbols of progress and abundance, and objects of fantasy, in addition to marketing tools.[30] These catalogues featured images and descriptions of things many Americans had not seen in-person, often items that were innovative or clever in their usefulness, and which highlighted America's technological progress or abundance of resources. Some of the items in mail-order catalogues, such as fur coats, fine jewelry, or even advanced farming equipment, were unaffordable for many Americans, thus serving primarily as objects of desire. School teachers in rural communities also used mail-order catalogues when their textbooks did not arrive on time. They taught "reading, spelling,

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[27] Cherry, 11.

[28] Mark Wilson, Encyclopedia of Chicago: http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/779.html (Accessed 2 February, 2011).

[29] Cherry, 12, 116.

[30] *Encyclopedia of Chicago.*

arithmetic by filling out orders and adding items, drawing from models, geography from the postal-zone maps."[31] Shopping by catalogue also allowed customers to remain anonymous and to be treated on equal ground with the rest of the population, ensuring a relaxed and stress-free shopping environment provided the buyer was comfortable waiting for delivery of their goods, which varied depending on location and weather.

With Montgomery Ward and Sears as pioneers, selling everything from lawnmowers to entire houses, many other companies added mail order components to their businesses, which brought about a rise in advertising. Early catalogues marketed their wares with catchy slogans, fancy typeface, and vivid descriptions that were soon followed with drawings and, sometimes, photographs of the objects for sale. As time went on, catalogues naturally became more visually descriptive and themselves became objects to collect.[32]

The excitement of the catalogue eventually lost steam and saw a much slower growth period beginning in the 1920s, which was likely due to the rural depression throughout that decade.[33] Some people believed catalogue shopping would put local stores out of business and, therefore, they formed groups to oppose the system of selling goods through mail. Indeed, congressional hearings on the matter were held and numerous articles were published against the institution of parcel post and mail-order catalogues, all focusing on the unfair results they had on the local merchant and his hope

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[31] Viola I. Paradise, "By Mail," *Scribner's Magazine* 69 (April, 1921), 473.

[32] See Robin Cherry, *Catalog* and Gordon L. Weil, *Sears, Roebuck, U.S.A.: The Great American Catalog Store and How It Grew* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977).

[33] I have been unable to determine why catalogue sales dropped off in the 1920s and none of the literature on the topic has made suggestions as to the reasoning.

for survival.[34] Nevertheless, the mail order catalogue persisted well into the twentieth century.

By the time Associated American Artists sent out its first catalogue in 1935 Americans were long familiar with the practice of shopping by mail and even purchasing art this way. In fact, Currier and Ives ran a small component of their business by selling through the mail, though Lewenthal never acknowledged this precedent in his marketing rhetoric. By 1945, Associated American Artists had 53 clerical workers sending out 3,000,000 pieces of mail each year.[35] Unlike many of its predecessors and contemporaries, Associated American Artists strongly attempted to reach and service its patrons from every possible angle. Selling via mail order allowed them to access a developing market—the middle class and Americans who did not have easy access to galleries.

Associated American Artists' initial introduction to customers through their advertisements invited them to try out the art on a short-term loan basis, free of charge, in order to determine whether these items were those they intended to keep. The patron had the option of subscribing for free to their pamphlets, which detailed the artwork available for sale.

Associated American Artists' catalogues included a letter by Reeves Lewenthal in which he introduced the company and explained the program. These letters were intended to make customers comfortable with the firm and create a feeling of closeness with Lewenthal and his artists, ultimately removing any sense of distance or elitism

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[34] For more on this topic, see Elizabeth Rips Rae, *Introductory Study of the Role of the Mail Order Business in American History, 1872-1914* (PhD dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1938).

[35] Walter Adams, 30.

between the firm and its customers. Each catalogue showed images of the available prints as well as a short description of the print and a photo of the artist along with their biography.[36] The catalogues contained detailed material about framing options, as well as pricing information if prints were purchased in bulk. Over time, excerpts of praise from national newspapers and museums were included. An example of the language typical of Lewenthal's promotion of Associated American Artists is as follows:

> Leading observers of the nation's cultural trends have publicly voiced their beliefs that our program constitutes the most potent force operating today towards developing a more widespread interest in contemporary art. The majority of the country's periodicals have devoted considerable editorial space to our project and have recorded, very favorably, their opinions concerning the program's merit and influence in shaping art tastes and filling art needs.[37]

Lewenthal clearly sought to establish for the reader the sense that Associated American Artists had received acclaim through exposing the public to its art, educating the public about art, and maintaining a position of service to the public on matters of art. This pronouncement was important in that it allowed Lewenthal to place Associated American Artists in an esteemed position among "leading observers" of cultural trends, which reminded its customers that ownership of these prints would put them in favorable company. This concept is similar to Pierre Bourdieu's idea that people are not only

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[36] For a helpful discussion of the practice of including an artist's biography as an accompaniment to auction or dealer catalogues, see Nicholas Green, "Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Art History* 10, 1 (1987): 68-70. Green's account of artist' biographies relates to their accompaniment of landscape paintings in journals and catalogues and asserts that these biographies functioned as a mode of interpretation. "The given absences of stylistic analysis for nature painting—of a vocabulary which could engage with the formal structure of the image—opened up space for the full-blooded entry of biographical explanation." Green, 70.

[37] Loose page from Associated American Artists catalogue, 1940, author's collection.

defined by their social class, but also by all types of capital they can articulate through their social networks.

Segments from the articles included in the catalogues reiterated Associated American Artists' claim to have reached out to a wider audience. As one *New York Times* article suggested, Associated American Artists was dedicated to "welding a common link between artist and public. From the beginning it has been the aim of this group to make art accessible to a very much wider public than could be reached without the sort of effort that is now on foot. Primarily the group is interested in bringing art to those who would not or could not come to art."[38] A list of the museums and institutions that collected Associated American Artists prints was also included (See Appendix A).

The ideas that Associated American Artists steadfastly promoted a bond between artists and their consumers, and that Lewenthal made this art easily available for both ordinary members of society and first-class cultural institutions served as a reminder of the uniqueness of Associated American Artists compared to its print-selling contemporaries, or so Lewenthal claimed. His marketing strategy was to assert that Associated American Artists was exceptional in offerings to, and relationship with, its customers.

The catalogues served as advertising by constantly reminding readers of the exciting possibilities of collecting art. Many included images of Associated American Artists' prints hung in attractively decorated homes or offices, which helped customers imagine the opportunities these prints had for transforming their personal spaces into their own private galleries. Moreover, Lewenthal explicitly argued his firm's prints

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[38] *The New York Times* (October, 1937) cited in undated Associated American Artists' Patrons Supplement, author's collection.

should be used for decoration. This marketing technique was used to gain attention specifically from women (an audience also targeted by the department stores and mail order catalogues), likely meant to expand his market.[39]

In this regard, Associated American Artists' catalogues were targeting women in ways similar to magazines like *Better Homes and Gardens*.[40] With the housing boom of the 1920s, women's magazines like *Better Homes and Gardens* stressed the importance of home improvement and decoration, which reinforced Associated American Artists' program well.[41] For example, one of the Patron's Supplements included a page featuring one of Grant Wood's gelatones above the following text: "Associated American Artists present a new idea in full color paintings that answers an important picture problem. The six very beautiful "in-between-size Gelatones" will fill the need in your home for matched pairs of paintings for decorating balance….*and the price*?... unmatchable values at only $5.00 each, matted, and $14.50 each, handsomely framed!"[42] (Figure 24) Another of the firm's publications suggested "when you hang these pictures on your walls, you will be pleased by the glowing, new decorative values which will be added to your rooms. The pictures radiate good taste and are appropriate for any décor, traditional or

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[39] "Department store owners conceptualized the downtown shopping district as a largely segregated female space in which mostly middle-class women did the work of consumption—shopping for the family and themselves." Alison K. Hoagland and Kenneth A. Breisch, eds. *Constructing Image, Identity, and Place: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 86.

[40] Fore more on the middle-class's use of art as decoration, see Paul Fussell, *Class: A Guide through the American Status System* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

[41] *Better Homes and Gardens* had few advertisements geared toward men. It was never marketed as a literary magazine and has always emphasized decorating, gardening and, do-it-yourself projects.

[42] Undated Associated American Artists insert from a Patron's Supplement, author's collection.

modern."[43] This appealed to homeowners who were more inclined to view art as decoration as opposed to a collectable.

Images of the galleries were often included in the Patron's Supplements sent through the mail. From the gallery's inception to the mid-1940s, the extensive information provided in their catalogues far surpassed the material printed by other galleries or print cooperatives.[44] The catalogues also listed the broad range of services the firm offered. Associated American Artists' artists were available for mural and portrait commissions and, according to Lewenthal, "any fine art desire can be fulfilled" with an inquiry made either by mail or during a trip to the gallery.[45]

Reeves Lewenthal's decision to sell Associated American Artists' prints, and later paintings, greeting cards and other artist-designed items through mail-order catalogues was revolutionary. Associated American Artists' experience with mail order was lucrative and protracted because the firm reached larger numbers of people and a broad audience. Additionally, the firm's catalogues contained clever propaganda that reinforced Lewenthal's ideas about the importance of promoting American artists, the need for artists to reach their public more easily, and the educational and enriching capabilities that art-buying can create. For many of the firm's customers, these catalogues were the only connection they had with the firm or its artists because they did not live near one of the Associated American Artists' galleries. Since this was the case for such a large portion of the firm's buying public, the content of these catalogues had to

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[43] Undated Associated American Artists insert from a Patron's Supplement, author's collection.

[44] I studied the archives and material of the following galleries and auctions: The Downtown Gallery, Julien Levy Gallery, The Macbeth Gallery, The American Art Union, The American Art Association and 291 Gallery, located in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[45] Undated Associated American Artists Patron's Supplement, 16, Author's collection.

address all possible matters of inquiry relating to the art, serve as advertisement for the firm and its ideas, and remain enticing enough to convince the public to embark on a new method of buying quality art.

Gallery Space

In addition to their mail order operation, Associated American Artists maintained a gallery space in the heart of Manhattan that was frequented by artists, customers and critics. In order to understand fully the dynamics of Associated American Artists' gallery within the environment of other galleries selling American art in New York, it is important to examine their surroundings and situate them in proper context.

According to White-Orr's Classified Business Directory, there were forty-seven registered art galleries in New York City in 1930. Several known galleries (namely the Ferargil Gallery, and the Downtown gallery) did not make White-Orr's directory, but their list is a reliable indication of the gallery scene just a few years prior to the founding of Associated American Artists. By comparison, the 1930 New York Blue Book Business Directory lists 27 art galleries in New York City, only some of which overlap with the White-Orr Directory. Based on these two sources, it is my estimation that around the year 1930 the art market concentrated around Fifth Avenue and 57th street with at least twelve galleries operating there. The real estate found between Rockefeller Center and Central Park South was a preferred location for the opening of art galleries in

the 1930s, likely because of its newly formed reputation for being a high-end cultural and retail destination.[46]

This area, specifically 57th Street, was described in a 1946 *Fortune* article as the "most imposing and seemingly dignified of the city's cross-town thoroughfares. Here are the heart, brain, and nervous system of the art business of America….Along 57th street, in places ranging from the palatial (where 'the paintings hang on golden nails') to the grubby ('with dirty bathrooms'), traders in art are open for business."[47]
This segment of the city housed 150 art dealers by 1946 and establishment near this section of Manhattan brought with it a recognizable amount of prestige for art dealers.[48] This quotation highlights the fact that there appears to have been a huge growth in the art business between 1930 to 1946 when Associated American Artists was operating at full steam.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Associated American Artists first managed operations at 11 West 42nd Street, which it owned for just over a year in 1935. Once the mail order component of the firm increased in popularity, the requirement for more space led them to move to 366 Madison Avenue. In the interest of providing patrons with a gallery space to visit, Associated American Artists moved to an even larger space at 420 Madison Avenue in April of 1936. This Madison Avenue location was the first expansive site for Associated American Artists as it housed a full floor divided into a gallery, offices and mail-order department. Quickly requiring even more square footage, Associated

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[46] I have been unable to find a New York City business directory for 1934 or 1935.

[47] "57th Street" *Fortune* 34 (September, 1946): 145.

[48] Ibid., 145.

American Artists moved to 711 Fifth Avenue, formerly occupied by Manufacturers' Bank.[49]

A comparative analysis of photographs and descriptions of the galleries in operation at the same time as Associated American Artists during the 1930s and 1940s yields varied stylistic tendencies for interior decoration and the display of art within these galleries. Dealers of Old Masters or Impressionist art, such as Knoedler's and Wildenstein's, tended to favor darkly-colored walls with rich velour, and antique furniture such as benches and chairs for clients to rest on while viewing the artwork in their opulent surroundings.[50] Galleries such as the Julien Levy gallery, the Modern Gallery, and Associated American Artists tended toward more lightly-colored, streamlined interiors devoid of heavy draperies and furnishings, likely to promote a more modern image.

Associated American Artists' location on Fifth Avenue was considered prime real estate and its design implemented the most modern elements to match its growing recognition. Associated American Artists' gallery was designed with a nod to the Art Deco style, which was very popular at the time and showcased Lewenthal's interest in keeping up-to-date with current design trends. The Art Deco style was characterized by an emphasis on symmetry and linearity and was based on Classical and Egyptian forms. Though the gallery was decorated with marble floors and columns, this subtle

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[49] Associated American Artists, *Fifty Years of Fine Prints*: *The History of a Gallery* (New York: Associated American Artists, 1984), 4.

[50] A. Dierdre Robson writes, "Galleries supporting American or modern art tended to be much more modest affairs than those selling Old Masters or European nineteenth-century painting, the dealers often being close confidants of the artists whose work they sold." A. Dierdre Robson , *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure: The Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 11.

incorporation of the Art Deco style was not overbearing and did not overshadow the art for sale or on display. Reeves Lewenthal arranged for architects, lighting experts, and the renowned design team of Victorine and Samuel Homsey to create a "grand space, complete with high ceilings, marble floors and columns for the interior of Associated American Artists' gallery."[51] Images of this location showcase a very clean, contemporary display space, which comprised fifteen rooms, a large exhibition space, a custom framing area, and several private offices (Figures 25, 26). Lewenthal described the space as a "departmentalized gallery, the first of its type. Here visitors will be able to acquire at all times original signed works of art at a price to fit their purse. We shall do our best to keep our galleries cheerful, inviting and stimulating so that our artists and patrons can meet in hospitable comfort."[52] Several of the firm's artists painted murals on the walls of the private offices within the gallery in order to continue the theme of art being a key feature of each of the gallery's rooms. Seventy-five of the five-dollar prints were on permanent display at the entrance to the gallery, followed by large full-color reproductions of paintings sold for $7.50. Original watercolors were sold from $50 to $250, as well as original oil paintings that were priced at $300 and up.

Associated American Artists' gallery and the visual impression it promoted came to represent the firm's sales message as it maintained a modern and inviting image that was marketed to customers from its inception. The New York gallery, Associated American Artists' first location, was designed to give the same impression to patrons as the firm's catalogue. The artwork was displayed simply and accessibly for visitors, and

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[51] Robson, 4.

[52] Craven, 63.

most of the prints were on display in a large room at the heart of the gallery with modern lighting optimally placed for viewing. According to a 1946 *Fortune* article, some of the firm's contemporary and neighboring galleries practiced selective salesmanship in which many of the gallery's works of art were hidden from view, only brought out for select clients.[53] This practice was kept to maintain an air of mystery to customers and required the dealer and sales associates to keep special lists of which artwork they showed to each particular patron upon each visit in order to imply that they owned a larger inventory than existed or to maintain the illusion of a special, exclusive relationship with each potential buyer. In fact, it is known that several dealers would purchase monumental works of art together and share the profits upon its sale. Often these dealers would alert one another to a customer's interest in a specific item and send a courier to the competing gallery to lend the work of art, receiving a commission if the artwork was sold by their competitor.[54] These methods, generally practiced by dealers of Old Masters and Impressionist artists, greatly contrast with the more transparent approach practiced by Reeves Lewenthal, who sought to demystify the process of buying and selling art.[55]

Lewenthal went on to describe Associated American Artists' galleries as being

> by far the largest devoted exclusively to contemporary American art. However, bigness for the mere sake of bigness is a hollow satisfaction but we feel that these sizeable galleries with their superb facilities are necessary to house and efficiently display the all-embracing productive efforts of our artist members they are simply very necessary headquarters, the hub in which our activities are consolidated and prepared for radiation to our patrons all over the globe.[56]

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[53] The article did not name specific galleries. "57th Street," 197.

[54] Ibid.,197.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Craven,16.

For people who were unable to visit the galleries, they could request reproductions or photographs of artwork to be sent to their home for approval along with information concerning price, size, colors, and decorating suggestions, free of charge other than shipping.

Reeves Lewenthal alerted current and potential customers to Associated American Artists' *raison d'être* in all of the firm's circulating literature and advertisements, describing it as an organization which "disseminates pertinent facts and educational material concerning native accomplishment [and] through the maintenance of a nationally known and accessible 'sales place' competently staffed, where authoritative information and honest direction in collecting can always be courteously secured."[57] Through this rhetoric, Lewenthal seems to have been emphasizing the idea that he, his gallery staff, and the firm in general were in the position of educators—providing authoritative information and honest guidance. Lewenthal described the firm as being able to 'fill any artistic interest,' regardless of medium, including drawings, pastels, gouaches and paintings in watercolor and oil. This expanded the gallery's services to include such options as sending a portrait artist to the patron's town if a private commission was requested.

In all, the offerings of Associated American Artists outnumbered their competitors in variety and number, as evident upon examination of other galleries' exhibition catalogues found in the Archives of American Art. This points to Lewenthal's desire to reach as many customers as possible by catering to all of their possible desires.

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[57] Craven, 16.

This populist attitude was unique to the firm and set it apart from many other galleries in New York City at the time. Lewenthal's editorial read more like a clearinghouse newsletter than an art gallery publication in its stress on low prices, complete customer satisfaction, high variety of goods, and convenient shopping. Keeping in mind the firm's broad patronage, which included people of all classes and from all geographic areas, his form of dialogue was highly approachable.

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"A work which does not make contact with the public is lost"[58] *– Grant Wood*

Grant Wood's quote is indicative of his agreement with Associated American Artists' mission to cultivate a large audience which, in the period of the present study, became increasingly engaged with the growing consumerist culture. It is necessary to situate Associated American Artists within the culture of mass consumerism and reproduction that existed at the time of the firm's founding. In America, Reeves Lewenthal seems to have been one of the leading figures of the early twentieth century to recognize that modern mass media and modes of reproduction could be used to promote original works of art and enhance the excitement viewers felt over seeing and collecting artwork. As was already mentioned, unlike the practice of some of his contemporaries, many of whom did not enter into dialogue about art being available and approachable to all, Lewenthal marketed prints as easily accessible commodities and stressed the importance of the public working together with dealers and artists to promote American

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[58] Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 92.

art. America of the early and mid-1930s had embraced mass-consumerism with respect to objects sold in general stores, department stores, and, as we have seen, through mail-order catalogues, but mass-consumerism of artwork on the level of Associated American Artists' success was entirely new. It is important to recognize, however, that it is difficult to determine whether his patrons purchased and collected his firm's artwork because it was marketed as a commodity and was easily accessible, or because they were attracted to the notion of participating in the exciting common culture that was prevalent in New York City at the time, or because they liked the choice of subjects, medium, or artists. It is important to note that these possibilities are not mutually exclusive and people's motivations for buying likely overlapped these categories.

An *Esquire* article entitled "Art for the Walls of America" includes a story about a man who visited Associated American Artists' New York Gallery and expressed interest in a Georges Schreiber painting that was priced at $500. He told Lewenthal, "I'd give anything if I could own that picture. It's impossible, all I make is thirty dollars a week." Lewenthal asked him if he could afford a dollar a week, took the painting off the wall, and offered it to him to take home. He told the man if a dollar a week was not affordable he would take less. Lewenthal explained "the people who want art and make sacrifices for it are the people conservative chroniclers would least suspect. Sailors in service drop in to buy farm landscapes to hang on their lockers…cafeteria workers, salespeople… Many have got their five-dollar prints on the installment basis."[59]

Lewenthal created an egalitarian culture for art collectors by marketing his firm's prints to a broad range of the American public. Associated American Artists prints were

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[59] Mark Ashley, "Art for the Walls of America," *Esquire* (May, 1942): 98.

strongly nativist in tone (especially within the first few years of the firms existence), which meant that they appealed to a large segment of the population. The firm's artists supported the mass reproduction and mass mailing of their artwork. Grant Wood praised the reproduction of his painting *Woman with Plants* (1929) in gelatone as being more impressive than the original oil painting.[60]

Lewenthal's roster of artists was more than content with their salaries (Benton moved his family to a larger home and Grant Wood wrote several letters of thanks to Lewenthal for the financial help he received on numerous occasions), which were especially uncommon given the state of the economy in the early 1930s.[61] In 1941 none of the Associated American Artists' artists made less than $25,000 per year and one even earned $75,000, which would be the equivalent of $390,841.84 and $1,172,525.51 in today's dollars, respectively.[62]

Lewenthal continued to expand Associated American Artists and cater to new audiences when he marketed his firm's artwork to a class of consumers whose needs and interest in using and collecting art had been growing for several years—the corporate world. The corporate projects of Associated American Artists will serve as the next chapter's focus.

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[60] "Art: Artist to Consumer," *Time* (October 24, 1938): 38.

[61] Grant Wood correspondence with Reeves Lewenthal, Associated American Artists records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton*, 294.

[62] "Art by Big Business," *Newsweek* 24, no. 12 (September 18, 1944): 102.
Inflation statistics received at: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm/ (Accessed 28 June, 2012).

Chapter 5

Art by Big Business

In describing the status of art patronage in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, art critic and historian Elizabeth McCausland aptly pronounced "what is clear is that art does not have a broad enough base in American life. Truly, art in America today is unsteady and insecure."[1] McCausland suggested that in order to broaden the base of art, its audience needed expanding. Though she did not specifically cite or endorse corporate industry as a means to expand the audience for art, her sentiment about the need for an expanded audience was one nonetheless shared by Lewenthal. McCausland's comment was published in 1947, eight years after Reeves Lewenthal endeavored to expand his customer base by creating Associated American Artists' Art for Advertising Department, which ultimately promoted the sale of American art to a larger, and more diverse, audience.

The use of fine art in advertising and the employment of fine artists to fill corporate needs already had an established history in America prior to Associated American Artists' founding. The "incorporation" of America aided corporate industry's use of fine art in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historian Alan Trachtenberg defines "incorporation" as "the general process of change, the reorganization of perception as well as of enterprise and institutions not only the expansion of an industrial capitalist system across the continent, not only tightening

[1] Elizabeth McCausland, ed. *Work for Artists: What? Where? How?* (New York: American Artists Group, 1947), 3.

systems of transportation and communication, the spread of a market economy" into all of the country's regions as well as "the remaking of cultural perceptions this process entailed."[2] By the start of the twentieth century America was already an interconnected country as a result of the establishment of a national railway system, increased literacy, and the growth of retail shopping in department stores and via catalogues. Railway networks and newspapers bridged large distances between cities by allowing convenient travel options, and spreading news across the nation and transporting goods relatively quickly. Department stores in major cities inundated shoppers with the pleasures and rewards of consumerism, rather than the mere purchasing of goods. Commercial and industrial empires spread their influence across the nation and established a national consumer base.

Lewenthal took advantage of, and his success largely stemmed from, the country's established interconnectedness. Both the means with which he communicated with customers (mail order catalogues and newspaper advertisements), and the venues that sold his firm's prints (department stores) existed because of the incorporation of the United States and the increasing level of importance placed on the market economy. I argue that Lewenthal aimed to market his firm's art to the industrial corporations discussed within this chapter both because of the country's continued interest in consumerism and also because industrial corporations were more easily able to devote money to the commissioning and purchasing of art during the late 1930s and early 1940s than Lewenthal's original customers—individuals who may have been more likely to spend their discretionary funds more conservatively as the U.S. entered World War II.

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[2] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 3.

The Art for Advertising Department served as the liaison between Lewenthal's artists and America's big business. This department encouraged the firm's artists to create artwork for industry for the following purposes: to be used in advertisements; to be collected by corporations and then featured in private corporate museums or headquarters; to document corporate projects; to be reproduced in corporate magazines; to be displayed in calendars; and to be featured in exhibitions that functioned as corporate-sponsored contests. These collaborations were successful enough to cause widespread notice from both artists and industry, and to exert influence on the art market in general.

In order to understand fully both the success of Associated American Artists' corporate and advertising campaigns as well as the impact they had on the firm's artists and their market, it is necessary to examine briefly the history of fine art used in advertising and by corporate industry. This chapter provides an overview of several of the projects and commissions Lewenthal initiated, describes the strategies he utilized within these partnerships, and analyzes the efficacy of these strategies.

The relationship of art and artists to the marketplace serves as the underlying foundation upon which the projects discussed within this chapter arose. As seen in the history of art sales provided in chapter 2, and as will be seen in the case studies presented within this chapter, American artists were bound to the capitalistic market. Artists, therefore, elected to create art for corporate industry or for advertising presumably for the same reasons that eighteenth-century artists such as Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, produced large-scale paintings and were accused of "speculating in exhibition

pieces to attract the masses and for pecuniary gain."[3] The artists of the late 1930s and 1940s that submitted their paintings for corporate-sponsored contests, exhibitions, and for use in advertising or corporate projects were taking steps to reach out to their audience, make a name for themselves, and attract potential consumers. As I show throughout this chapter, artists developed increasingly more public personas in this period—their work was printed in mass-circulated magazines and featured in traveling exhibitions, which allowed for an increase in the public's role in forming opinions on the artwork, and added to the established role of the art critic already present in American society. This ever-changing relationship of the artist to the marketplace, and especially to the "consumers" of their art, was further compounded in the period of this study by the rapidly expanding role of the retail market and, therefore, the growing effect of advertising on the artist, all made possible by the incorporation of the United States.

I also contend that Lewenthal foresaw the dangers of the potential downgrading of his art from "fine" or "high art" as the artworks were used in corporate advertising. His conceptions of what is meant by "art" or "fine art" were never clearly delineated, but his actions (partnering with corporations that displayed his firm's art in prestigious museums) shed light on his awareness of the danger of debasing the reputation of his firm's art. As I show throughout this chapter, Lewenthal suggested that corporate use of fine art would lend these corporations a "prestige image," implying not only that the use

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[3] Valentine Green, *A Review of the Polite Arts in France at the Time of their Establishment under Louis the XIVth. Compared with their State in England* (London: Cadell, 1782), 50-51. Oskar Bätschmann, in his book *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict Between Market and Self-Expression* (Cologne: Dumont, 1997), suggests "The exhibitions immediately gave rise to the suspicion that artists could be corrupted by money, mass taste, cheap applause and the pressure to succeed in the competitive art world."10. Though Bätschmann is referring to the exhibition artists in the eighteenth century, the concept applies to the artists examined within this dissertation and is a reminder that Associated American Artists' artists were not subjected to unique circumstances in relation to these terms.

of fine art would elevate their status or reputation, but also that the art his firm's artists produced for these projects fell into the category of "high" or "fine art."

A Brief History of Corporate Use of Fine Art in America

Advertising and art historian Michelle Bogart states, "The ascendancy of the mass print media in the late nineteenth century produced crucial changes for artists, both positive and negative."[4] These crucial changes formed the basis for a system by which artists in the mid-twentieth century were judged as they attempted to fulfill the patronage requirements of the industrial corporations that hired them and led to new expectations of artists in terms of accessibility and even levels of cooperation. In order to assess the full scope of the changes that Bogart alludes to, we must first examine the history of the use of fine art in advertising both in the United States and in Britain as print culture flowed between both countries.

Advertising became more widely present in visual culture when increased literacy and leisure time propelled the market for books and magazines in the 1890s. The incorporation of America propelled the growth of the book and magazine market by allowing for easy and more rapid distribution of these materials across the nation. The switch from a producer to a consumer economy at the turn of the twentieth century caused a shift in the type of advertisements that corporations sought to produce.[5]

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[4] Michelle Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5.

Advertisers gained more prominence in the 1920s with more money dedicated to the field, and with new technologies, such as colored pictures, they began to reach a wider and more receptive audience.[6] During the mid-1920s color advertisements comprised twenty-five percent of all magazine advertisements and began attracting more attention than the basic black-and-white advertisements.[7] Advertisers wanted to exploit fully the new possibilities of color in magazines, which lent themselves well to artistic reproduction. Magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Saturday Evening Post* and their advertisers were the primary patrons for artists and illustrators, promoting advertising campaigns for everything from Chrysler automobiles to Pears Soap and Johnson's Baby Powder.[8]

An informative early example of the use of fine art in British advertising is John Everett Millais' painting *Bubbles* (1885), which was purchased by *The Illustrated London News* with an 1886 copyright and demonstrated the historic longevity of this practice (Figure 27). The newspaper published it in color in the Christmas issue in 1887. It was almost immediately sold, along with its copyright, to Thomas Barratt of Pears Soap and was used in the company's widely dispersed advertisements.[9] Millais was a successful painter in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition. *Bubbles*'s use in advertising increased his

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[5] Bogart, 5.

[6] Ibid., 71.

[7] Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber, *Nineteen Twenties* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 67.

[8] Bogart, 71.

[9] William Sharpe, "J.E. Millais' *Bubbles*: A Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *The Victorian Newsletter* 70 (1986): 15.

popularity since the painting reached a much wider and more diverse audience than if it had only been exhibited in London.[10]

Following the transformation from *Bubbles* as a work of fine art to its identity as an image used for advertisement of soap helps set the stage for what was to become a path shared by some American artists who developed a set of common concerns with respect to their artwork used as advertising. At the time of its debut as an advertisement for Pears Soap, Millais' painting received mixed reviews; some felt it was degrading to art, while others felt it made great strides from the less complex and uncouth imagery utilized in prior advertisements for the company.[11] Yet, literary historian William Sharpe suggests that Millais's painting coexisted successfully as a work of fine art with its ad-image because *The Illustrated London News* distributed several hundred thousand copies of it as a work of fine art before Pears used it in its advertising. Sharpe points out that because of the image's versatility, it functioned successfully in many roles, such as a jigsaw puzzle, painting, chromolithograph, poster, etc. This versatility points to the painting's success, and yet caused a significant decrease in Millais's reputation once he became known as an artist whose paintings appeared in advertisements.[12]

Sharpe utilizes Walter Benjamin's theories from his essay *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* discussed earlier in this dissertation, as a platform from which to assess *Bubbles's* transformation from a work of fine art to an advertising image. This is pertinent because this transformation from art object to advertising image occurred

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[10] See also Laurel Bradley, "From Eden to Empire: John Everett Millais's *Cherry Ripe,*" *Victorian Studies*. 34. No. 2 (1991): 179-203.

[11] Sharpe, 16. Sharpe does not give details about the professions of the people who held these differing opinions.

[12] Ibid, 17.

often throughout the period of Associated American Artists' history under consideration in this study. When considering Benjamin's suggestions that a work of art loses its aura when it is reproduced in multiple forms, Sharpe offers another assertion—"Re-viewed, re-read, re-written, the mass produced object only multiplies the interpretive and emotional investment that composes both its collective 'ego' and its aura."[13] Due to a work of art's ability to serve in a greater number of contexts, Sharpe is suggesting that the mass-produced object also takes on aura by being opened up to multiple possible meanings and assessments.

Art historian Paul Mattick provides helpful commentary on this topic as he shares Sharpe's opinion that aura is not necessarily diminished by reproduction.

> This was understood by painters such as Mantegna, Raphael, and Rubens, who, realizing "the advantage of fame that reproduction of their images brought," played important roles in the organization of the reproductive print trade of their time.[14]

Mattick cites the creation of plaster casts from their originals as a necessary step in fostering world-wide appreciation of ancient statues, and that the 'aura' of these originals could be so powerful as to pervade their copies. Mattick explains that the reproduction of artwork removes the art, in image form, from the museums, palaces, and other settings in which the originals were typically displayed, decreasing viewers' distance from them and

> by even placing them at our disposal for use on mementoes, greeting cards, and wrapping paper…but it is hardly certain that this has spelled the withering of the "aura" of the work of art. It has even been plausibly argued that the circulation of

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[13] Ibid, 17.

[14] Susan Lambert, *The Image Multiplied: Five Centuries of Printed Reproductions of Paintings and Drawings* (London: Trefoil, 1987), 147, quoted in Paul Mattick, *Art in its Time, Theories and Practices of Modern Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 97.

> reproductions has enhanced the "auratic" presence of the originals, by preparing the viewer for the experience of the artwork.[15]

It is thus important to consider, as illustrated by *Bubbles* as well as the sale of Associated American Artists' prints, that the reproduction of art into multiples has been shown to prepare the viewer for, in Mattick's words, "an enhanced experience" of the artwork. This enhanced experience, whether it leads only to appreciation of the artwork itself or also to purchase of the advertised product, seems not necessarily to diminish the aura of artworks as Benjamin predicted.

Sharpe illustrates an interesting point relating to the determination of an artwork's value upon its reproduction in multiple forms by pointing out the sharp decrease in value of many of Millais's earlier artworks after their rights to reproduction were sold. This is because their value lay in their reproducibility or copyright. Until 1897 when the Copyright Commission "ruled that the owner of a work of art also owned its copyright," it was possible to sell copyrights separately from the art object itself; this allowed prices to fall because a painting could be purchased without its copyright.[16] The copyright also had a value and, if was already sold, the painting was worth less. The lower value of some of Millais's original works of art, compared to the value given to their rights for reproduction, underscores the increasing acceptance of fine art as a commodity and suggests that while the "aura" of a work of art may, in some ways decrease, its value may

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[15] Mattick's quote continues as he suggests that the circulation of reproductions enhances the auratic presence of the originals by also "embodying the limits of reproduction and so the uniqueness and unreproducible properties of the original and—last but hardly least—by being the basis of a 'new form of class distinction,' the difference between 'those who own originals as opposed to those who own only reproductions." Mattick, 101.

[16] Martha Tedeschi. "How Prints Work: Reproductions, Originals, and their Markets in England, 1840-1900." (PhD dissertation Northwestern University, 1994), 23.

increase when it is reproduced.[17] The painting's value is now divorced from the actual object and associated with its reproducible image instead.

The many functions and meanings of Millais's *Bubbles,* and the changed reputation of Millais himself, will continue to serve as an example of the public's reception of art used in advertising, especially by corporate industry, as well as the ability of an artwork to reinvent function and meaning upon reproduction in multiple forms. This phenomenon was later seen in the United States as the market for color prints fueled the advertising industry and substantially changed the use of fine art in advertising.

Though the first use of fine art in advertising in the United States remains unclear, one of the earliest examples is the Erie Railroad's use of Currier and Ives prints in their advertisements.[18] In 1903 the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway showed an interest in supporting artists by providing them with free transportation within the Southwest in return for paintings, which the company used in magazine advertisements and reprinted on its dining car menus.[19] The company also purchased original genre and landscape paintings made by artists in the Southwest, which led to a large collection featured in several public exhibitions.

Evidence suggests that while the use of fine art in advertising and for other corporate projects continued to expand during the early part of the twentieth century, the

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[17] In her description of the Victorian print market of England in the 1880s, Brenda Rix explains the high demand for reproductive prints. Rix suggests "Since painting and copyright were separate saleable commodities, the publisher usually attempted to buy both" and continues "The accusation that the publishers were the dictators of the art market is probably quite justified." See Brenda Rix, *Pictures for the Parlour: The English Reproductive Print from 1775 to 1900* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1983), 61.

[18] Currier and Ives' earliest images used for advertising the Erie Railroad that I was able to find was 1874. Fred J. Peters, *Railroad: Indian and Pioneer Prints* (New York: Antique Bulleting Pub. Co.,1930), 29.

[19] Art, Inc., *American Paintings from Corporate Collections* (Montgomery, Alabama: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), 10

artists involved had differing opinions about their commissions for these various assignments. These partnerships between artists and corporations yielded occasional discontent in some cases and feelings of satisfaction in others. These differing sentiments warrant examination at this juncture and will also be further explored within each of this chapter's case studies.

Some artists, such as John Atherton, felt that their reputations as fine artists were diminished because they created art to be used in advertising.[20] Other artists became frustrated with the lack of creative freedom some of these partnerships provided, as evidenced by Thomas Hart Benton when he was looking back at the history of fine art used in advertising and said:

> It is a mistake for business to attempt the prostitution of fine art when there is a perfectly capable commercial technique for advertising purposes. The artist who substitutes for his own perceptions the fictions of advertising does not do either himself or advertising much good. He may get a nice fat check; but he sells himself out and thereby also sells out his art in public estimation—which is a pretty serious matter for the professional.[21]

Though the comment came years after the retrenchment of artists from advertising, Benton's reaction remains pertinent. His failure to delineate between the artist allowing business to prostitute his work and, as a result "sell himself out," and the artist's reliance on "public estimation", which he terms a "pretty serious matter," is particularly salient. Benton's acerbic reaction may indeed be self-critical, reflecting back on his own

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[20] Artist John Atherton admitted, "I had always felt the pictures done for advertisements were in a separate class and had no relation to "painting" as I wished to do it." John Atherton, "The Artist in Advertising," *Magazine of Art* 37 (March, 1944): 101.
Benton was not against the use of fine art by corporate industry in all of the directions examined in this chapter, however, and these situations will be explored later.

[21] McCausland, 26.

participation in both advertising campaigns and Hollywood's film industry. But, what is most relevant to the understanding of Associated American Artists in Benton's comments is the uphill battle that Lewenthal had to fight in order to bridge the distinction in the minds of both consumers and artists between the "high art" Benton alludes to and the increasingly accessible art for advertisement or print sales.

One of the artists who became dissatisfied with creating art for advertisements was Maxfield Parrish, who created frameable prints as advertisements for General Electric Mazda Lamps in 1910.[22] Parrish's artwork was in sufficient demand that he had steady employment as an advertising illustrator, but he ultimately became frustrated with the short deadlines and lack of artistic freedom and ceased creating artwork for advertisements. He left his position at General Electric to make art for Brown and Bigelow, a firm that reproduced his prints on calendars and greeting cards.[23] Although his position with Brown and Bigelow still required making art for advertising this relationship was not as overt as it had been with his projects with General Electric because no advertising slogans were placed directly on his artwork at Brown and Bigelow.

N.C. Wyeth's experience as a fine artist employed as an illustrator sheds light on the disappointment some artists felt when they created imagery for advertisements. Wyeth took on illustration because it guaranteed him steady employment, but it caused him aggravation, as evidenced by this quote: "a picture to the publisher is essentially a commercial asset. Its principle function is to attract attention. It is, in short, a form of

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[22] McCausland,16.

[23] Ibid., 224.

advertisement. And so to be practical for the publisher the true function of a picture [to express the truth, the artist's "inner feeling"] is distorted."[24] Wyeth's discontent soon became the sentiment shared by other illustrators as, by the end of World War I, illustrators had lost the battle for respect as "fine" artists and their work was now regarded as entirely commercial.[25]

The employment of fine artists by corporate industry for advertising purposes or other corporate needs was not viewed negatively by all artists, however, which is evidenced by the careers of George Luks, Winslow Homer, and John Sloan, who worked both as fine artists and as illustrators for newspapers, advertisements, and other projects. Michelle Bogart suggests that for these artists, the aforementioned projects "represented a lucrative, challenging blend of fine art and high-level popular culture, more broadly accessible than easel or mural painting."[26]

Artists' continuing interest in pursuing such projects was ensured by their awareness of positive and successful collaborations between artists and corporate industry. For instance, in 1928, Steinway and Sons pianos, through N.W. Ayer and Sons advertising agency, commissioned artists to create art for its advertisements.[27] One such advertisement involved the commission of Basque Spanish painter Ignacio Zuloaga, who painted a full-length portrait of Polish pianist Ignacy Paderewski used in Steinway's

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[24] Bogart, 58. Brackets are included in the original quote. For more on Wyeth's opinions about working as an illustrator see Alexander Nemerov, "N.C. Wyeth's Theatre of Illustration," *American Art* 6, No.2 (1992): 36-57.

[25] Bogart, 58.

[26] Ibid., 20.

[27] N.W. Ayer agency created its own gallery of advertising art and staged regular exhibitions. Marchand, 26.

advertisements. Zuloaga received $25,000 dollars for the project and, because of the positive feedback the advertisements received, Steinway decided to continue to develop their use of fine art in advertising, commissioning paintings from artists such as Emil Fuchs, Serge Sudekin, and John Carroll.[28] According to a spokesman for Steinway, the program gave distinction to advertising and paid "dividends both in prestige and in cash."[29]

Steinway's campaign in using fine artists for advertisements in the late 1920s was highly successful and helped pave the way for the continued use of fine art in advertising. All of the artwork used was devoid of any typeface and reproductions were placed next to accompanying advertising text, which I believe contributed to the campaign's success as did the fact that the works of art were created to promote a general interest in music as opposed to specifically promoting Steinway pianos.[30] These images, which appeared less overtly to be art for advertising, serve as useful examples of the positive relationship that existed between fine artists and the advertising industry. These positive results also often occurred when artists were given freedom in their creations as opposed to fulfilling strict requirements for subject matter and style, which hampered their creativity and created frustration for the artists involved.

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[28] Walter Abbell, "Industry and Painting," *Magazine of Art* 39 (March, 1946): 83.

[29] Ralph M. Pearson, *Experiencing American Pictures* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), 77.

[30] Art Inc, 10.

Associated American Artists and Corporate Industry's Use of Fine Art

Steinway's employment of artists for its advertising campaigns was born of the company's interest in promoting its pianos and was therefore a rather straightforward approach. Other companies used fine art to fulfill different needs in addition to advertising their products.

The employment of fine art for advertising and other corporate uses offered several incentives for corporations during the late 1930s and 1940s: positive publicity and a 5% pre-tax income deduction was given to institutions who were patrons of the arts, as dictated by a 1935 congressional ruling.[31] Several of the major corporations with which Associated American Artists collaborated (Standard Oil of New Jersey and Abbott Laboratories) were "under fire" or on the defensive resulting from various scandals or conflicts with the federal government, and were thus hopeful that their patronage and use of fine art would allow them to recover and develop more positive reputations.[32] The interest was not necessarily in the art itself, but what could be achieved *through* the art, whether the reparation of corporate reputation or simply capitalistic gain.

Whether fine art was needed to mask the overt capitalistic incentives behind the deceptive nature of advertisements, or advertisers or corporations had altruistic or larger social motives, it is clear that corporations were beginning to see the attraction that talented or successful artists had for potential customers. Advertising historian Roland

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[31] Bogart, 274.

[32] Ibid., 274-275.

Marchand explains one of the reasons fine art was used in advertisements during this time period: "When an advertising director sought to create an aura of style around a product that did not itself convey an adequate prestige image, he was likely to turn to high art for the desired association."[33] The product being advertised, Marchand continues, acquired "a prestige from its proximity to a work of fine art."[34]

Reeves Lewenthal capitalized on this concept of status elevation by developing strong bonds with several corporations in his effort to create a larger audience for expanding his business. He saw the increasing power these corporations developed and profited from their authority in the marketplace. By convincing these corporations that fine art would improve their image, Lewenthal became the leading and most successful director of corporate collaborations and was peerless in these endeavors through the 1940s, as determined both by the number of artists he represented who were involved in corporate commissions and the number of corporations that engaged his services.[35] Associated American Artists' artists created artwork that was used in advertisements and in other applications for companies such as The American Tobacco Company, Standard Oil, DeBeers Diamonds, United Artists, Maxwell House, Imperial Whiskey, the Hiram Walker Company, National Steel, Country Gentleman, The Farmer, McCall's, Holiday, Look, Simon and Schuster, Encyclopedia Britannica, and Green Giant.[36]

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[33] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 140.

[34] Ibid., 140.

[35] Walter Abbell, 85.

[36] In many of these cases there is little archival material about these projects or imagery of the artwork created, and in other cases I was unable to access the archival material for a complete assessment of these

By exploring a few key partnerships for which the most complete documentation still exists we can learn how Reeves Lewenthal profited from an expanding market during the late 1930s and 1940s. It is important to note, however, that, as the U.S. entered World War II, many people may have been apprehensive about purchasing fine art and, therefore, Lewenthal's entrée into the business world was a logical step if he wished to keep himself, and his artists, employed during this time. An examination of these collaborations and the potential impact they had on artist's reputations will be made through the discussion of four case studies: Abbott Laboratories, Standard Oil, The American Tobacco Company, and Pepsi-Cola.

Lewenthal initiated these commissions and served as an agent for the artists of his firm who were involved in the marketing campaigns as well as for those artists who were hired for specific projects, but were not represented by the firm outside of these projects. In addition, he was responsible for acting as an intermediary between the advertising agency and the commissioning company. Associated American Artists worked with various corporations in multiple ways: Associated American Artists commissioned its artists to create artworks for advertisements of a company's products and to document the history or practices of a company, its artists' work appeared in calendars created for public consumption, and corporations hired Lewenthal to create collections which were sometimes circulated in public exhibitions and accompanied by printed catalogues.

Lewenthal's rhetoric suggested he initiated these corporate commissions in order to create awareness of his agency and the artists he represented as well as to continue to foster a market for American contemporary art. As he forged these relationships,

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projects. I contacted all of the surviving companies and was only given material by Standard Oil and Hiram Walker, unfortunately neither of which was complete enough for a full analysis.

however, his comments reveal a more profit-centered outlook, a clear departure from his earlier ideological and rhetorical position, which appeared to be more philanthropic and selfless during the first years of the firm. When discussing his firm's partnerships with corporate industry Lewenthal explained, "The artist knows that industry is the prime mover in adopting new techniques in selling and distributing goods." He continued, "It is this realization that makes him willing to meet industry more than half-way and participate more fully in the opportunities afforded him by business in the modern methods used to introduce its products."[37] It is unclear what Lewenthal meant by suggesting artists "meet industry more than half-way" though his next remarks suggest he was referring to artists' acceptance of corporate industry as their patrons. Lewenthal continued, "There are, of course, many snobs among the painters who hold themselves aloof from 'commercial taint,' refusing to understand that they can create art for advertising, rather than advertising art."[38]

Lewenthal noted the changes made to advertising upon the inclusion of fine art in these campaigns when he said: "The wild, lying advertising of a short decade ago, with its exaggerated promises, its honeyed illustrations, has given way to a technique of realism which makes it possible for the artist of integrity to cooperate in public sales efforts."[39] He acknowledged that many artists "have been quick to participate in the economic and display opportunities opened by large advertisers."[40] These large advertisers and corporate commissions were a powerful presence in America during the

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[29] McCausland, 123.

[38] Ibid., 124.

[39] Ibid, 125.

[40] Ibid, 123.

period of this study and took on the role that influential magnates or museums held in the past.

The Abbott Formula

For one noteworthy example of the fraternal tie between Lewenthal's "high art" and corporate business, we can look at Abbott Laboratories, a pharmaceutical supply company in Chicago, which commissioned a multitude of Associated American Artists' artists to fulfill its various corporate needs. Reeves Lewenthal proclaimed that the relationship with Abbott Laboratories was the most successful and longest contract Associated American Artists had with a company, lasting 15 years.[41] This relationship began in 1938, when Lewenthal approached Charles S. Downs, advertising director for Abbott Laboratories to facilitate an arrangement that would employ the artists of Associated American Artists' to create artwork for the company to use in material it sent by mail as well as its printed advertisements.

Abbott cited its reasons for hiring fine artists were to '"command the attention of busy professional men," because its executives believed that "fine artists" were "more adept at capturing the *spirit* of the stories contained in advertising copy,"' and also "because—perhaps—of a predilection on our part for the work of first ranking artists."[42] One should not ignore, however, that Abbott was recently under fire from the

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[41] Ibid., 123. I have been unable to find any further dates for the Abbott commissions than the ones given here.

[42] Quoted in Pearson, 78. Pearson did not give a citation for this quote.

government over misleading advertisements of patent medicines. It is likely that the corporation's art collecting and advertising campaigns were at least in part disguised efforts to overcome recent bad press and diminishing public reputation.[43]

Abbott hired Associated American Artists to provide all the imagery for its *What's New* magazine, which was sent free to physicians across the United States. With the assistance of Reeves Lewenthal, Abbott also created a corporate collection of artwork to decorate its corporate offices and gave some of these works to its employees as gifts.[44] In addition, Associated American Artists created artwork for separate informational brochures produced for specific drugs, fliers, envelopes, advertisements in medical journals, other professional publications, patient information booklets, and the packaging materials used to send drugs to physicians. Associated American Artists and Abbott Labs collaborated on several Abbott-sponsored projects, from 1938 to 1945. Upon the U.S. involvement in the war, these projects included the deployment of artists to various theatres around the world to paint scenes of battle, military medical assignments, and illustrations of Indian reservations. Abbott also initiated circulating exhibitions of the artwork they purchased from Associated American Artists. Associated American Artists'

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[43] Michele Bogart suggests of Abbott's art collecting and patronage that it "represented an effort to retain their high standing as responsible businesses and to convince the public that pharmaceutical companies complied with federal restrictions to provide products of distinction that served medical experts and the American public." Bogart, 275-276.

[44] The less significant paintings Abbott acquired through Associated American Artists were stored in a building across the street from the main corporate headquarters. Once a year employees who worked in the advertising department were given permission to view them and take any of the artwork free of charge. Patricia Shaw interview with Blayne McCurry, November 1985 and February, 1986, collection of Patricia Shaw.

Art for Advertising Department had complete freedom with ideas and implementation and the medical department of Abbott checked the copy for medical accuracy.[45]

Associated American Artists' involvement with Abbott's *What's New* magazine was an important connection for the firm because it was a unique opportunity for its artists to gain greater visibility to a wide-ranging audience. These magazines were sent free to physicians and copies were put in waiting rooms. Between 185,000 to 200,000 copies were distributed per issue.[46] The popularity of the art included in Abbott's magazine is evidenced by the public's reaction and the company's response in return. Abbott received many requests for information about the artwork reproduced in the magazine as well as letters from patients requesting extra copies of the magazines. Three to four hundred copies of the color covers of each issue were printed with white mat borders, which the physicians could order for free. Color reproductions of paintings were free by request, some of which were featured in portfolios that illustrated a particular theme, i.e., the history of medicine or medicine used on Indian reservations. Abbott printed the reproductions and portfolios in reaction to numerous requests for copies of the images included in *What's New*. *What's New* magazines were Abbott's main form of advertising as each issue included full-color ads for its products painted by the chosen artists, as well as artwork for the magazine's covers.

In addition to the artwork in the magazine, significant writers such as Archibald MacLeish, Carl Sandburg, and John Steinbeck contributed to the magazines' content with short fiction or poetry. Associated American Artists served as the liaison between the

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[45] Ibid. I have been unable to find any material that lists the locations and dates for these exhibitions.

[46] Ibid.

writers and poets and Abbott.[47] All of the writers and poets involved in *What's New* were also selected and hired by Reeves Lewenthal, pointing to his near complete-control over the selection of artists and writers utilized for Abbott's various needs.[48]

Reeves Lewenthal asserted that Abbott greatly benefited from its collaboration with his firm and its artists because Abbott's use of fine art raised the company's status. In describing Charles S. Downs' commitment to working with Associated American Artists, Lewenthal commented,

> He is fully aware that proper use of art can automatically stamp the associated sponsor as one of sensitive taste and discernment. Thus, through association with quality, he begets a psychological impression of the qualitative stature of his firm and it's products.[49]

When describing Abbott's house organ, *What's New,* Lewenthal suggested the company was "breaking spectacularly with a traditional pattern of pictorial conservatism" by using fine art in its mailings. Discerning what Lewenthal meant by moving beyond "pictorial conservatism," however, is difficult to ascertain without reproductions of the artwork he referenced, which I have been unable to obtain. Lewenthal continued his assessment of his firm's collaboration with Abbott by praising its strategy when he stated, "through its innovation of an envelope with an all-over color design related to the pictorial content of the promotional piece it carries, the attention of the receiver of Abbott literature is arrested immediately, and through continued usage, Abbott pieces have become readily

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[47] According to Reeves Lewenthal, Associated American Artists was a meeting place for artists and writers during the 30s and early 40s. Interview with Patricia Shaw, collection of Patricia Shaw.

[48] Ibid, Patricia Shaw interview notes, collection of Patricia Shaw.

[49] McCausland, 127.

identifiable in the mails."[50] Essentially Lewenthal is speaking of "branding," or "brand identity" that arose from the repeated usage of imagery that came to be recognizable as belonging to Abbott Laboratories, a practice which became necessary as businesses grew and needed to distinguish themselves and their products from their competition.

This branding became noticeably profitable for Abbott as evidenced by an increase in their sales with the initiation of the illustration of their mailings by Associated American Artists.[51] The public's positive reaction to the use of fine art in *What's New* is demonstrated by the inquiries about artists reproduced in the magazine. In fact, Associated American Artists' New York gallery received customers who spent between $25,000 and $60,000 on artwork presumably because of their introduction to it in the *What's New* magazine.[52] Upon the appearance of a Grant Wood lithograph in the magazine, the gallery's entire inventory of Grant Wood's lithographs was sold.[53] It is important to note that the source of these conclusions-- that Abbott's magazine caused increased gallery sales due to the public's exposure to the firm's artwork-- is an article that drew its facts directly from the firm itself. Therefore, these conclusions remain the point of view of Lewenthal and his firm and, because sales receipts and notes on

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[50] Ibid., 127. Lewenthal continued, "In order to advance the impression of quality, Abbott backs up its use of original art with fine paper and excellent reproductions."

[51] Patricia Shaw interview with Blayne McCurry, manager of advertising and public relations at Abbott, collection of Patricia Shaw. McCurry stated that Abbott's revenue was increased upon initiation of the program with Associated American Artists.

[52] Doss, "It Pays to Advertise," 39, 40.

[53] "Immediately after the reproduction of Schreiber's hayfield a man came in and bought to canvases by him; since then he has spent about $5,000 on American paintings. Another new customer whose introduction to art came through the same channels has passed some $60,000 across the counter since January and is still buying." Ibid., 39, 40.

inventory from this period are scarce, it is impossible to check these claims for accuracy.[54]

Because I have been unable to find any of the *What's New* magazines from the period under investigation, it is not possible to analyze the artwork included. As stated, these magazines were sent to physicians, an audience Abbott expected to "identify with the exclusive and tasteful high cultural enterprise signified by "good painting."[55] It appears that its employing of fine artists was a decision partly made because the company felt its highly educated audience (doctors) could better relate to the high quality of the art.[56]

Some of these doctors may have had difficulty understanding some of this artwork, however. This difficulty is evidenced by what Abbott referred to as the "little Herman" letters they received from physicians in response to the artwork featured in their mailings. An example of a letter sent by a doctor to Abbot: "I have an eight year old son named Herman who can paint better than that," showcases both that the physicians were taking note of the artwork used by Abbott and also that the physicians who sent these comments either did not understand or appreciate the type of art being used.[57]

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[54] I viewed the entire collection of archival material on the firm in the Archives of American Art, which includes a small set of sales receipts and correspondence relating to Grant Wood's artwork made for the firm. None of this material provides evidence that supports or denies Lewenthal's claims regarding Abbott's reproductions having impact on the sale of Grant Wood's art in Associated American Artists' New York gallery.

[55] Bogart, 276.

[56] Michelle Bogart suggests historian Ralph Pearson "approved of this 'new' practice of appealing to an audience presumed to be 'civilized adults' rather than 'morons'." Bogart, 276.

[57] Patricia Shaw interview, collection of Patricia Shaw.

As a result, Reeves Lewenthal hired Emily Genauer, *New York Herald Tribune* art critic and Pulitzer Prize winner, to write commentary for the modern looking artwork that Abbott featured.[58] From that point forward, physicians who received *What's New* gained an education on the various art styles represented by Associated American Artists and promoted by Abbott.[59] This catering to the audience is a hallmark of Lewenthal's advertising philosophy and directly in keeping with his role as educator and tastemaker.

According to Lewenthal, Abbott's use of fine art in the company's mailings and magazines helped the public recognize the firm and associate it with high standards and quality. The assistant advertising manager for Abbott suggested in 1953 that the use of fine art in their direct mail marketing was responsible for sales surging from $10,000,000 to $85,000,000 in fifteen years.[60] Thus, in the instance of Abbott and its use of fine art in the various capacities mentioned, the company and the firm assessed the partnership as positive and beneficial. However, as will be shown below, the marriage of art and industry was not always favorable.

Standard Oil

In 1943 Jersey Standard, New Jersey's division of Standard Oil Corporation, created a public relations department, which hired Associated American Artists to organize and direct their artistic commissions documenting "the role played by oil from

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[58] The Emily Genauer papers in the Archives of American Art do not include this information. Abbott Laboratories has denied my requests for information from January 2006 to April 2012.

[59] Patricia Shaw interview, collection of Patricia Shaw.

[60] *Advertising Age*, vol. Z4. No 10 (March 9, 1953): 2.

1940 to 1945. The company wanted a meaningful, educational and enduring record of the oil industry during those crucial years."[61] In addition to picturing the role of oil, the company hoped to repair any damage to their reputation that may have been caused when they were accused of overcharging the U.S. Navy for fuel oil during a complicated cartel agreement between the U.S. government and a German petrochemical company, which ultimately aided the German war effort by not attending to U.S. demands in a timely fashion.[62]

Frank Caspers, art critic and advertising director with *Art Digest*, N.W. Ayer & Sons, and the Office of War Information, described the creation of this record as a collaborative effort between photographers, writers, painters, radio broadcasters, and reporters to "picture the drama of oil at war, fueling the home front as well as the mighty Allied armies, navies, and air forces."[63] Caspers explained the role of artists in documenting Standard Oil's story: "they were to create a lasting record in a medium itself of inherent durability and intrinsic value (oil). As highly trained and sensitive observers, they could record sweep or prairies where oil pipelines carry oil from wells to refineries to dockside terminals."[64] Artists who were already at the war fronts were told to picture the uses of oil in their areas while other artists were dispatched to oil fields and refineries in the United States as well as to Standard Oil's research laboratories and foreign oil-producing fields.[65] Sixteen artists were assigned to these destinations: Howard Baer,

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[61]McCausland, 130.

[62] Bogart, 274.

[63] Ibid, 130. N.W. Ayer worked with Associated American Artists on Standard Oil's project

[64] McCausland, 131.

Robert Benney, Thomas Hart Benton, Franklin Boggs, Howard Cook, Francis Criss, Adolph Dehn, Kerr Eby, Ernest Fiene, Joe Jones, Carlos Lopez, Frank Mechau, Bruce Mitchell, Georges Schreiber, Lawrence Beall Smith, and Frederic Taubes. Some of these artists were already represented by Associated American Artists and others were hired temporarily.

Associated American Artists organized the entire project for Jersey Standard. Because of the difficulty Standard Oil encountered getting the required paperwork accepted by the government to allow artists to travel in active military areas, Lewenthal took over as he was already prepared to handle these operational details through his connections with the War Department.[66] Standard Oil imposed no limitations on Associated American Artists in the choice of artists, the particular assignments given, or the manner in which the artists depicted their subjects. Additionally Standard Oil did not specify the quantity of paintings it required for the project and did not restrict Associated American Artists' use of the images.

Standard Oil received a total of two hundred oil and watercolor paintings, which traveled in exhibitions across the United States to colleges and universities in 1944. Initially exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City, many of the images were reproduced in booklets with accompanying text, which served as catalogues for the exhibitions. In addition, images were made available to art magazines, newspapers, and school publications throughout the United States as well as the company's own magazine.[67] Standard Oil's magazine, *The Lamp,* featured color reproductions of the

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[65] Ibid, 131.

[66] Ibid, 131.

paintings commissioned through Associated American Artists. *The Lamp* was originally a bulletin for the company's employees, but evolved into a quarterly shareholder magazine. The *Lamp* was distributed to over 255,000 readers.

Caspers noted that Jersey Standard's objective

> was not the creation of art. It was, rather, the creation of a documentary record. The painters' function was that of highly trained pictorial reporters. Whether or not their record produced aesthetically sound art was beside the point. If it did, fine. If not, the pictures nevertheless serve the purpose for which they were commissioned.[68]

Essentially this meant that there were no aesthetic requirements or high expectations for the quality of art that was produced for Standard Oil. Caspers continued,

> Industry employs artists to perform a service. This is the important point; for it means that the contemporary painter fits into today's economic life by performing a service profitable to himself and his sponsor. That is why Standard Oil Company joined the community of industrial sponsors of contemporary art.[69]

The company's expectations it had for its artists (that the images did not have to be aesthetically sound) could only have had influence on the quality of the art produced if the artists were, in fact, aware that Standard Oil did not expect or require high quality art. Standard Oil's plan was for the artists it hired to paint propaganda pictures for the company. Casper's attitude toward art, and the relationship facilitated by Associated American Artists, thus put artists in a position in which art served profit (which is not unlike the place art has held throughout history). The difference with this project, compared to others cited in this dissertation, is that Standard Oil did not profess to

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[67] Ibid, 137.

[68] Ibid, 131.

[69] McCausland, 130.

advance the cause of art or give service to the public through its employment of fine artists to create images that would be seen by the masses. Yet, as noted, these images were exhibited in museums and reproduced in large quantities, so they were easily accessible to the public. The paintings had the potential to yield positive results for the public through increasing its exposure to fine art, as well as for the artists, whose artwork reached greater audiences. Standard Oil's aims in hiring fine artists for its business needs were no different than the other corporations mentioned here, but it is important to note that the company gave no indication that it was also intending to "give back" to the public by providing them with exposure to fine art.

The varied contributions that this commission yielded is best seen when examining Thomas Hart Benton's painting *Fluid Catalytic Crackers* (1944) and Francis Criss's *Tomorrow's World* (1944) (Figures 28 and 29). Benton's painting could easily be mistaken for one of Charles Scheeler's precisionist studies as it sharply depicts two of Jersey Standard's Baton Rouge catalytic crackers in operation, with steam and smoke billowing from their mighty pipelines. The image is one that appears to promote and showcase America's industrial proficiency and, like his *oeuvre* in general, speaks to a positive and hopeful future. Criss's painting documents the company's research laboratories by prominently displaying a technician or scientist checking the clarity of the liquid compound he holds by raising it to the light, a gesture which appears almost as a toast to the company's future achievements. He stands amidst beakers and pipettes while a group of researchers in the background vigorously take notes and comment on a chart hung on the wall. The painting shows technical merit and also bears similarity to images by Norman Rockwell in its illustrative qualities. These two images are a small

representation of the assorted paintings made for Standard Oil and appear to be more finished in comparison to some of the sketchy renderings made by other artists, such as *Elk Basin* by Joe Jones (Figure 30). Jones' image of Standard Oil's oil well in Elk Basin near Yellowstone National Park is a loose rendering of what the artist called "the violence of the terrain."[70] The multitude of styles presented are the result of Standard Oil's decision not to provide the artists with strict parameters for their assignments.

The Brooklyn Museum displayed the images cited above along with the entire collection created for Standard Oil. The display of this artwork in a renowned museum leads to the conclusion that either the museum saw the works worthy of display in its esteemed environment and/or the museum felt that the excitement of the exhibition would entice a substantial crowd to visit the museum for such an event. The benefit of this project to the artists involved was that their artworks were seen by a large number of people in each of the cities to which the exhibition traveled as well as through the printed copies distributed to various institutions. For Standard Oil this campaign became a colossal advertisement for its company.[71]

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[70] The Art Gallery of Toronto, *Oil, An Exhibition of Documentary Paintings from the Collection of Standard Oil Company (N.J.),* (May, 1948), 23.

[71] I have been unable to determine the cities to which this exhibition traveled. Johns Hopkins University owns copies of Standard Oil Company's *Annual Reports* from 1943 to 1950 in its Pleade Library, housed under its Series 7 Business File, compiled by Jacob Blaustein. Pleade Library's archives is in the process of being moved and the library's staff has been unable to locate the annual reports at this time. As a result, I have been unable to examine them for relevant information. Additional material, including correspondence, public affairs material, financial information and news releases for Standard Oil can be found in boxes 2.207/H26 and 2.104/9.10 in the Exxon Corporation files at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin. These materials are only available to on-site users and I therefore did not have access to them.

Pepsi Cola

Pepsi-Cola hired Associated American Artists in 1941 to organize and serve as project manager for its attempt to use fine art as a means to outdo its biggest competitor, Coca-Cola. After obtaining promising growth in the market in the 1930s due to a larger quantity of soda sold for less money than Coke, Pepsi's president decided to surpass Coca-Cola by elevating the company's reputation through support for the arts.[72] Because its executives believed that the public would not have responded well to a self-serving advertising campaign, Pepsi endeavored to

> do a real public service by producing a calendar of good works of art, which would bring to the public some of the best in American art and which would be of service to the artist as well. Such a calendar would wear well through the years and the substantial sum of money spent on the reproductions in it would not be wasted.[73]

Pepsi's president, Walter S. Mack, Jr., intended to choose from among the best paintings by American artists selected by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's staff, which gave Pepsi permission to reproduce the thirteen images contained in the calendar. These images included paintings such as *Delaware Water Gap*, by George Inness; *Maine Coast*, by Winslow Homer; and *Still Life* by James Peale. The calendar, with its color reproductions, was well received by the public as well as informed art circles, causing the company to create another the following year, which was distributed to 500,000 people.[74]

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[72] Richard S. Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 22-23, 70-79.

[73] McCausland, 139.

[74] Ibid, 140.

In 1943, Pepsi collaborated with Associated American Artists when it decided it was only going to use contemporary American artists. The choice of Associated American Artists was likely because of the firm's impressive roster of corporate commissions. Associated American Artists selected all of the artists involved and, initially, took charge of the project. This decision to use contemporary artists may have arisen because of Coca-Cola's use of contemporary artists, such as N.C. Wyeth, who created an image for their 1936 calendar.[75] Pepsi-Cola's calendar used both reproductions of already existing artworks from artists such as Benton, Fiene, Curry, Hurd, Wood, and Sample as well as art commissioned especially for the calendar from Francis Criss, Adolf Dehn, Gordon Grant, James Perrin, John Costigan, and Edna Reindel.[76] According to Mack, this calendar yielded mixed responses, however, because "some of the canvases either were not characteristic of their paintings or else fell short of their best work."[77] He explained that selections would be made from finished paintings in the future and that a competition would be organized for selecting the artists.

Pepsi conceived of five objectives for the 1944 calendar of artwork, which can be paraphrased as: 1) to give the general public a valuable calendar which would help acquaint them with contemporary American art and develop an appreciation for it; 2) to offer substantial prize money to the artists; 3) to give the artists freedom to submit their best work to be judged by a well-recognized and impartial jury; 4) to give the artists a free annual exhibition where their paintings were on view and for sale to the public; and

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[75] Bogart, 398.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid, 141.

5) to hold this exhibition in larger cities to acquaint the public with living American painters and afford the artists additional opportunity to sell their work. These objectives marked the launching of the first "Portrait of America" exhibition.

The exhibition was supported by the Artists for Victory, a group of artists' organizations working on behalf of the war effort.[78] The group was founded in 1942 in New York City and consisted of delegates from major art societies and unions, such as the Allied Artists of America, National Academy of Design, Sculptors' Guild, and the New York Society of Women Artists, among several others.[79] A jury selected by Artists for Victory through the suggestion of Emily Genauer, who had worked with Associated American Artists in the Abbott Laboratories *What's New* campaign, awarded the prize money.[80] The 150 paintings deemed best were initially exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of art in a two-month show, drawing over 180,000 visitors. Nearly $40,000 worth of paintings were sold from this exhibition and the following shows that traveled throughout the United States.[81]

Because the criteria for choosing the 150 best paintings remain ambiguous, it is difficult to assess the quality of the judging. The competition was praised for its freedom from commercial influence, democratic approach, and prize money given, but issues arose that caused great concern, according to Mack, who did not give specifics.[82]

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[78] See Minutes, Artists for Victory, reel 116 AV, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[79]Bogart, 286.

[80] First prize won $2500, Second Prize $2000, Third and Fourth with $1000 and the remaining eight winning paintings received $500 each. The 150 best paintings were exhibited at museums throughout the United States. 500,000 calendars were printed by Pepsi. McCausland, 142.

[81] McCausland, 143.

Perhaps the best example of the ambiguity in judging was Pepsi's retraction of the first prize awarded by Artists for Victory to Paul Burlin in 1945.[83] Burlin's painting, *Sodajerker*, was created nine years prior to its submission for the contest, though his painting was not the only one cited as not made specifically for the contest. Pepsi's president did not confirm the reason for taking Burlin's title away, but this does illustrate the control the company had over the contest despite their claims of intending to leave all matters of judging the contest to the Artists for Victory committee.

Burlin's painting was replaced by Waldo Peirce's 1944 painting, *Maine Swimming Hole*, which was awarded first prize of $2,500 (Figure 31). Peirce's bucolic painting of a rural swimming hole is reminiscent of several paintings by American Post-Impressionist painter, Maurice Prendergast (1958-1924), who created many images of beach and park settings that are similar to Pierce's in subject matter and composition. To date, only one review of the exhibition has come to light; it was authored by Ernest Watson, journalist and art critic for *American Artist*. Watson states that Pierce's painting "sets out primarily to please and as a result is weaker than many others."[84] Watson does not give details for this assessment. Earlier in the article Watson remarked, "Maybe too many cooks spoiled the broth" as he opened his discussion of the logistics of the contest, citing the nineteen jurors involved and their responsibility for determining which twelve canvases most aptly portrayed the theme "Portrait of America." Watson did not cite specific reasons for why he considers the project to be a failure, but said "If the outcome

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[82] McCausland, 143-144.

[83] "Art: Unprized Prizewinner," *Time* 46 (December 31, 1945): 67.

[84] Ernest W. Watson, "Portrait of America, Comment on the Pepsi-Cola Competition," *American Artist* 8. (1944): 25-27.

of the present trial is on the painful side it may serve as a laboratory experiment which, it is hoped, will not discourage future efforts." He offered no assessment of other winning paintings.

Philip Evergood's painting *Wheels of Victory* (1944) received second place in the contest in 1945 (Figure 32). The image of a black soldier standing guard near a group of railroad men and a locomotive recalls the realism and documentation of social issues evident in Daumier and the artists of the Ash Can School. Evergood's bold use of paint and thick black outlines underscore the dynamism of the scene, which is further emphasized by his choice of cobalt, rust, and indigo blue paint in the foreground of the scene. The painting is appropriate to its time in the precise visual description of the bridge and machinery, which serve as visual evidence of the further development and incorporation of the United States, allowing for speedy and efficient transportation of goods and people. Contrasting its subject matter, however, the painting is reminiscent of folk and genre scenes in the simplicity of treatment given to the group of men in the center of the painting.

Other paintings were not necessarily well received, however, as evidenced by the comment of Peyton Boswell, editor of *Art Digest.* Boswell suggested, "General opinion among the critics and along 57th Street is that it is a pretty depressing picture of both life and art in America that this show gives."[85] Other criticisms claimed that most of the winning artists were those living in or near New York and only represented the modern school in the style of art they submitted.[86] Boswell's comment, and his decision to

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[85] Bogart, 287.

include criticisms about the New York-centric and modern focus of the exhibition, highlight the fact that he felt this art was too radical for his taste and not representative of "American" reality, further emphasizing the distinction between the more avant-garde and social realist art tendencies that made up a portion of the New York art scene, but were not easily understood by audiences outside of New York. Only a select few of the one-hundred and fifty winning paintings have been reprinted, therefore a complete assessment of their quality is not possible.[87]

Michele Bogart offers analysis of the project by suggesting that Artists for Victory needed to "meet its obligations to Pepsi by working out better procedures for obtaining the best art available, the kind of popular art, for example, that advertising agencies were already buying."[88] She continues, offering that Artists for Victory "believed that the purpose of the contest was to serve art and artists, not the corporation, although they acknowledged a need to revamp competition procedures to obtain a better and wider range of paintings."[89]

Lewenthal's role in the Pepsi calendar and their Portrait of America competition does not appear to have been consistent with the other corporate projects I have studied, but the Pepsi case study is important because it reveals that not all corporations utilized Associated American Artists in the same manner, yielding various results. Commentary from Associated American Artists' artists is also missing and, therefore, it is difficult to

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[86] Peyton Boswell, "Portrait of America?" *Art Digest* 19 (October 15, 1944): 3. Boswell did not indicate who specifically criticized the show for the New York and modern focus.

[87] Peps-Cola denied my request for a copy of any of the calendars or images of the paintings they purchased from the exhibitions.

[88] Bogart, 288.

[89] Ibid.

draw final conclusions about what appears to have been misguided management and poor communication between Pepsi-Cola and Artists for Victory regarding the intended goals for the projects. Removing Lewenthal from a mediating role may have contributed to the general lack of success cited for the project.

When speaking of the project Walter S. Mack admitted "it was still not doing the best job that it could do for both the artists and the public."[90] In light of his feelings, and perhaps because of the negative comments cited above, Pepsi-Cola drastically revamped its contest guidelines and judging processes, as well as changing the name of the contest to "Paintings of the Year," in 1947 in an attempt to perfect the calendar and competition. Therefore, it is apparent that the company itself judged its 1944, 1945, and 1946 calendars and contests unsuccessful.

The American Tobacco Company

The American Tobacco Company's strategy in dealing with Associated American Artists to create magazine advertisements reveals that its needs rested mainly on securing the artists for the commissions and having Lewenthal handle the logistics of the project with their advertising firm. As with Pepsi-Cola, the farther removed Lewenthal was from the project, the less successful it proved to be. This correlation yields interesting conclusions about this particular type of relationship between industry and fine artists, as will be shown throughout the discussion.

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[90] McCausland, 144.

When the Department of Justice convicted the American Tobacco Company of price-fixing and monopolization in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1940, the company's president decided to launch a marketing campaign that would set its product, Lucky Strike cigarettes, apart from its competitors who had also been convicted of these crimes.[91] The U.S. involvement in World War II sparked major advertising campaigns for cigarettes among the top tobacco producers in the United States as tobacco companies expected a surge in demand for cigarettes.

The American Tobacco Company was unique in the route it took when hiring Associated American Artists to handle its advertising needs through the Art for Advertising Department and the fine artists it represented.[92] George Washington Hill, then president of the American Tobacco Company, commissioned seventeen Regionalist artists represented by Lewenthal's firm to collaborate with American Tobacco Company's advertising agents. The American Tobacco Company's also decided not to allow these artists freedom of artistic expression, resulting in a situation that gave the company its desired results, but left the artists involved disappointed. Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry were the most well-known artists of the group to create imagery for full-page ads to be placed in mass-market magazines such as *Fortune, Life, Saturday Evening Post*, and *Time*.[93] The artists, however, were not given freedom to

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[91] R.J. Reynolds's Camels and Liggett and Myers's Chesterfields were competitors. See Bogart, 269. See also "Behind the Cigarette Verdict," *Business Week*, no. 636 (November 8, 1941): 17.

[92] See Associated American Artists archives, reel D 256, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[93] The artists hired by the American Tobacco Company were: Thomas Hart Benton; Arnold Blanch; Aaron Bohrod; James Chapin; John Steuart Curry; Ernest Fiene; Joe Jones; Doris Lee; David Stone Martin; Fletcher Martin; Robert Philipp, Paul Sample; George Schreiber; Lawrence Beall Smith; and Frederic Taubes.

depict "tobacco country," as the advertising copy called it, as they saw fit. Instead, Hill maintained a strict level of authority and vetoed any imagery if its subject matter or style did not fully promote the product as he felt it should.[94]

The lack of artistic freedom with this campaign bore down the hardest on Benton. Hill rejected Benton's first sketches because they depicted black sharecroppers.[95] Hill's advertising agents told Benton, "Don't you know you cannot show Negroes doing what looks like slave work," and went on to explain their collective position:

> …we want realism. That's why we quit the conventional model stuff and hired you artists, but we don't want realism that will foul up our sales. The Negro institutions would boycott our products and cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars if we showed pictures of this sort. They want Negroes presented as well-dressed and respectable members of society. If we did this, of course, the whole of the white South would boycott us. So the only thing to do is to avoid the representation of Negroes entirely in tobacco advertising.[96]

Hill insisted that Benton redo his imagery to portray the tobacco company in a more positive light and to include what he suggested was a symbol of his product's quality, the large yellow tobacco leaf (also known as the company's unofficial trademark). Benton retorted, "Product advertising is not a field for fine art….The commercial artist who specializes in dressing up commercial ideas is a better hand at this than the fine artist who must either represent himself and his ideas or blunder into ineptitude."[97]

Benton then traveled to North Carolina because he knew the tobacco there was mostly handled by whites. The painting he created during that trip, *Tobacco Sorters*

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[94] Bogart, 271.

[95] Adams, 323.

[96] Benton, *After*, 294-295.

[97] Thomas Hart Benton, "Business and art," in McCausland, 25-26.

(1944), was also rejected since the young girl who was shown examining tobacco leaves with the older farmer was considered too thin, which "might suggest that proximity to tobacco caused consumption."[98] The two paintings Hill accepted were *Outside the Curing Barn* and *Tobacco*, both innocuous images. *Outside the Curing Barn* (Figure 33) shows two white farmers hanging large tobacco leaves on wooden dowels across the back of a horse-pulled wagon that is parked slightly in front of a small wooden outbuilding. The middle ground is relatively barren with the exception of a stack of wooden boards and an upturned basket, which emphasize the diagonal line of the workbench inside the curing barn, which dominates the foreground. Benton opened the foreground to allow the viewer to feel as though he or she is in the space of the curing barn with an elderly man who is sorting large yellow tobacco leaves whose undulating lines and organic curves add movement to the quiet scene. The farmer in the curing barn handles the tobacco carefully and nothing about this image would elicit controversy.

Tobacco (Figure 34) is a still life dominated by a heaping pile of thickly-veined tobacco leaves resting on a table in front of a simple wooden bench and a board that is propped against a structure on the left side of the image. This board holds a loosely draped cloth and straw hat, both of which appear together almost as a man slumped against a tree, hat down over his face and taking a nap. Atop the table is a glass vase with brightly painted flowers that vertically projects in the middle ground. The background shows the same style of wooden outbuilding featured in *Outside the Curing Barn* and a farmer and horse in the distant field.

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[98] Benton, *After*, 295.

Benton was most disappointed in the lack of artistic freedom the campaign imposed (as opposed to being upset by the race-related comments). He was not alone in his frustration. Frank Caspers, *Art Digest* editor, described the American Tobacco Company as a "big money sponsor, but it so restricts the artists that their work, reduced to a standardized formula, is utterly lacking in the particular qualities that earned them their national reputations."[99] Though these remarks only came to the surface after these projects ended, it is possible the artists felt creatively restricted from the beginning of this collaboration.

As mentioned in chapter three, Benton had a personal interest in removing art from ivory towers and putting it in saloons and other public places, which was part of the reason he was eager to be part of Associated American Artists—its populist message was in keeping with his ideals and paid him well. But making art for advertising and corporate industry had ramifications he soon experienced after embarking on his journey to support the corporate culture from which he had hoped to remain separate.[100] Benton made the following comment while speaking at a symposium in 1947 about the status of fine art and its use by corporations in advertising:

> Advertising is a lying art—it depends upon suggestions that are not wholly true. And you can't expect art to deal in half-truths. Business can't expect the artist to tell its lies for it. If we do, we're pure prostitutes and should be paid high. I'm not a prostitute and I'm sick of advertising.[101]

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[99] Frank Caspers, "Patrons as Profit—Business Discovers Art as a Selling Force," *Art Digest* 17 (May 1, 1943): 5.

[100] Doss, *Benton, Pollock*, 280.

[101] Thomas Hart Benton, "Business and Art as Tom Benton Sees It." *New York PM* (December 24, 1945), reel D 255, Associated American Artists papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Benton's quote is the quintessential example of an artist feeling as though the quality and freshness of their art was compromised for the sake of the advertiser's bottom line.[102]

Benton had the freedom to turn down opportunities to create art for corporate industry, but it is obvious from the comments he made prior to the Lucky Strike commission that he had been hopeful that the marriage of art and corporate industry would be a positive union.

> Any work which helps to bridge the present gap between the artist and the practical forces of society is worth cultivation. The artist suffers as artist from his present isolation. He works so much for and within little warring aesthetic cults that he develops highly distorted views of life and of his importance. Without working contacts with his society he misses his historic mission of representing it….The desire of American business to have its operative aspects represented through art is immensely hopeful. The fact that the artist may sometimes have to argue and fight for his right to perform as artist rather than as commercial functionary is no grave drawback in this matter.[103]

The Lucky Strike campaign was the most disappointing advertising venture for Associated American Artists and has been described as the firm's least successful as well. Lewenthal suggested,

> The Lucky Strike campaign… is pointed at time and again as an example of failure of the artist and the sponsoring advertiser to get together. One cannot deny that for the artist the effort was a failure; but with all of its short-comings there was a significant departure from "corny" advertising art involved. As a pioneer effort it served as an important stepping stone.[104]

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[102] I have been unable to uncover information regarding the audience of this symposium.

[103] McCausland, 23-24.
Prior to its collaboration with Associated American Artists, the American Tobacco Company utilized Hollywood stars in nearly all of its advertisements. See AFP, "Tobacco Giants Paid Millions to Stars in Hollywood's 'Golden Age," (September 24, 2008) and K.L. Lum, J.R. Polansky, R.K. Jackler, et al, "Signed, Sealed and Delivered: Big Tobacco in Hollywood, 1927-1951" *Tobacco Control Journal* (September 25, 2008): 313-323.

[104] McCausland, 125.

Lewenthal's positive spin on the Lucky Strike campaign is a typical reminder of his continued suggestion that his firm pioneered the usage of fine art in advertising when, as I have shown in the beginning of this chapter, this practice was established prior to Associated American Artists' founding. Lewenthal's assessment was that the use of fine art in advertising Lucky Strike cigarettes was a departure from "corny" advertising art and The American Tobacco Company clearly benefited from this improved direction in more effective advertising. The benefit to the artists involved remains speculative, as evidenced by Benton's remarks.

Yet, the mass distribution of reproduced artwork in the late 1930s and 1940s was beneficial in that many more Americans were exposed to fine art (in reproduced form) through magazine advertisements, reprints, and calendars, all made possible by the country's continued interconnectedness. When compared to art magazines and museum publications, the exposure initiated by industry was far greater.[105] Walter Abell, writing in 1946, held conflicting views on this matter.[106] He suggested that the mass reproduction initiated by industry was beneficial for artists, industry, and the general population in many ways:

> This widespread dissemination of color reproductions through industrial channels constitutes a powerful educational force, particularly in view of the fact that these reproductions reach large numbers of people who never see a regular art magazine or visit an art gallery. To have the work of some of our best painters in a dozen periodicals on every newsstand, in 100,000 doctors' offices, in the reading matter distributed by large corporations to their employees and business associates, is a

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[105] Abell, 90.

[106] Abell presented his conflicting views within the same article. He did not explain reasoning for his disparate opinions.

> leavening influence favorable to the understanding and enjoyment of art on an unprecedented scale.[107]

The exposure of Americans to this art, the interest in art that it developed, and the financial support it offered the artists were all positive consequences of the mass distribution of industry-sponsored reproduced art. But, corporate representatives could hold such stringent standards on the artists and impose rigid requirements that the artists had no artistic freedom.

Abell offered an alternative viewpoint when he suggested the distribution of reproduced art by industry reinforced

> the aristocratic tradition of the private collection, placed on public view for short periods through museums, rather than the permanent public ownership of art. It is likewise functioning in terms of a cultural order in which the mass of the population lacks original art of its own and is dependent on free or cheap reproductions.[108]

Abell did not mention Associated American Artists' practice of offering affordable art to the mass population as being of service to the population and, therefore, helping them avoid a reliance on "free or cheap reproductions" of fine art should they possess an interest in art ownership.

The practice of collecting reprinted artwork removed from magazines or calendars, coupled with the increasingly frequent use of fine art in advertisements and corporate mailings, combined to disseminate fine art images. Unlike the prints Associated American Artists sold through department stores, mail order catalogues, and from their galleries, which were matted, framed, and hung in people's homes and offices,

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[107] Ibid, 91.

[108] Ibid, 115.

pages torn from magazines and images printed on advertisements and on corporate mailers and envelopes were occasionally discarded. These images were created with the knowledge that they were disposable, yet, in some cases, they were copies of the same images that were marketed as works of fine art by Associated American Artists and collected by museums, art collectors, universities, and wealthy corporations. This practice of throwing away reproduced images of fine art merits attention because it offers the possibility that the original artworks, which were later reproduced in large multiple quantities for the uses described herein, could have been seen as impermanent. One could argue that through the advent of technical reproducibility, all prints, or even posters, could be seen as disposable, especially when compared to paintings. Even so, a print sold as a work of art is marketed and treated differently than a reproduction of a print or painting used solely to market pharmaceuticals, alcohol, diamonds, etc. Therefore, the difference in handling is a direct result of both the different nature of the artwork vs. the reproduction of the artwork, and the intended use of these two forms of "art" and the role of the respective context.

Associated American Artists' relationship with the corporations that hired it in the various capacities mentioned gave the firm the opportunity to provide its artists with greater exposure to the public. This exposure, even considering the occasional mixed reviews it yielded, allowed the artists to enter the marketplace in multiple ways. The practice of showcasing their art to the public through corporate-sponsored commissions, though deemed unique and innovative as expressed by Lewenthal, was simply a continuation of practices that were firmly in place long before Associated American Artists' founding. Lewenthal promoted successfully the continued collaboration between

art and corporate industry in part because of the ongoing incorporation of the country, most notably in its increasingly marketed cultural capital which was promoted in print media. The context of this exchange between art and business in the late 1930s and 1940s remains the variable that begs further examination if a solid conclusion is to be drawn about the partnership between artists and corporate industry during this period.

Conclusion

In his famous satirical cartoon of 1946, "How to Look at Modern Art," abstract painter Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967) offered his critique of contemporary art and its relationship to modern business (Figure 35). Reinhardt's image of a tree, whose roots are labeled Cézanne, Seurat, Gauguin, and Van Gogh, supports a trunk that bears the names Braque, Matisse, and Picasso. Pure abstract "painting" is depicted on one side of the tree and pure illustrative "pictures" on the other. A large branch cracks from the burden of various chains, signs, weights, and the old shoe that hangs from it. These items include labels such as: subject matter, denotes Pepsi-Cola contest winners, business as art patron, Mexican art influence, World War II artist correspondents, Regionalism/Illustration, etc. These items dangle above the cornfield cemetery occupied by Associated American Artists, Lucky Strike, IBM, *Fortune*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Calendars, Pin-Ups, Walker Whiskey, and Oil. The corncob labels include Benton, Rockwell, Wood, Curry, Schreiber, Lucioni, and others.

Associated American Artists' position in the cornfield graveyard forebodes its eventual diminished reputation. Reinhardt's strategic placement of the firm's gravestone pointedly describes his view of Associated American Artists, its artists, and the corporate projects it initiated as not being worthy of a position of prominence, such as the leaves of those artists whose supporting branches remain strong and erect.

In 1950 Reinhardt commented on his illustration, "Does not one have to remove oneself from the business world in order to create 'fine' art to exist as a 'fine artist'?"[1] Upon founding Associated American Artists Lewenthal remarked that the sale of art ought to be treated as any other business. He marketed and sold his prints as commodities. This practice was not completely innovative, but Lewenthal was unusual in explicitly vocalizing and writing about his new sales approaches. Lewenthal proposed that his treatment of art was unique and groundbreaking; some of these claims this dissertation has disproven through examining the history of the sale of art in New York prior to Associated American Artists' founding, as well as an assessment of the literature on the European art market. Reinhardt and Lewenthal did not offer evidence of their awareness that art and business had deeper ties than those forged in the 1940s. One could argue, for example, that Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel* (1508-1512) ceiling was a form of advertising propaganda and that Pope Julius II was the High Renaissance equivalent of a corporate C.E.O. wanting to display his company's success. If viewed in this manner, Reinhardt's negative assessment of Associated American Artists and its graveyard companions showcases his naïveté of the history of art patronage, if not just his preference for separating art and industry.

Abstract Expressionist painter Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Thomas Hart Benton's most famous student and close friend, commented on Associated American Artists in a letter to his friends in response to Reeves Lewenthal's offer for him to paint a mural for the firm's New York gallery. Pollock said Associated American Artists was "a

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[1] Robert Motherwell and Ad Reinhardt, ed., *Modern Artists in America* (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, 1951), 21.

Department store of painting (most of it junk) but they do a terrific business."[2] Pollock's and Reinhardt's comments on Associated American Artists offer the most obvious need for a deeper investigation into the firm's role in the market. The firm went from being a distributor of art to the masses to a liaison between business executives and its artists. This shift suggests that a deeper investigation of the role of mass market magazines' and advertisements' impact on the public's view of the firm's art and artists would greatly expand our understanding of Associated American Artists' changing place in the art selling market.

* * *

I argue that Associated American Artists furthered the commodification of art through its method of advertising and sales. Additionally, Lewenthal's popular sales methods, specifically the sale of his firm's prints through mail order catalogue, have proven to have lasting impact on how the public currently buys art. I suggest Associated American Artists had a hitherto unexamined longer-term impact on the ways of marketing and selling fine art and, in particular, high quality prints. In the 1930s and 1940s Associated American Artists ran the largest mail-order catalogue system of selling art, and, by many accounts, the largest art gallery in the world. Its methods for marketing

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[2] Letter to Alfonso Ossorio and Ted Dragon, June 7, 1951 in Francis V. O'Connor and Eugene Victor Thaw, eds., *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné* 4: *Other Works, 1930-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 258.

and distributing art via mail-order influenced other galleries and also art institutions in their various practices. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (in New York City) and the National Gallery of Art (in Washington, D.C.) both adopted Associated American Artist's practice of selling artist-designed neckties, stationery, greeting cards, paperweights, etc., all of which bring remarkable revenue through their museum gift shops each year. Associated American Artists, building on the practices of its predecessors such as Goupil, further popularized selling photographic reproductions of art to large audiences, much the same way that eBay and other online auction sites and online art galleries operate today, thus helping set the stage for today's widely successful online art-selling venues. Today's collectors who purchase Associated American Artists prints through online galleries or auction websites are at least one generation removed from the firm's original mail-order patrons, meaning they were never the direct recipients of the firm's rhetoric and programs during a time when purchasing art via mail-order was rather new. Now buyers embrace the technology which makes Associated American Artists' prints available online in much the same way as the firm's original mail-order catalogue customers did.

Appendix A

Collectors of Associated American Artists' Prints listed in Patrons Supplements 1938-1945

Amherst College
Art Institute of Chicago
Bennington College, Vt.
Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Ma.
Brooklyn Museum
Carnegie Institute
Cayuga Museum of Art, Auburn, N.Y.
City of Grand Rapids Art Gallery
Cleveland Museum of Art
Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts
Cornell University
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts
Dartmouth College
Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans
Denver Library
Duke University
Eastman Memorial Foundation, Laurel, Miss.
Fitchburg Art Center
Fogg Art Museum
Fordson Public Schools, Michigan
General Federation of Women's Clubs
George Walker Vincent Smith Art Gallery
Goucher College, Baltimore
Hackley Art Gallery, Muskegon, Michigan
Hamilton College
Harvard University
Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii
Indiana State Library
Illinois State Library
Iowa State College
John Herron Art Institute
Junior League, Iowa
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Michigan
Kansas City Art Institute
Kansas Wesleyan University
Little Rock Junior College
Los Angeles Museum
Louisiana Polytech
Macon Art Association
Mary Bull Museum, Oxford, Ma.
Massachusetts State

Metropolitan Museum of Art
M.H. de Young Museum, San Francisco
Milwaukee Art Institute
Milwaukee Public Library
Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey
Mount Holyoke College
Municipal University
New York Public Library
New York University
Norfolk Museum of Art
Ohio University
Old White Art Colony, W. Va.
Pennsylvania State College
Philips Exeter
Princeton Print Club
Princeton University
Public Library, City of Boston
Purdue University
Raleigh Art Center
Robert Hull Fleming Museum, Burlington, VT.
Rochester Memorial Art Gallery
Sacramento Public Schools, California
Salina Art Association, Kansas
San Francisco Museum of Art
Seattle Art Museum
Skidmore College
Smith College
Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach
State of Missouri
Stephens College
Stevens Institute of Technology
Syracuse University
Taft Museum
Talladega College
Temple University
Texas Technological College
United States Library of Congress
University of Chicago
University of Connecticut
University of Idaho
University of Kansas
University of Maine
University of New Hampshire
University of Oregon
University of Toledo
University of Virginia

Valentine Museum
Wesleyan University
Whitney Museum
William Rockhill Nelson Gallery, Missouri
Williston Academy, Easthampton, Mass.
Witte Museum, Texas
Worcester Academy



Figure 1.

Reeves Lewenthal. Collection of Lana Reeves.

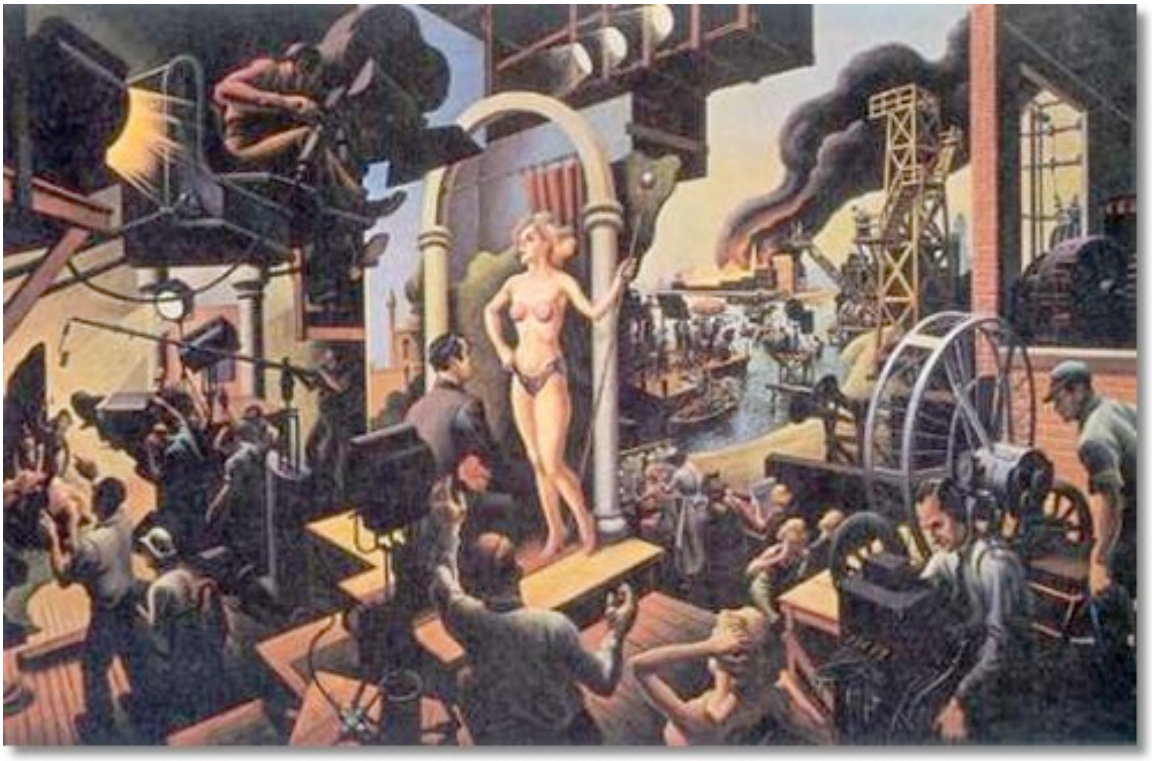

Figure 2.

Thomas Hart Benton, *Hollywood*, 1937-1938. Tempera and oil on canvas mounted on panel. Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.



Figure 3.

Edward T. Laning, *T.R. In Panama*, 1939 Oil on fiberboard
Smithsonian American Art Museum

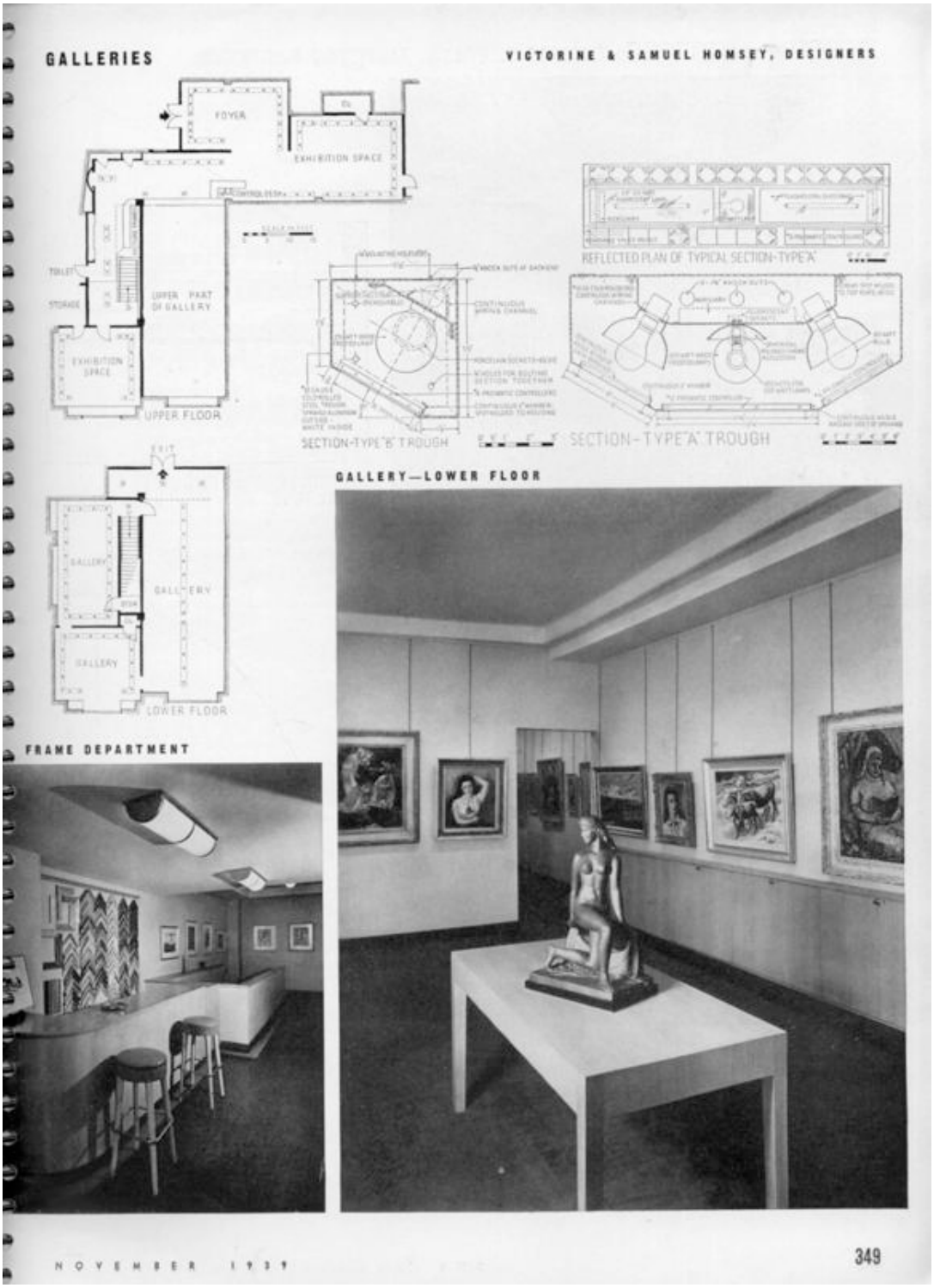

Figure 4.
Plan and image of Associated American Artists Gallery, 711 Fifth Avenue, New York. George Nelson, *The Architectural Forum*, Philadelphia: Time, 1939, 349.



Figure 5.

Thomas Hart Benton, *Departure of the Joads*, 1939. Lithograph. Ball State University Museum of Art.



Figure 6.
Associated American Artists Patrons Supplement, 1939, Author's collection.



Figure 7.
Pond's Soap Advertisement
http://www.periodpaper.com/index.php/subject-advertising-art/health-beauty/soap-cleansing/1931-ad-pond-s-cream-belmont-astor-vanderbilt-du-pont Accessed 24 August, 2012

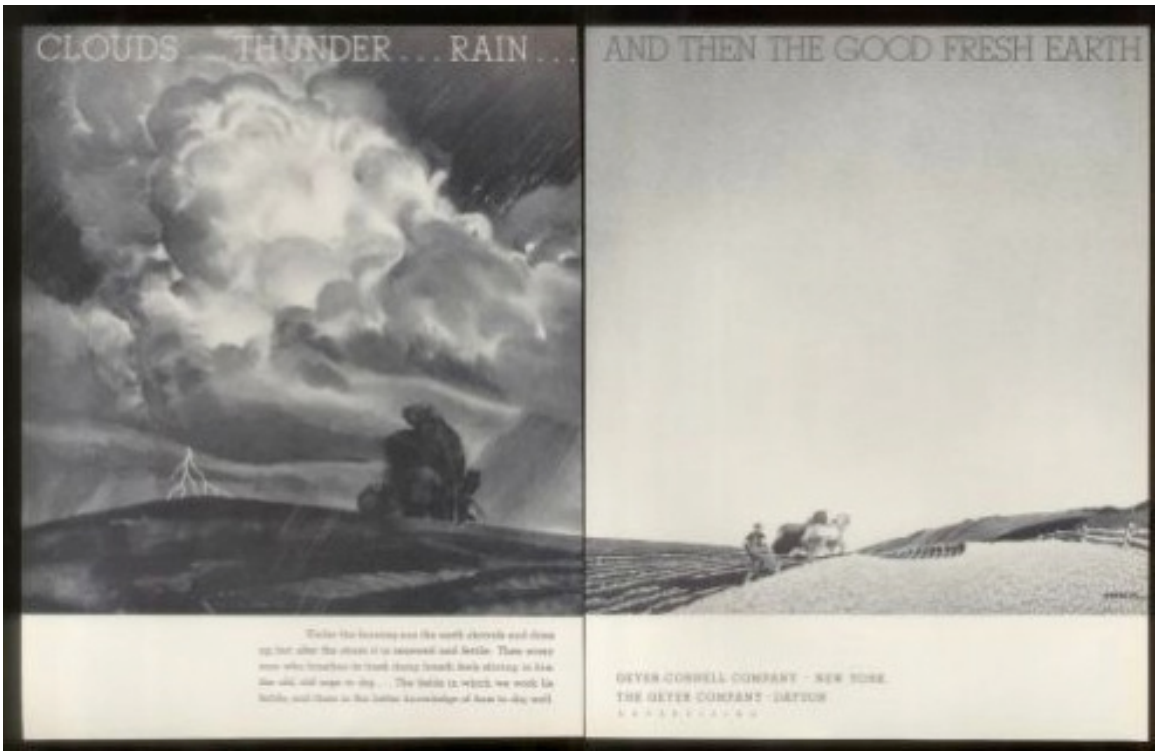

Figure 8.
Geyer Cornell advertisement, 1933.
http://www.ebay.com/itm/1933-Peter-Helck-farmer-farm-art-Geyer-Cornell-print-ad-/140612080783#vi-desc Accessed 24 August, 2012.



Figure 9.
Georges Schreiber, *Southern Siesta*, 1939. Lithograph. De Young Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco.

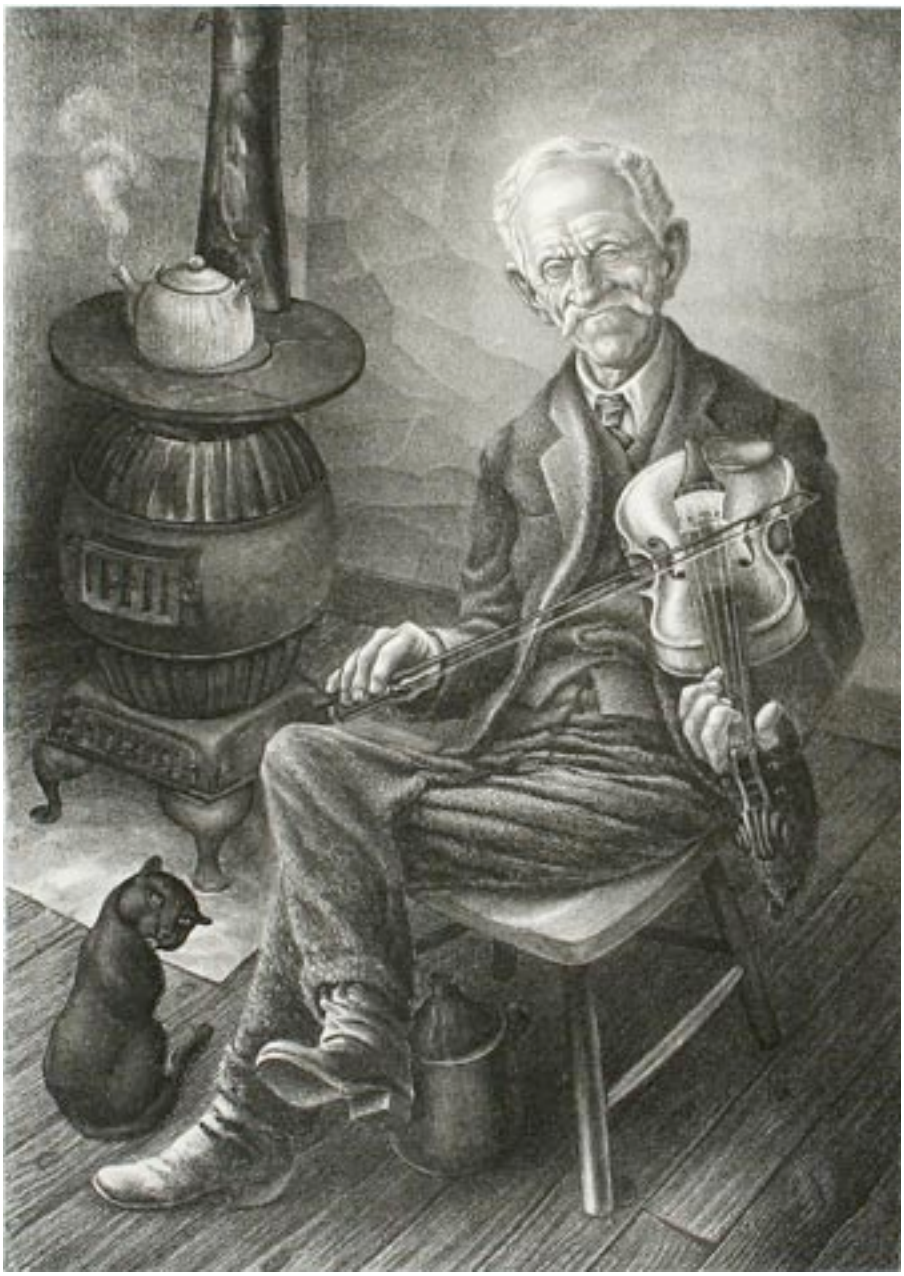

Figure 10.
John S. DeMartelly, *Two Old Toms,* 1938. Lithograph. Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 11.
Thomas Hart Benton, *I Got a Gal on Sourwood Mountain*, 1938. Lithograph. Oklahoma City Museum of Art.



Figure 12.
Thomas Hart Benton, *The Ballad of the Jealous Lover of Lone Green Valley*, 1934. Oil and tempera on canvas mounted on aluminum. Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas.



Figure 13.
Luis Quintanilla, *Deer and Faun*, 1940. Drypoint etching.
Associated American Artists, *Patrons Supplement*. Author's collection.



Figure 14.
S.L. Margolies, *Men of Steel*, 1940. Drypoint. De Young Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco



Figure 15.
William Gropper, *The Opposition*, 1942. Etching. Cleveland Museum of Art



Figure 16.
Arnold Blanch, *Along the Hudson*, 1939. Lithograph.
de Young Museum of Fine Arts, San Francisco



Figure 17.
Adolf Dehn, *Threshing,* 1939. Lithograph.
Associated American Artists *Patrons Supplement.* Author's collection.



Figure 18.
Ernest Fiene, Winter Evening, 1939. Lithograph.
Associated American Artists *Patron's Supplement.* Author's collection.



Figure 19.
Eugene Higgins, *Pioneers Resting*, 1937.
Associated American Artists *Patrons Supplement.* Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



Figure 20.
Andrew Karoly, *Broad and Wall*, 1936. Etching.
Associated American Artists *Patrons Supplement.* Author's collection.



Figure 21.

Thomas Hart Benton, *Cradling Wheat*. 1939. Lithograph.
Saint Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri.



Figure 22.

Grant Wood, *Tree Planting Group*, 1937. Lithograph
Dubuque Museum of Art.



Figure 23.
Associated American Artists Advertisement, Author's collection.



Figure 24.
Associated American Artists' Patrons Supplement Insert, Author's collection.



Figure 25.

Associated American Artists gallery image, 1936. Photograph, Author's collection.



Figure 26.

John Everett Millais, *Bubbles,* 1886. Oil on canvas.
Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool.

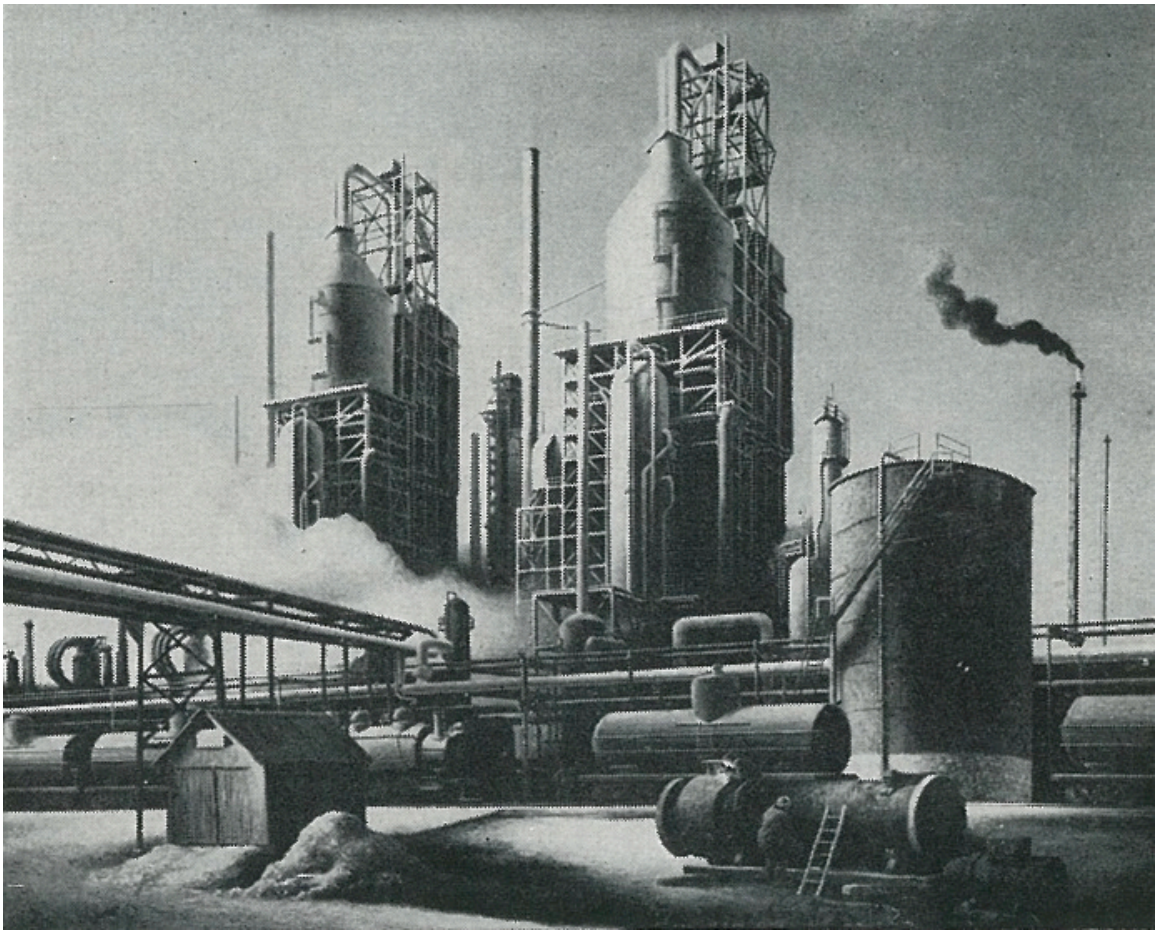

Figure 27.

Thomas Hart Benton, *Fluid Catalytic Crackers*, 1944. Oil and egg tempera on canvas. The Art Gallery of Toronto, *Oil, An Exhibition of Documentary Paintings from the Collection of Standard Oil Company,* New Jersey: Standard Oil, 1948, 10.

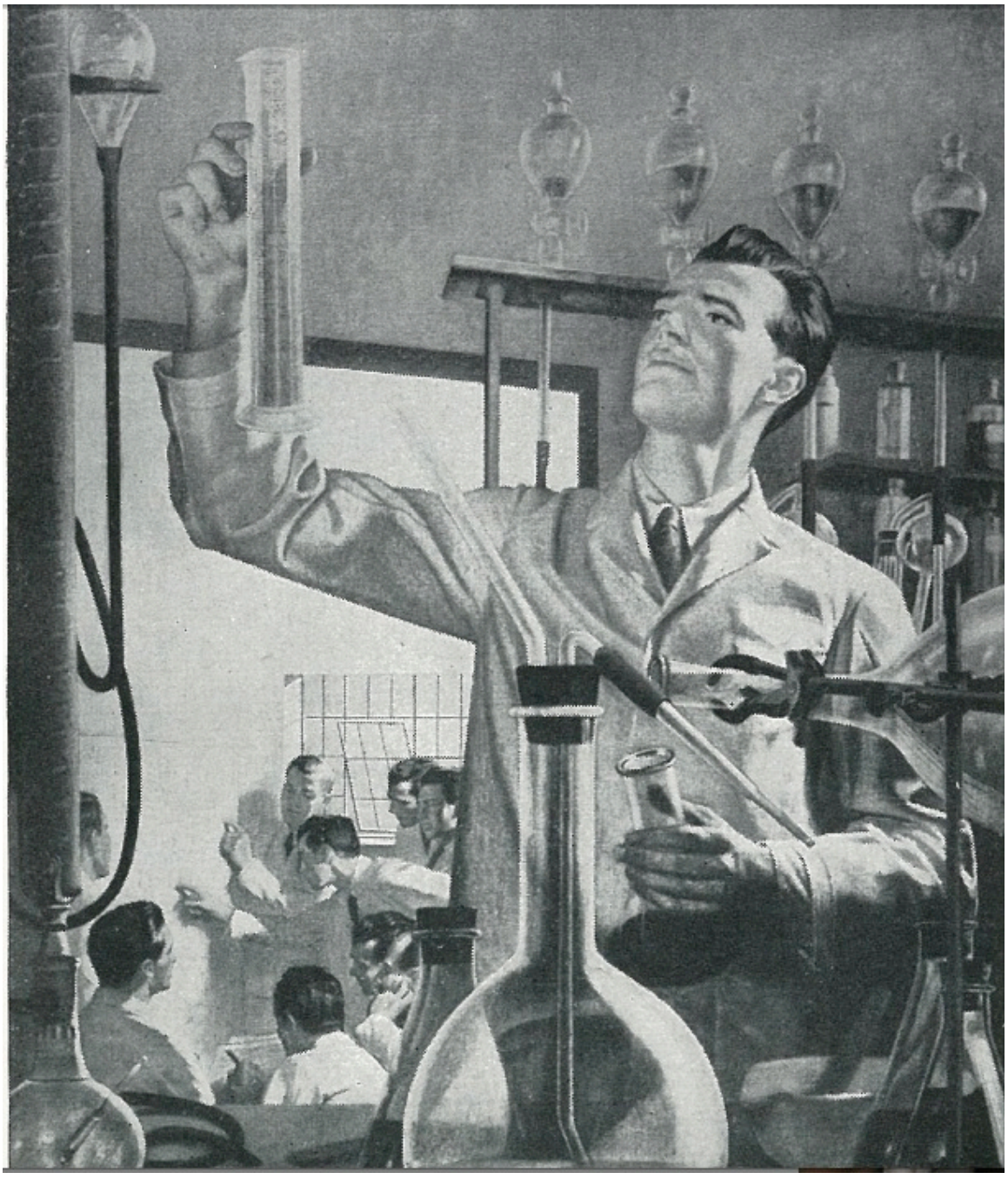

Figure 28.

Francis Criss, *Tomorrow's World*, 1944. Oil on canvas. The Art Gallery of Toronto, *Oil, An Exhibition of Documentary Paintings from the Collection of Standard Oil Company*, New Jersey: Standard Oil, 1948, 15.

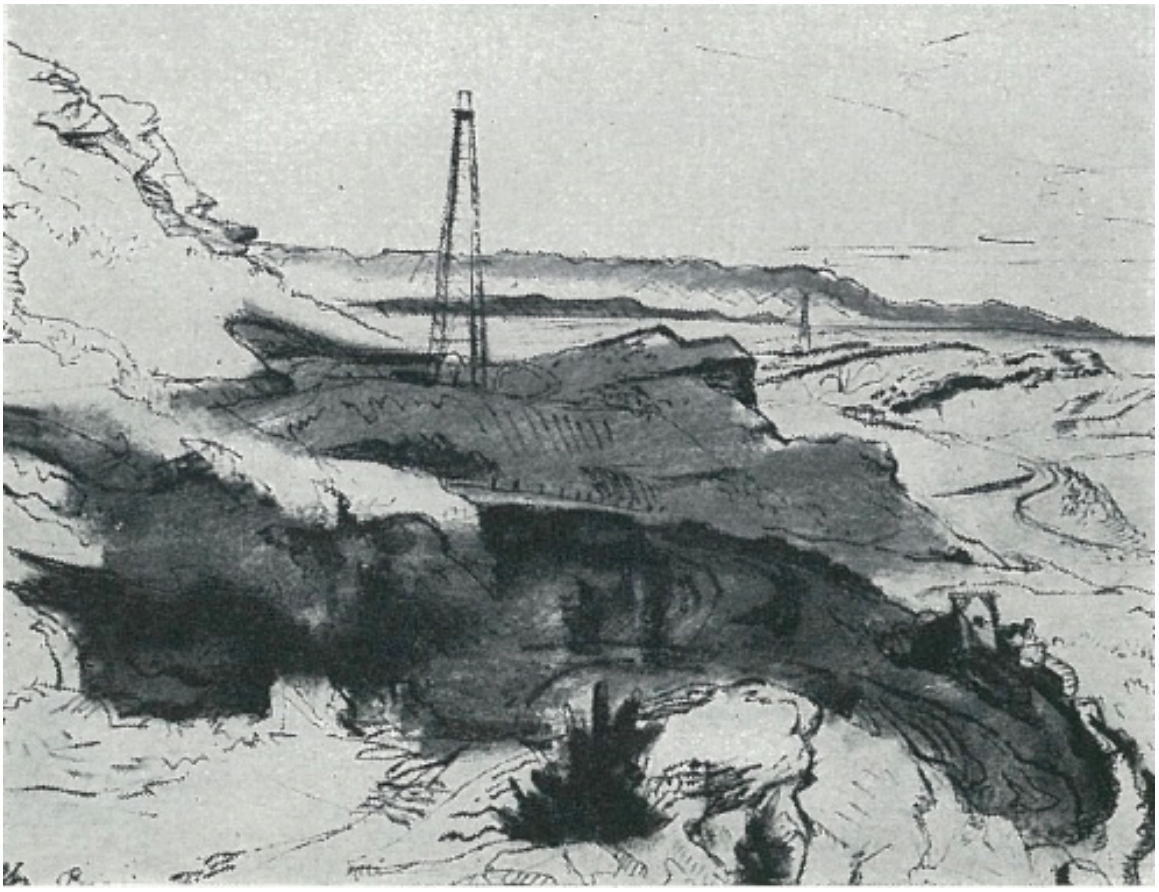

Figure 29.

Joe Jones, *Elk Basin*, 1944. Lithograph. The Art Gallery of Toronto, *Oil, An Exhibition of Documentary Paintings from the Collection of Standard Oil Company*, New Jersey: Standard Oil, 1948, 23



Figure 30.

Waldo Peirce, *Maine Swimming Hole*, 1944. Oil on canvas. Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, *Portrait of America*. Pittsburg: Carnegie Institute, 1946, 103.



Figure 31.

Philip Evergood, *Wheels of Victory*, 1945. Oil on canvas. Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, *Portrait of America*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute, 1946, 46.



Figure 32.
Thomas Hart Benton, The American Tobacco Company Advertisement featuring *Outside the Curing Barn*. *Time* (July 20, 1942).



Figure 33.
Thomas Hart Benton, The American Tobacco Company Advertisement featuring *Tobacco*. *Time* (July 20, 1942).



Figure 34.
Ad Reinhardt, *How to Look at Modern Art,* Ad Reinhardt Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Arthur and Helen Torr Dove papers, 1905-1975. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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