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## To Inspire and Instruct

### ART FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“Who can measure the wealth of inspiration and pleasure they may [bring], and the subtle, ennobling influence they may exert on the thousands of boys and girls, and men and women, that shall come under their spell? And who can say how far that influence may reach, or what fruit it may bear?”

—Principal Harry Keeler in a letter to the Chicago Public School Art Society after receiving a gift of two paintings in 1921

“I didn’t know we had that!”

—Unidentified Chicago Public School Student, 2001

### Recognizing Beauty Everywhere

**I**n recent years the Chicago Board of Education, under the leadership of the former Board president, has rediscovered and restored the vast art collection housed in Chicago’s public schools in order once again to bring inspiration and pleasure to the children of the city. The dawn of the twentieth century, a period of optimism and energy in Chicago, witnessed a building renaissance that included the construction of hundreds of public schools and a monumental school-decoration campaign. Between 1900 and 1946 more than three hundred murals, easel paintings, prints, and sculptures were donated or commissioned to adorn school auditoriums, hallways, libraries, and cafeterias. The works were made by artists of local and national renown, and given to the schools by Progressive Era reformers (1879–1920) or New Deal relief agencies during the Great Depression (1929–41). The art was carefully selected, as one philanthropic group stated, to “instruct and inspire” students by portraying subjects such as American social and industrial history, literature, and geography.



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The works chosen for this exhibition demonstrate the collection's breadth and indicate the pivotal role that art played in public education in the first half of the twentieth century. As one early supporter of art for the schools put it, "We want the children to recognize beauty everywhere." The exhibition also underscores the current Board's singular commitment, through the leadership of Board president Michael Scott, to preserve this educational resource—one of the strongest examples of its kind in the nation—for future generations of Chicago children.

## Chicago Public Schools and the Progressive Era

**F**ollowing the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, mural and easel painting flourished in public spaces throughout the city. Concerned about the negative impact of industrialization and urbanization, Progressive Era reformers sought to inject beauty into what they saw as an increasingly dreary urban landscape. At the core of their philosophy was the belief that visually pleasing environments contributed to a child's personal growth and social development.

Out of this milieu emerged a group of philanthropic organizations that adopted public-school reform and decoration as a civic priority. The Chicago Public School Art Society (founded in 1894 and now known as Art Resources in Teaching, or A.R.T.), the Commission for the Encouragement of Local Art, and numerous women's clubs joined together with local school principals, teachers, and the city's Board of Education to improve learning through art. By linking public schools, art academy, and museum, advocates sought to nurture a new generation of enlightened young citizens. Students working under well-known muralist John Warner Norton at the School of the Art Institute, for instance, were hired to produce murals for local schools. Easel paintings, selected in many cases from the Art Institute's annual exhibition of works by Chicago artists, toured schools in loan exhibitions, or found permanent homes in school hallways, classrooms, and offices.

Given the rapid urban and industrial growth that characterized Chicago in the early twentieth century, Progressive Era commissions



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and donations to schools are notable for their emphasis on rural and pre-industrial scenes. Subjects such as Native American communities, the westward move of settlers, and pastoral landscapes show the desire to counteract what was perceived as the increasing urbanization of Chicago.

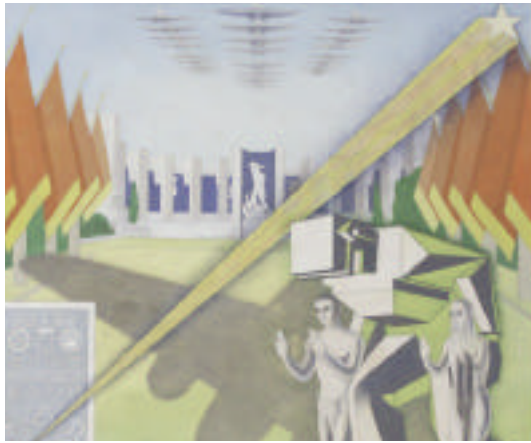
### Government-Funded Art in Schools during the Great Depression

**D**uring the Great Depression, art was produced for buildings and offices in virtually every state by American artists working under government programs inspired by Mexico's state-sponsored support of public mural art. The Federal Art Project (FAP), established in 1935, employed artists to create works to decorate public buildings or for touring exhibitions. Under the Illinois Art Project (IAP), the state division of the FAP, hundreds of murals and easel paintings, as well as sculptures and prints, were produced for public schools throughout Chicago.

At first glance, the subjects of these works appear the same as those of the Progressive Era; Chicago history, classroom motifs, labor scenes, and children's literature figure prominently. Unlike their predecessors, however, New Deal art works for the Chicago Public Schools embraced modern Chicago as an increasingly diverse metropolis that encompassed both the rural and the urban. Works from this part of the exhibition also highlight the outstanding contributions made by women, immigrants, and minorities through the New Deal programs.

### "I Didn't Know We Had That!"

**F**ollowing Mayor Richard M. Daley's 1995 initiative to improve city parks and facilities, the Chicago Board of Education undertook the task of rebuilding and refurbishing the architectural infrastructure of a school system that includes over six hundred buildings. The preservation and use of the Chicago Public Schools' art collection, compris-



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ing thousands of pieces, has been a crucial element of that initiative. The rediscovery and resurrection of these works brings to life a rich pictorial history that spans decades of American experience—often much to the surprise of the very beneficiaries for whom the collection was originally assembled. “I didn’t know we had that!” has in many ways become the theme of this rediscovery, as students, teachers, and administrators have reacquainted themselves with an artistic prize beyond measure. By once again linking public schools, art academy, and museum, in the same fashion as nearly a century ago, the hope is to “instruct and inspire” new generations of Chicago children.

For Further Reference:

Gray, Mary L. *A Guide to Chicago's Murals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

*The Chicago Public Schools Art Collection* : [www.cpsart.org](http://www.cpsart.org)

Online database of art objects in the collections of the Chicago Public Schools.

*Chicago: The City in Art* : [www.artic.edu/aic/students/mural\\_project/index.html](http://www.artic.edu/aic/students/mural_project/index.html)

Web site for the 1995–2000 Art Institute mural-related curriculum-development program with eleven Chicago public schools.

All works from the collection of the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education, details shown.

1. Dudley Crafts Watson (1885–1972). *Native Americans Watching a Dance*, 1906. Oil on canvas. Wendell Phillips High School Academy. Photography by Peter J. Schulz, courtesy of Heather Becker.

2. Henry George Brandt (1862–?). *Village Scene II*, 1913. Oil on canvas. Albert G. Lane Technical High School. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

3. John Warner Norton (1876–1934). *July*, 1925–27. Oil on canvas. Helen C. Pierce School of International Studies. Photography by James Prinz, courtesy of Mary Gray.

4. Ernest Martin Hennings (1886–1956). *The Canyon Trail*, c. 1920. Oil on canvas. Alfred David Kohn School. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

5. Adam Emory Albright (1862–1957). *On the Raft*, 1902. Oil on canvas. Helen C. Pierce School of International Studies. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

6. Margaret Alice Hittle (Chapin) (1886–after 1939). *Steel Mill*, 1909–10. Oil on canvas. Albert G. Lane Technical High School. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

7. Lucile Ward (b. 1907). *The 1933 Century of Progress Exposition*, 1940. Oil on canvas. Sidney Sawyer School. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

8. Charles Freeman (dates unknown). *Characters from Children's Literature*, 1937. Oil on canvas. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart School. © The Art Institute of Chicago, photography by James Prinz.



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## Calendar of Related Events

All events listed below except those marked with an asterisk (\*) are free with museum admission.

April 5, 12:00  
 Gallery Talk: *Noble Natives and Visionary Pioneers: Mural Painting in the Progressive Era*  
 Gallery 150

April 10, 12:00  
 Gallery Talk: *Painting the Walls: Art in Chicago Schools*  
 Gallery 150

April 30, 12:00  
 Lecture: *The State of the Union: Competing Visions of America in WPA Murals and Prints*  
 Price Auditorium

May 3, 1:00–2:45  
 Panel Discussion: *New Deal Murals and Muralists*  
 Participants: Francis V. O'Connor, art historian; Kathy Flynn, executive director, National New Deal Preservation Association; George Mavigliano, professor emeritus, Southern Illinois University  
 Price Auditorium

May 5, 2:00  
 Lecture: *Adventures in Saving New Deal Murals*  
 Francis V. O'Connor, art historian  
 Price Auditorium

May 22, 12:00  
 Gallery Talk: *Exhibition Overview*  
 Gallery 150

May 28, 12:00  
 Gallery Talk: *Exhibition Overview*  
 Gallery 150

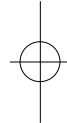
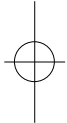
June 5, 12:00 (30 minutes)  
 ExpressTalk: *To Inspire and Instruct: Art from the Collection of the Chicago Public Schools*  
 Gallery 150

June 8, 11:00  
 Gallery Talk: *Noble Natives and Visionary Pioneers: Mural Painting in the Progressive Era*  
 Gallery 150

June 8, 11, & 14, 1:00 (15 minutes)  
 Object Lesson: *"Pocahontas" by Joseph Mozier*  
 Gallery 150

June 18, 12:00  
 Lecture: *Murals of Ancient Mexico*  
 Morton Auditorium

June 19, 12:00  
 Gallery Talk: *Painting the Walls: Art in Chicago Schools*  
 Gallery 150  
 (American Sign Language)





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June 22, 1:30 \*  
**Concert/Commentary: *America Strong—Music and Murals, 1930s and 40s***  
 Selections by Aaron Copland, Louis Armstrong, Marion Anderson, and others, hosted by Stephen Burns, trumpeter and director of Fulcrum Point. Accompanied by a commentary and followed by a tour introducing the exhibition.

Fullerton Hall  
 Public: \$10; members and students with ID: \$7. Ticket allows admission to the museum galleries.

Cosponsored with Performing Arts Chicago at the School of the Art Institute.

July 9, 6:00  
**Lecture: *Another South: African American Artists, Mexican Muralists, and the Art of Resistance***  
 Andrea Barnwell, director,  
 Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

July 15–19, 12:00 or August 5–9, 12:00 \*  
**Lecture Series: *A Grand Tradition: Mural Paintings in the World History of Art***  
 Morton Auditorium  
 For ticket information call (312) 443-3680.

July 31, 12:00  
**Gallery Talk: *Exhibition Overview***  
 Gallery 150

### Family Programs

Saturdays and Sundays in May and June (except June 8); and Tuesdays in June, 12:30–3:30  
**Drop-in Workshop: *The Artist's Studio: Mural Making***  
 Kraft Education Center  
 All ages

June 22, 10:00–4:00  
**Workshop: *From Cartoon to Mural***  
 Kraft Education Center  
 Parents and children age 9 and up; free, but registration is required.  
 Call (312) 857-7161.

### Student Programs

April 1–June 7; July 1–August 2  
 Guided school tours that include a visit to the exhibition. For more information or a tour application, call Student Programs at (312) 443-3679 or visit the museum Web site, [www.artic.edu](http://www.artic.edu).

Note: A fee is charged for out-of-state students.

### Teacher Programs \*

July 24, 9:30–3:30  
***Painted Walls—A Muralist at Work***  
 Daniel Barber, artist and educator  
 Price Auditorium  
 Fee \$35. Registration is required.  
 Call (312) 443-3575.



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### Senior Programs

May–August

#### *Art Insights*

Free presentations on the exhibition for senior centers. To request a lecturer and for more information, call (312) 857-7641.

April 7–13, 21–27, May 5–11,  
June 2–8, and August 4–10

#### *Elderhostel* \*

Elderhostel weeks at the Art Institute for adults 55 and older and spouses; events related to the exhibition will be included.

July 7–13, and July 21–27

#### *Intergenerational Elderhostel* \*

Grandparents or other relatives and children 9 to 12; family activities related to the exhibition will be included.

For more information on attending these Elderhostel weeks as a commuter, call (877) 426-8056 or go to Web site [www.artic.edu/aic/programs/seniors.html](http://www.artic.edu/aic/programs/seniors.html)

### Art Express \*

Bring a preview of the exhibition to your workplace through 45-minute lunchtime slide talks at your downtown business. For information, call (312) 443-3706.

All works from the collection of the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education, details shown.

9 and 13. William Edouard Scott (1884–1964). *Untitled*, c. 1940. Oil on canvas. Zenos Colman Elementary School. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

10. Emil Armin (1883–1971). *Skating after School*, 1940. Oil on canvas. Byrne School. © Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

11. Florian Durzynski (1902–1969). *American Youth*, 1937. Oil on canvas. Daniel S. Wentworth School. Photography by Peter J. Schulz, courtesy of Heather Becker.

12. Henry Simon (1901–1995). *Peter Aker's Prophecy*, 1941. Egg tempera on gesso-coated panels. Wells High School. Photography by Peter J. Schulz, courtesy of Heather Becker.

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*To Inspire and Instruct, Art from the Collection of the Chicago Public Schools* has been organized by The Art Institute of Chicago and is sponsored by The Chicago Board of Education, with additional funding from The Albert Pick Jr. Fund, and The Woman's Board of The Art Institute of Chicago.





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ART FROM THE  
COLLECTION  
OF THE  
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THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

March 23–August 11, 2002

Galleries 271–72

The Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Building