

THE ARTIST AS SOCIAL CRITIC:
JOHN SLOAN AND THOMAS HART BENTON

by

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ABSTRACT

Artistic expression reflects and influences the time, place and culture from which it springs. Many artists were inspired by the revolutionary optimism prevalent in the early twentieth century and viewed their art as a tool for changing society.

In this study I plan to show how some artists have been politically active, chronicling their times and presenting a vision for a better, reformed America. This project focuses on two artists who represented the American experience during the first half of the twentieth century. Both had long careers and all were concerned with the social and economic issues of their day.

John Sloan was a member of the so called Ashcan school of art. He portrayed the life of the common worker at the turn of the century. Sloan's illustrations for the radical journal The Masses were among the most expressive pieces of political propaganda ever made in this country.

Thomas Hart Benton was primarily concerned with the social and economic struggles of the working class person, especially during the Great Depression and New Deal era. He was also known for his championing of regional themes in art, such as that of Missouri.

Drawing upon biographies such as Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original by Henry Adams and John Loughery's John Sloan: Painter and Rebel, I plan to explore how both artists exhibited a sense of social awareness. Was their political expression subtle or overt? How did the artists' observations change over time? What personal

experiences shaped the artists' outlooks? From where did the support for their art come? And, to what degree is their work a mirror of society at large? Many of these questions have been addressed in broader texts emphasizing the complex relationship between art and politics including Frances Pohl's ambitious survey of American history, Framing America: A Social History of American Art . By understanding the political expression of these two artists, students will gain an appreciation for the power and drama social conditions have on an artist and the powerful influence an artist can have on the era in which he or she lives.

Lesson Plans:

- 1) Create overhead transparencies of select works of art from each of the three artists. Use them with students for their daily journal writes. Write up a brief biographical sketch on each artist to present to the class as background information. Develop questions for each work of art that refer to technique, style and subject matter. (These transparencies and journal questions will provide students with a model for what I expect in the next lesson.)
- 2) Art Museum Curator Project: This research project will place students in the role of art curators who must write up a biographical sketch on an artist, describe that artist's technique, and present five of their most influential works to the class in the form of a museum exhibit.

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THE ARTIST AS SOCIAL CRITIC: JOHN SLOAN AND THOMAS HART BENTON

Introduction

Artistic expression reflects and influences the time, place and culture from which it springs. Artists working in the first half of the twentieth-century were witness to profound revolutions in science, technology, politics, and social relations. People's lives became animated by electricity and accelerated by the gasoline engine. Warfare was conducted with unimaginable savagery. Monarchies gave way to experiments in democracy and proletarian communism. Women began to explore the dream of equality with men. It was a period of fascination for all things "modern," sometimes invigorating and at other times disturbing. Worldwide depression undermined some ideas and gave new life to others. Not surprisingly, artists and their work were shaped by these events.

John Sloan and Thomas Hart Benton were two painters whose overlapping years of influence span this period of dramatic transformation in America and the world. An investigation of their lives and work will illustrate how artists were inspired by the revolutionary optimism common at that time. They were politically conscious men with well-developed ideas about justice and equality. Though their art was decidedly not propagandistic, their choices of subjects and even mediums represented their political, social and economic ideals (Benton's work with murals was a conscious attempt to make art accessible to a broad range of people).

Both men were prominent in the art world and exerted influence far beyond the product of their hands. Sloan was a key organizer of the momentous 1913 Armory Show that introduced Americans to the many tangents of the European modernist movement. For nearly thirty years Sloan was president of the Society of Independent Artists which promoted exhibition opportunities for many up and coming artists. They each shaped countless students at the Art Students League, as well as in private tutorials. Benton's most famous pupil, ironically, was the abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock. Importantly, both published books that took on the major issues of art in their day and explained their philosophies.

At the start of the twentieth-century the art world was still insecurely grappling with the question that came into being since the earliest days of the new American republic, "What is American Art"? Both men confidently answered this question with bodies of work that explored American themes in a forthright manner, emulating traditional populist values. Though both were obviously influenced by abstract art being created in Europe, Benton, in a flamboyant and ultimately self-destructive flourish, rejected these modernist schools as un-American.

In the highly politicized art scene of New York during the first half of the twentieth-century, another elemental debate swirled around the purpose of art. Was it purely an aesthetic endeavor, meant to entertain and beautify, or was it a social act that reached its most noble end when it served to provoke, educate, and transform? In their own way each chose the social definition of art; though Sloan, especially in his later years, would explore a very personal form of art. The reservation both men had for

abstract art was that it could never match the power and depth of representational art, and thus could never play a reformist or revolutionary role in society.

John Sloan

“The artist is not like most mortals; when he dies, he leaves behind that undying distillation of his whole life---his art. Long after those who were fortunate enough to know him have themselves gone, John Sloan’s art will continue to move and delight future generations.”

Lloyd Goodrich

John Sloan (1871-1951) was the first of three children born to James and Henrietta Sloan in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. His father, a cabinetmaker by trade, and his mother, a former school teacher with a passion for art and literature were steadfast in their desire to see their children prosper artistically and intellectually. However, economic security was never within reach of the family. His parents often struggled to pay the rent and relied quite heavily on his mother’s side of the family to help make ends meet. By the age of nine, after having moved to Philadelphia, John Sloan was keenly aware of his family’s economic hardships. And yet, it was his mother’s gregarious uncle who opened his library to the young Sloan. Despite news of his father losing yet another job, the enticing world of books and ideas offered Sloan comfort and a means by which he could temporarily escape.¹

Bruce St. John, in his study, *John Sloan*, emphasizes the importance literature had on Sloan’s early artistic endeavors. “His first venture into illustration, for instance, was at the age of twelve, when he illustrated his own copy of Robert Louis Stevenson’s

Treasure Island".² He also notes the significance of some of the materials available to John Sloan in his uncle's library, including original prints by Hogarth.

Both St. John and John Loughery, in his 1995 biography *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel*, provide a positive spin to another seemingly unfortunate set of circumstances. Six months prior to graduation from Central High School, John Sloan's path took an unpredictable turn. Forced to care for his family after his father's financial and mental collapse, he quit school and accepted a job in a bookstore which offered him time to discover French realists such as Zola, Flaubert and Balzac. St. John believes the wealth of materials presented to Sloan in his new work environment contributed to his development as an artist. "It was here that he first saw original etchings by Durer and Rembrandt and engravings after Rubens."³ Loughery points out that a few years later he worked as a commercial artist in an upscale stationary store. This enabled him to develop his talent as a designer for booklets and magazines. In his spare time he drew greeting cards to supplement his income. By 1891, with his confidence growing and reputation spreading within one of the most dynamic cultural hubs in the U.S., John Sloan boldly quit his \$9.00 a week job to strike out independently as a free lance artist.⁴

Most of the sources agree that this was a formative period for Sloan's future in art. St John makes the argument that the pressure put on Sloan to support his family pushed him to use his talent as a means of income.⁵ Loughery, however, looks at the social environment in which he was living and the dynamic changes taking place all around him.⁶ David Scott, in his well-illustrated 1975 biography of Sloan, agrees here with Loughery and St. John that economic hardships, strong determination and job

opportunities contributed to the building of his character and career. “At the age of twenty, John Sloan already displayed the traits that were to distinguish him for life”.⁷

The international spotlight had been on Philadelphia ever since it hosted the 1876 World’s Fair celebrating the centennial of the Declaration of Independence. The city was a magnet for new money and support for the arts. Museums and academies were expanding, attracting young artists and instructors. Sloan’s desire to follow his own path, set his own pace and answer only to himself proved impractical and therefore, short-lived.⁸ Within a year, financial and emotional care for his parents drove him back to a scheduled work routine. He accepted a job as an illustrator for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and began training in the evenings at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.⁹

From the start, Sloan found the Academy’s rigid structure and rules to be unbearable. He argued with instructors and refused to conform to the strict limits placed on the creative process. The conflict, in essence, came back to Sloan’s strong independent nature. St. John points out that Sloan deeply respected his instructor, Thomas Anshutz, one of the grand masters of nineteenth century American realism, but he was ready for new subject matter. Not surprisingly he gravitated to other non-conformists. “Their concern was with life in its everyday aspect as opposed to the photographic realism and romantic subject matter preferred by the academy.”¹⁰ Sloan found solace with like-minded intellectuals, especially Robert Henri. Together in their studio on Walnut Street, they formed the Charcoal Club, an independent experimental art school. “Most of the members of the Club were illustrators and were accustomed to drawing from memory and from their observations of life, which accounts for their

boredom with academic procedures.”¹¹ Robert Henri took them one step further into the field of painting. The class met each Thursday for seven months. Scott explains that Henri’s “disciples” were encouraged to “strive for the directness and immediacy of subject”¹² He stresses the point that the Charcoal Club inspired Sloan’s transition from illustrator to painter. Indeed, Sloan himself commented, “I don’t think I would have become a painter if Henri had not kept at me to become started. When I met him, I was only interested in becoming a good illustrator”. Scott also noted the political influence Henri had on his students. When the Club was not engaged in artistic discourse, conversation was often centered on literature, politics, or “philosophical anarchism”.¹³

Every source makes reference to the strong ties between Sloan and Henri. In his collection of letters between Sloan and Henri, *Revolutionaries of Realism*, Bernard Perlman underscores the independence and rebelliousness they both shared. “It was not purely by chance that Henri and Sloan, who sought independence for themselves and others, should have met in the city of American independence, Philadelphia.”¹⁴

At this time, Sloan gained special recognition with the *Inquirer* when he was given an assignment to chronicle the life of the leisure class. Influenced by the “poster craze” in Paris, and by Japanese style brushwork, he added excitement and imagination to apparently realistic scenes. According to Helen Farr- Sloan, “His pen and ink illustrations in decorative Art Nouveau style made striking designs on the printed page.”¹⁵ Within a short period of time, this unique and very appealing style became popular with regular readers and most importantly, his sketches gained the attention of art critics outside of Philadelphia.¹⁶

Working as an art illustrator brought Sloan financial security, a flexible schedule and notoriety. No doubt he would have loved to devote all his time to personal endeavors, but financial obligations to his parents and sisters were never far from his mind. When the *Philadelphia Press* offered him a salaried position with a broad range of creative possibilities, he gladly accepted.¹⁷ With his mornings free, he painted for himself, read the philosophers of the Enlightenment, visited museums, and took drawing lessons from his old friend and mentor, Robert Henri. On his regular walks, he observed life on the streets, and realized his true passion would never be found in a sterile studio or in the pristine countryside. It was the dynamic life of the city, the people in action, in conversation or in quiet contemplation against the backdrop of an urban landscape that inspired him the most. This was a time of refinement and self-discovery for Sloan. Even though his friends had traveled and worked in Europe, exposed themselves to the latest styles and returned to find plenty of success in cities such as Chicago and New York City, Sloan was honing his skills and using his position with the newspaper to open up avenues to show his work and widen his circle of acquaintances. By the age of 30, his drawings had been printed in numerous upscale magazines such as Chicago's *Echo*, *Gil Blas*, and *Moods*. He also had received his first public commission at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Four of his paintings: *Independence Square, Philadelphia*, *Delaware River*, *Walnut Street Theatre*, and *Tugs* had been exhibited in major shows at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Carnegie Institute. All had received glowing reviews.¹⁸ According to Scott, this was the beginning of Sloan's developmental years as a serious painter. "In the meantime, his work in illustration and etching had leaped to

maturity, and his experience with these mediums were to have a strong effect in their turn on his oils.”¹⁹ Sloan was living the life of a cultured artist, and still longing for more.

It was only a matter of time before Sloan would marry, pull back from supporting his family, and join his friends in New York City. It was the place to be. Considering the obvious and exaggerated juxtaposition of wealth and poverty in a city like New York, Sloan had plenty of material to lose himself in. He was quite prolific during this period and yet, he could barely pay his monthly rent. On canvas, he threw himself into the harsh conditions of the poor and disenfranchised; he painted what existed without judgment and without concern for an audience. According to John Loughery, Sloan’s first hint at “political painting” was probably *Coffee Line*. He explains:

The dominant effect of the image in all its particulars is formidably grim: the sky is almost pitch-black, the men are no more than stabs and masses of blackish paint, even the snow is dirt-streaked and rather lurid in the flow of the few streetlights that illuminate it. *Coffee Line* is hard to take as merely a painting, as an arrangement of stark forms and subtle blends of dark pigments. It tends to make anyone who sees it wonder why so many men are in need of a handout, why they don’t have jobs and homes and families to go to, why well-meant charity has to become public humiliation.²⁰

Charles Wisner Darrell, a journalist and member of the Socialist party, wrote an article for the *Craftsman*, a left-wing journal, referring to Sloan as “America’s great Socialist artist” and drew attention to *Coffee Line* “as a great depiction [of] and as biting a commentary upon the social system as ...one of Gorky’s poignant little masterpieces.”²¹

Reflecting on this perception held by many at the time, Sloan wrote, “On the whole, when finding incidents that provided ideas for paintings, I was selecting bits of joy in human life. I did not have any didactic purpose; I was not interested in being

socially conscious about the life of the people. In my etchings, there was sometimes a more satirical element.”²²

By 1907, Sloan’s paintings were seen as being politically motivated and were dismissed by the ruling conservative judges at prominent art institutes. Furious, insulted and economically desperate, Sloan and his small core group of friends, many from the Tuesday evening Charcoal Club, devised a plan to have an independent exhibition on their own terms. “The Eight,” referred to later as the Ash Can school, shook up the art world by organizing an alternative venue to display their work. They used established connections with journalists and editors of major newspapers and magazines to publicize the 1908 event at the William Macbeth Gallery in New York.

Lloyd Goodrich, who as Associate Director of the Whitney Museum organized a retrospective of Sloan’s work in 1952, thought the rebellion of “The Eight” was an important turning point against traditionalism in American Art. “Relishing low life as much as high life they pictured the city and its people with warm humanity and with a humor that has been sadly lacking in American art of years.”²³

Another critic who recognized with appreciation Sloan’s sense of humanity and humor was Peter Morse, a former associate curator of Graphic Arts at the Smithsonian Institution. Describing Sloan as an incurable punster all his life Morse particularly appreciated etchings such as *Woman’s Page* which showed a “dowdy, half-dressed woman in a small messy room, reading the newspaper accounts of the latest high fashion styles.”²⁴

Financially, the exhibition was a disaster for almost everyone involved. Sloan invested a tremendous amount of time organizing the event and did not sell one painting. Press reports referred to the artists as “apostles of ugliness” and to Sloan’s etchings in particular as “vulgar”.²⁵ However, the exhibition is today considered a critical watershed in the development of modern art.. One event led to another creating a momentum eventually forcing traditionalists to examine the process by which art was categorized, compared and evaluated for acceptance or rejection.²⁶

Helen Farr-Sloan notes that during this Progressive era it may have been easier for intellectuals to accept the photographs of Jacob Riis or the words of the muckrakers over the graphic depictions of reality. She laments that in later years, critics rebuked “The Eight” for their “Romantic feeling” and “pigeonholed the work as nostalgic”²⁷

Paul Von Blum in *The Critical Vision* credits the Ashcan painters for breaking away from the status quo mold and daring to paint and show what others shunned. “In a revolt against gentility, they sought to elevate truth over beauty.”²⁸ Their commitment to the poor, he believes, is reflected in their art which respects reality. Of all the Ashcan painters, Von Blum recognizes Sloan as being “the most political member.”²⁹

Up to this point, Sloan had not articulated his politics consciously to himself or to others. He and his wife Dolly were sensitive to the injustice that existed throughout society. But work, personal problems and friendships allowed a certain degree of separation. Much of his work during this time has been labeled “humanistic”. “Sloan was not a political militant,” argues Von Blum,³⁰ [However], “The artist’s description of working class life in New York City is not merely objective.” He continues, “Sloan’s

class-consciousness emerges forcefully in a compassionate work, the etching *Roofs, Summer Night*' (1906).³¹ ...These people do not go to their roofs seeking amusement; in the suffocating heat and unbearably crowded conditions, their retreat is a physical and emotional necessity."³² Interestingly, Sloan would be the first to say that his depictions of the squalor of working class Americans and their living conditions at the turn of the century were not meant to create sympathy or anger; they were simply a reflection of city life. Sloan's comments about this painting were more personal: "I have always liked to watch the people in the summer, especially the way they live on the roofs... The city seems more human in the summer."³³

Political activism may have been a natural progression for an artist who was already challenging the status quo, pushing the boundaries of art education and screaming for a redefinition of acceptable art. Reform-minded, seeking new definitions and willing to struggle for an ideal, left wing progressives saw Sloan's commitment to the cause before he did. Unintentionally, yet not surprisingly, he gravitated toward the Socialist Party. By 1910, he and Dolly were bonafide members.³⁴

John and Dolly Sloan had personal reasons for getting involved with a political movement. Their marriage was strained by Dolly's alcoholism; her focus on social issues had a positive though temporary effect. She was offered a welcome mat from fellow socialists who needed her help organizing events, raising money and handing out leaflets. Sloan was less preoccupied attending to her personal needs and found more time to walk the streets and mingle with the people, immersing himself in his subject matter. "He loved to walk the streets and watch the movement of the city; he loved the warm, rich

flavors of human life in its great masses of people, on the streets, in their places of enjoyment at home. His paintings were direct, spontaneous reports of what struck his keen and humorous eye.”³⁵

Patricia Hills, in an essay on Sloan’s portrayal of working class women, uses diary entries to reveal attitudes and motivations held by Sloan during these walks. She finds consistency and sincerity in his concerns for the poor but wonders if he, like other realists, was romanticizing poverty.³⁶

Just before joining the Socialist party, he confesses “I am rather more interested in the human beings themselves, than in the schemes for betterment. In fact, I rather wonder if they will be so interesting when they are all comfortable and happy.”³⁷

Hills attempts to eliminate doubt that Sloan was an activist. [He] “read party literature, and novels, plays and essays with socialist themes; attended lectures by Eugene Debs, as well as by anarchist Emma Goldman; participated in strike meetings with his wife; and ran for public office on the socialist ticket” He also contributed numerous witty cartoons to several left-wing periodicals.³⁸

In 1912, the peak of popularity for the Socialist Party in America, Sloan became art director of the radical journal, *The Masses*. This was a time of personal examination for a man who was passionately committed to “pure art” as well as living a life true to his socialist values. Sloan categorized his work into two camps: political (illustrations) and non-political (paintings and etchings).³⁹ Hills analyzes this split as a “dialectical struggle that would be waged within himself, that would affect his relationships with his socialist colleagues, and that would ultimately spell the direction of his art.”⁴⁰

Although *The Masses* had a small circulation, Sloan saw its potential as a popular venue for social and political education. He insisted upon practicing the democratic model of consensus each month when selecting literary and artistic submissions, resulting in an exhaustive process of discussion and deliberation. Max Eastman, well known and respected among the intellectual circles, directed the overall organization and dissemination of the journal.⁴¹ John Diggins, in *The American Left in the Twentieth Century*, refers to Eastman as a “...handsome, flamboyant poet, a Columbia University philosophy teacher, and an organizer of the early feminist and pacifist movements, and one of the dominant figures in American cultural life between 1913 and 1922.”⁴²

With such strong, energetic talent influencing the course of this new radical experiment, arguments were inevitable. Eastman relied more heavily upon liberal benefactors with their own influential connections. Sloan feared their power would usurp the democratic process. Already Eastman felt indebted to just a handful of individuals; they were keeping the journal afloat. His suspicions were realized when an argument flared up over putting captions (seen as blatant propaganda) directly underneath Sloan’s illustrations. The heavy hand of politics, managing the content and direction of the journal, violated the essential creative spirit of the publication.⁴³

The debate over mixing art and politics was central to the contributors of *The Masses*. Frances K. Pohl, in her ambitious survey of American art history *Framing America*, recognizes Sloan’s categories of political and non-political art identified by Hills as the main source of conflict. She also stresses Sloan’s need to be “ideologically neutral” and hints that this too may have been unrealistic or naïve.⁴⁴

In the wake of heightened sensitivity, recognizing the proselytizing direction of the Masses, the need to show art ‘for the sake of art’ became paramount. Once again, “The Eight” organized another major independent exhibit, this time at the Armory Building of the Sixty-ninth Regiment in NYC. Sloan was ready to introduce new work to the public and portray himself as being anything but a political propagandist. Only a few of his urban settings would be shown. In addition to well known rebels of the Ashcan school who participated in the show, the American public was treated to roughly 1600 pieces by European modernists including Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse and the controversial French artist, Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* was described by one critic as “an explosion in a shingle factory.”⁴⁵ The public was both curious and appalled. Typically the U.S. was two decades behind Europe in accepting the most recent style of art. The unique, varied and modern expressions struck even the savviest critics as being too extreme, over the edge of acceptability. Self proclaimed moralists were outraged and their comments filled newspaper articles and opinion pages for months afterward.

Robert Hughes, author of *American Visions*, claims that art has often been explained through a political lens. When the conservative critics of the 1913 Armory Show described it as being “anarchic” they intentionally sought to associate it with political behavior. The artists involved with the show were linked with disturbing, violent images of bomb-throwing subversives, “coming across the Atlantic to derange its cultural polity and making monsters or fools of real American artists.”⁴⁶ In a few more

years, the full effect of these labels will be realized with the Red Scare and its chill on the artistic communities in America.

Sloan can be credited for taking the lead in organizing one of the most radical far-reaching exhibits in U.S. history. Millions of people felt the impact of the Armory show and experienced the consequences of change. Modern art was bright, bold, broke down barriers and expanded the perimeters of academic art. By 1916, the representation of reality was appearing blurred and unpredictable.

On a personal level, the Armory show was of great importance to Sloan; the works of Cezanne, in particular, inspired him to move beyond social realism. The urban, gritty scenes for which he was most identified would be locked away for some future show, always with the hope that perhaps his break would come; due recognition and pay would be forthcoming. According to Loughery, it was a liberating experience for Sloan to move toward the impressionistic or abstract style.

Ten years of painting the city and its inhabitants in that context was enough for him. The somber colors of the Omaha burghers and the netherworld of McSorley's Bar are gone for good. Sloan was ready to venture further afield to loosen a few of the old restraints -ready to have fun with his painting in a way he had never done before.⁴⁷

Equally liberating was his complete break from *The Masses* and the Socialist Party. By 1916, the conflict between staff members regarding the direction of the journal reached a climax. Sloan insisted that some literary and artistic submissions be free of socialist propaganda. Art Young, Max Eastman and other staunch supporters of the Socialist Party felt that extreme emotions brought on by the war required extreme anti-war messages. When the issue came down to a vote, his opinion was defeated and a

prompt letter of resignation followed. In his 1928 Memoirs, with *The Masses* debates a decade old, Art Young fondly spoke of Sloan as a “man of universal vision and understanding...always ready with a cryptic comment, a witticism, or a satirical spurt of indignation.”⁴⁸

Sloan may have entered a more playful and prolific period with painting but he was living beyond his means and friends were not always able to bail him out. In Gloucester, Massachusetts, the summer retreat for like-minded artists, seascapes and small town scenery provided an excellent environment for experimenting with technique and color. “Sticking to the principle of keeping his politics out of his art, Sloan focused on what appealed to his imagination in the world around him, No one could ever have guessed that any of these paintings had been made during a time of international strife and mad flag-waving.”⁴⁹ Financial problems, however, plagued Sloan; his label as a leftie continued to define him and turn people away from purchasing his work. Later in life he would claim that he did not sell a painting until he was 50 years old. Certainly, if it wasn't his politics, it was his lack of interest in the business and consumer aspect of life that led him to accept promises from shady art dealers for future purchases, which led only to further disappointments and deeper debt.⁵⁰

If he couldn't make a living from his art, at least he had teaching to rely on to pay the bills and cover summer expenses. Since joining the Art Student's League in 1916, he developed quite a reputation with young, admiring “Sloanian nuts” who

...listened with eager respect to the philosophy, aphorisms, trenchant criticisms, and occasional biting sarcasm that came so freely from Sloan during class sessions. He combined some of the qualities of a prophet with those of an actor. Deeply serious in his intention, he was witty and dramatic in his manner and at

informal gatherings he revealed unsuspected talent with a ‘thick slice of ham’ in his songs and pantomimes.⁵¹

By the summer of 1918, Gloucester, along with other fishing towns along the eastern seaboard were on high alert. Patriotism and American pride were running high. After Sloan and his fellow artists arrived for their summer sojourn, the locals were less than thrilled. An “antiloafing” law had passed that year to target “unproductive” men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. Those who were not working or doing their military duty were regarded with suspicion and contempt. In addition:

The Espionage Act of 1917 had expanded the definition of treason, and conspiracy to commit treason, not only to action but to speech and the printed word as well. Worse still, it had widened the understanding of the term treason to encompass any public questioning of the country’s war aims, the practice of conscription, or the value of patriotism.⁵²

The conservative mood remained after the war ushering in a wave of intolerance against artists and intellectuals. Sloan’s involvement with the Socialist Party and *The Masses* in particular brought them under intense scrutiny by the Federal government. The once comfortable, carefree get-away from New York had turned hostile; John and Dolly would have no more of it.

After hearing the praises of Santa Fe, New Mexico from New York friends and artists such as Stuart Davies and his old mentor Robert Henri, John and Dolly Sloan made a clean break from their picturesque colony in Gloucester. For the remainder of their lives, each summer, the long cross-country trek took them to the Southwest, an area they will grow to love and cherish.

Sloan’s approach to life had always been direct and forthright. His sincere quest for truth in artistic expression explains the transformations witnessed between the 1920’s

and 1940's. Upon arrival at the artists' haven of Santa Fe, he was immediately drawn to the cultural traditions of the Native American community and fascinated by their deep respect for the environment. To portray their lifestyle authentically he sought deeper understanding of it by visiting cliff dwellings and observing rituals. He was deeply moved to say, "What is left of a beautiful, early civilization should simply be left alone... allowed to survive with its soul as well as its body intact."⁵³ According to Scott,

He studied the ceremonials, bought Indian blankets, admired the pottery and dressed in Navajo costume for the Independents' Ball in New York in 1922. He brought respect to all the native customs as well as an increasing appreciation of the value of tradition. When he painted, his satire was confined to depictions of the tourists and visiting artists who completely lacked the dignity of the Indians.⁵⁴

Personally, he relished the infinite possibilities in a desert landscape with "fine geometric formations and handsome color"⁵⁵. He observed, "The ground is not covered with green mold as it is elsewhere. The pinon trees dot the surface of hills and mesas with exciting textures"... "Because the air is so clear you feel the reality of things in the distance."⁵⁶ Spending summers in the Southwest with his wife Dolly was probably the best thing that could have happened to John Sloan in the later years of his life. An independent rebel at heart, he found an atmosphere that allowed his political, philosophical self to flourish. There, he was free to let go of preconceived notions of form and style to explore and extend the range of his creativity.

Art Critics, such as Milton Brown writing for *Art News* in 1952, found little to appreciate about Sloan's work during this period. "He had turned his back on 'life' and the excitement of visual experience to investigate the nature of an aesthetic idea."⁵⁷ His crosshatched paintings, which to many looked like studio exercises in developing

perspective, were seen as discordant and disturbing, but Sloan was not one to care about his audience. In fact, being contrary was the essence of his political and artistic expression. To make art for the purpose of making money, pleasing others or gaining acceptance of the status quo would have been repugnant to the man whose saying at the League was “independence in everything, easy money and popular approval be damned.”⁵⁸

Thomas Hart Benton

Thomas Hart Benton was born in rural southwest Missouri in 1889. Both parents were raised in an environment of wealth and privilege. His father, Maecenas Benton, became a prominent attorney, and was elected to Congress when Thomas was just eight years old. Having been named after a famous great uncle, Missouri’s first Senator, expectations were placed on young Thomas to proceed with a formal education, and carry the family name further into law and politics. In his autobiography, *An Artist in America*, Benton explains that the family followed his father to Washington D.C. There, he enjoyed shadowing his father on the campaign trail and reading books on history and politics. But following his father’s footsteps and satisfying familial expectations was never a serious consideration.⁵⁹

Early in his life Thomas exhibited an interest and talent for art, much to the dismay of his father. In a second autobiography, *An American Artist*, he recalls, “Dad was profoundly prejudiced against artists and with some reason...The only ones he ever came across were the mincing, bootlicking portrait painters...who hung around the skirts of

women at receptions and lisped a silly jargon about grace and beauty. Dad was utterly contemptuous of them and labeled them promptly as pimps.”⁶⁰

Most of the sources credit Benton’s mother for encouraging his artistic development. Teachers in Washington D.C. and trips to the Library of Congress also exposed him to dramatic public murals. Returning to Missouri after his father’s defeat in 1904, Thomas quit high school and took a job as a newspaper illustrator in Joplin.

Biographer Henry Adams explains his early technique:

In the fashion of the time, he would draw big heads on small bodies and then surround the people with the implements of their profession. Completely untrained in portraiture, he would start with the nose and hang the rest of the features on that.⁶¹

Thomas Hart Benton knew he was destined to greatness but in the eyes of his father he was wasting his time and needed a good dose of military training to impose some discipline to his life. Benton agreed to enroll in a military academy for one year if his father would, in turn, support his pursuits the following year at the Chicago Institute of Art. It wasn’t six months before Benton broke the deal and, with backing from his mother, followed his true calling.

Chicago was a bustling, progressive city in the first decade of the 20th century; a convergence of science, industry and business. Benton’s initial experience at the Institute was one of frustration and conflict. Adams makes the point that his unconventional approach to education was evident when he bounced from one instructor to the next:

Benton’s training in Chicago was remarkably haphazard, as he attended whatever class suited his fancy. When drawing from the model, he worked in unorthodox ways using pen or pencil rather than charcoal, sketching rapidly, and frequently changing his position in relation to the model. He did not attempt a

photographically literal rendering but searched for those configurations of bone and muscle that provide the expressive essence of human action.⁶²

Adams continues that it was the instructor, Frederick Oswald who “took his raw and rambunctious talent and turned it in a serious direction”.⁶³ Reflecting on his early influences Benton recalls, “I now see that entering Fred Oswald’s painting class was one of the crucial moves of my life. In a short while it changed my whole outlook, redirected my ambitions and made me conscious of my basic inclinations and character potentials, made me find myself that is.” Later he noted, “Oswald was the perfect teacher for me. He knew how to handle a sort of innate rebelliousness in my character which made me resent instruction from above.”⁶⁴

Benton also credits Oswald for exposing him to the “science” of picturemaking otherwise known as composition. He learned how to appreciate Japanese prints and was told numerous times to study the old masters in the Louvre in Paris. Oswald considered Chicago a place to earn a living as a commercial artist. It was time for Benton to leave. Again, he turned to his mother for support as he realized continued study at the Institute would only stifle his passion.⁶⁵

Restless and eager to find his niche and to have others take note of his greatness, Benton arrived in Paris in 1908. The first six months were filled with loneliness and despair. Though he was taking classes at the Academie Julian, he felt lost and disconnected from himself and others. On advice from a fellow student at the academy, Benton began visiting the Louvre, studying the Old Masters and copying their drawings.⁶⁶ After three years of trying to fit in to the bohemian lifestyle, his mother flew to Paris to bring him home. Most of his paintings had received little notice.

Carrying the experience of being an accomplished, well-studied art student of the prestigious Academie Julian inflated Benton's self image. He returned to his small hometown in Missouri expecting to turn heads and impress. Instead, he was shunned and disregarded. Pride intact, he soon set off for New York City.

Benton found the city to be vibrant, highly diverse and intensely competitive. He hoped the art scene would provide the right opportunity for showing his paintings. The Armory Show of 1913 provided a venue for the Independents as well as introduced to the U.S. the latest European modernist styles. However, his Mother's illness called him back to Neosho so he missed one of the largest and most significant exhibitions in the history of the country. Fortunately, the same year, the portrait of his sister Mildred was reproduced in *Collier's Magazine*. This was his "first significant publicity."⁶⁷ But most importantly, his friend from France, Macdonald-Wright had organized a synchromist exhibit in NYC in 1914. Benton had already been introduced to these ideas and he had experimented with a number of styles including abstractions. But the figurative aspect of this style had a profound effect on Benton's future work.⁶⁸

Benton was most strongly attracted to precisely this figurative element of Synchromist work, which tended to produce an ordered but spatially energized, highly motive form very much at odds with the planar, blocky, and relatively static world of most abstract painting. "What captures my interest ... was the Synchromists' use of Baroque rhythms, derived not from Cézanne's work, as was the case with most of the Parisian painters who had experimented with such rhythms, but from the more basic source of Michelangelo's sculpture."⁶⁹

Sam Hunter finds it ironic that Benton "was directly indebted to Paris painting..."⁷⁰ Yet, throughout his career he became increasingly confrontational and hostile toward foreign influence in American art. Frances Phol in *Framing America*

agrees that Benton failed to credit the European Modernists for influencing his style.

“Benton was represented in the exhibition by an abstract synchronist composition, *Constructivist Still Life*, made under Macdonald-Wright’s influence.⁷¹ Art historian Erika Doss confirms this point that Benton’s “expressive figural distortions” which mark his murals of the 1920’s and 1930’s reflect “the lessons he learned in Europe”.⁷²

Certainly, many of these ideas resonated in Benton’s mind and imagination. “I began making these sculptures, constructions. I made them out of wire, paper, cloth, all kinds of things...I did it for the purpose of improving an abstract painting, giving it more impact, making it seem real.”⁷³

Benton was gaining a lot of publicity at this time. His paintings were bold bright and energetic. A critic of the *New York Tribune* enthusiastically reported, “His treatment of form, like some distant echo of the tradition of Michelangelo, suggests a large and flowing conception of truth, a feeling for life, and even in some vague way, a feeling for beauty.”⁷⁴

Still, he was unable to sell his paintings. Consequently, he joined the cadre of other struggling artists and picked up odd jobs designing movie sets and painting portraits of movie stars. His mother continued to send checks as needed but eventually he decided to take a teaching job at the “Henry Street Settlement, a union-controlled and subsidized settlement house.”⁷⁵ It was here that Benton, began associating with John Weichsel, main organizer of the People’s Art Guild and *The Masses*, a radical Marxist literary journal. Weichsel’s political objective was “to get art back into some cultural relationship with the masses...to do so with the labor unions.” Benton noted, I had been

in a political family but I had never seen that side of it. I knew about Eugene Debs and the Socialist movement in general but this time I got in the middle of it and some of its theory. So it was a great benefit to me.”⁷⁶

During WWI, artists were torn between signing up, waiting for their number to be drawn, or dodging the service altogether. Many on the left had devised ways to avoid the draft. Benton knew he wanted to stay off the battlefield so he joined the Navy. This was a period of relative ease for the young artist. Never one for hard labor, following orders, or doing like others do, he managed to land a comfortable position drawing sketches of the naval bases and ships for documentation purposes. Highly impressionable, his new focus now centered on the objective world and marked a turning point in his artistic career. He recalled reading a U.S. history book by J.A. Spencer and “I read and reread this work and examined its illustrations with increasing interest”. He asked himself, “Why could not such subject pictures dealing with the meanings of American history possess aesthetically interesting properties, deliverable along with their meanings?”⁷⁷

Upon return to New York, Benton attempted to renew old contacts. Many of the prewar groups and organizations he was associated with fell apart, as members scattered in different directions. The war itself caused many rifts within the art community. Again, alienated and lonely, Benton pushed forward to develop and explore some of his ideas. An article he read on Tintoretto, a Venetian painter was particularly inspiring.⁷⁸ Adams explains that it made him think about spatial relations of figures and how he planned his compositions. Thomas Craven, Benton friend and art critic, underscores the importance of early European artists: “The more lasting impressions he carried back to America

...were of the energetic elongated figures found in the late works of Michaelangelo and in those of El Greco and Tintoretto.”⁷⁹

Benton returned to the process of making clay sculptures for future sketches. But in order to get the right grouping of figures, he moved them around and tried to capture different angles, perspective, shadows and light. “Little by little, he learned to make models that were not fully three dimensional but occupied a tipped-back space, a kind of compromise between sculpture and painting.”⁸⁰ Manipulating shape and position helped him set the mood and convey a feeling of movement. The use of distorted or irregular shapes created drama. These experiments became the basis for many of his historical murals and provided yet another benchmark for Thomas Hart Benton: The emergence of his own style. Some criticized the intensity of his murals. Others praised his work but said it may be “too expressive”. They referred to the energy in all his figures as showing tremendous physical tension;⁸¹ In psychological terms the release can be understood by recognizing a different sort of release taking place in his life. Benton had feelings of inadequacy and alienation from his family and peers most of his life. He never measured up to anyone of value in his father’s mind. They had not spoken to each other for over twelve years. Benton admitted he had bottled up resentment and anger, only to be expressed inexplicably in regular quarrels, brawls, and drinking binges.⁸²

It was in the midst of lavish media attention and scrutiny when Benton was called to Missouri to look after his ill, bedridden father. Sympathetically, old animosities withered away. Benton recalled that during that month of care-taking, he was overwhelmed with “a great desire to know more of the America which I had glimpsed...

I was moved by a desire to pick up again the threads of my childhood.”⁸³ Clearly, after the death of his father, Benton was freed from the deep emotional bonds, which had restrained even the subtlest desire to connect with his past... with his Missouri roots.

Benton is well known for his Midwestern viewpoints but he actually became popular for his regional themes in the South. Southern culture was also a part of his past. His father had fought with the Confederate army and was later swept into political office with the help of William Jennings Bryan.⁸⁴ Narrative themes excited him as a child and combined with memories of political rallies, parades, bombastic speakers and an attitude that was sympathetic to the rural hard-working hill people, a mural series developed.

To Northerners, Regionalism was viewed as small-minded provincialism. From a Southern perspective, however, it was seen as a just reaction to the mechanized urban sprawl to the north. Benton tried to capture this revival of Southern pride in the sketches he made during a cross-country trip he took 1928. His exhibit of 109 pieces at the Delphic Galleries was divided into four main groups: *King Cotton*, *The Lumber Camp*, *Holy Roller Camp Meeting*, and *Coal Mines*. One reporter from the *New York Times* praised the show with such comments as: “His pictures of river traffic are particularly stirring...with some of the sweep of Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*; they actually achieve the epic quality of which he has strenuously aimed in the past”.⁸⁵ This was the type of review Benton had been craving. His latest artistic endeavors, he claimed were not politically motivated. They reflected more of a revolt against modernism and the abstract styles that had become so popular with the New York elite. He believed the quality of life in America had “departed from his ideal vision for this nation, not from a

theory of class structure,” critic Matthew Baigell considered him to be an out of date “Jeffersonian, adrift in the twentieth century.”⁸⁶ Ultimately, Benton sought a true American art, absent of European influence. His attack was not only directed against contemporary European painters but Americans who lived in Europe and adopted the culture as their own. “...the John Reed Club artists couldn’t paint anything real about America because their European derived Communist preconceptions wouldn’t permit real experiences of American institutions...”⁸⁷

His comments, coupled with a new exhibit of murals at the Whitney Museum in November of 1932, unleashed a flurry of harsh, scathing denunciations against Benton. The project titled *The Arts of Life in America*, was meant to be disagreeable:

The most shocking panel was *Political Business and Intellectual Ballyhoo*, in which he thumbed his nose at his old leftist friends and indeed at the political world as a whole...At the top, a group of cartoon characters, including Mickey Mouse and Mutt and Jeff, stand beside a sign that advertises the “Greenwich Village Proletarian Costume Dance.” Jeff holds a placard reading: “Literary Playboys League for Social Consciousness.” Behind him a New York Post blares the headlines: “Love Nest Murder,” “Greater Circulation” and “Arrest!”⁸⁸

The Marxists at the Arts Students League sharply rejected Benton as a reactionary isolationist. Jewish and African American students dropped his classes at the Art Student’s League, out of protest. Petitions were circulated to have his murals destroyed. His stereotypical images of people were said to be particularly disturbing. One student stated “There was a basic anti-humanist approach that was reflected in all his people”⁸⁹

Benton was in the political and public spotlight once again during the depression. While most artists were struggling to scratch out an existence, he was offered a huge commission to paint a mural for the Indiana legislature. It was to be the state’s

contribution to the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago. Working on a tight schedule, he began traveling the state extensively, looking for images of the common worker. To flatter those politicians, who had originally opposed a non-native of Indiana from receiving this commission, he painted their likenesses into the mural.⁹⁰ Nevertheless his enemies did not let up. The reviews afterward were mixed. Deciding where the panels would be stored became a separate divisive issue receiving substantial media attention. In the end they were donated to Indiana University in Bloomington.

Back in NYC, Benton continued to create a stir with the media. Some of the attention could be credited to his old friend Tom Craven. As an art critic, Craven popularized and promoted Benton's image by writing numerous articles published in *The Dial* and later the tabloid press. He portrayed Benton in his book *Modern Art*, as a Midwestern regionalist and ridiculed certain French artists such as Matisse.⁹¹ Americans who followed the latest trends in French painting were stereotyped as limp-wristed effetes or worse, as slaves of the old colonial masters. In an essay on the subject Matisse was attacked and compared to:

“Negro maniacs and would-be Persians” for infantile draftsmanship and for worshipping Congo sculpture, the descriptive scratches of the Bushman, Peruvian pottery, and everything else that was savage and undisciplined.”⁹²

Craven's writings dovetailed with an exhibit at the Kansas City Art Institute, organized by commercial art dealer Maynard Walker. In his reviews, Craven upheld the new mural style as “totally different from the quasi-classical Beaux-Arts mural of the preceding generation.”⁹³ A Midwesterner himself, he concocted an idea to bring together a Regionalist show honoring Benton, Grant Wood and John Stuart Curry. With an eye

for business and publicity, the exhibit advanced the cultural concerns raised by Craven and led to the complete development of a myth involving artists who had hardly even known each other; the movement took on a momentum of its own.

Coincidentally, the opportunistic motivations of *Time* magazine played a major role in elevating fiction to fact. Considering the desperate poverty faced by farmers, factory workers and the huge number of unemployed throughout the country, *Time* editors sought to publish a Christmas issue with a message of hope and optimism in the coming year. Tired of the doom and gloom of reality, they decided to boost the morale of the readership by featuring an artist who was doing his part to recapture the American spirit. They profiled the “Big Three” and presented a series of color photos for the first time in American history. Benton was placed on the front cover of the December 24, 1934 issue and overnight was propelled into stardom.⁹⁴

This was a classic case of opportunism for all the players involved. Each had their self interests advanced. The mood in America was ripe for such a charade, as men such as Walker aptly understood. His comments on art in America underscored the politics of Regionalism and the attempts to restore pride in the American heartland:

...And very noticeably much of the most vital modern art in America is coming out of our long backward Middle West. Largely through the creative output of a few sincere and vital painters, the East is learning that there is an America west of the Alleghenies and that it is worth being put on canvas. ...The sad part of it is that the West has been so slow in recognizing and fostering these famous sons of hers. Too often, when they have done a masterpiece as Benton has done for Indiana, all they get is anger and boos. If we could have more institutions like the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has done so much good in supporting the real American artists like Curry and Benton and Wood and others like them, it would not be long before America would have an indigenous art expression.⁹⁵

At large, the general public accepted the showcase of a new “indigenous” American art movement, but those who lived and worked close to the dynamic center knew better. Many responded with outrage and disbelief. Benton had already managed to anger left-wing intellectuals and art critics in speeches he made and articles he wrote. This latest promotion of himself forced deeper conflicts with two men central to the promotional hub of the art world: Alfred Stieglitz and Stuart Davis. Benton hurled insults at both men who responded with vicious retorts. The exchange forced a complete break up. Benton burned his bridges in New York and embraced whole-heartedly this new native, homespun nationalist movement.

Ironically, as a young man, Benton had ridiculed the small town Missouri mindset. Written off as provincial, it was New York that held promise and inspiration. His departure was not without public controversy. The New York Sun announced, “MR BENTON WILL LEAVE US FLAT-IS SICK OF NEW YORK AND EXPLAINS WHY.” Benton said, “...I’m leaving New York to see what can be done about art in a fairly clean field less riddled with verbal stupidities.”⁹⁶

He accepted a job as director of painting at the Kansas City Art Institute but once again, within a short period of time, conflicts developed. He provoked colleagues with outrageous comments and was fired. Amazingly, while other artists were wondering how next month’s rent would be paid, Benton was offered another generous commission to design a historical mural on the walls of the house lounge of the Missouri State Capitol Building. Using egg tempura and oil, his objective was to “capture the restless energy of America”.⁹⁷

Benton worked well when he worked alone. Over the next eighteen months he traveled the state, interacting with “country folk” and enjoying his connections with what he would call common decent hard-working Americans. Essentially, he was imagining and slowly planning the big picture. Meticulously, he created scenes of people working, dancing, and drinking. He sketched models and sculpted hundreds of clay figures, some miniature, some gigantic. By the summer of 1936, hundreds of eggs were mixed with oil to create a visual, sequential narrative from Lewis and Clark’s exploration up to the modern industrial development of St. Louis and Kansas City. Covering four walls of a huge room, the mural’s unifying features were the rolling landscape and the Missouri River.⁹⁸

Again, public reaction was loud and varied. Behind the work he attempted to portray the people of Missouri overtime, “as they were and are”⁹⁹ Once again his good friend Thomas Craven applauded Benton’s intensity as “dynamic, undulating composition that writhes restlessly across the canvas, carrying the eye on to the next episode of the state’s history.”¹⁰⁰

E.P. Richardson believes Craven gave too much credence to the regionalist movement. But he claims the praise was a reaction to the eastern portrayal of the Midwesterner as a country bumpkin incapable of understanding culture. However, he describes Benton’s style as original and imaginative. “The scenes were separated by wholly arbitrary moldings somewhat as over-lapping photographs were separated in the pictorial sections of the Sunday paper.”¹⁰¹ Though legislators would have preferred a “sweeter picture... something a little more delicate, a little more violet-scented,” Benton

professed his loyalty to realism and insisted that time would change their attitudes to a more favorable opinion of his work. Perhaps it was his forthright sense of purpose, which shielded him once again from the outpouring of criticism. Many Missourians were horrified by the amount of money and eggs that went into a portrayal they found to be insulting and disingenuous. Back in his home state, Benton was again seen as an outsider. He went to great efforts to fit in. His response was cool and sarcastic, “Those who affect art with a big “A” do so with their eyes on Europe just as they do in New York.”¹⁰² His remarks were intentionally loud and dismissive. “What is called society is of course, like the froth on a glass of beer, of no consequence.”¹⁰³

Benton expressed his political views publicly and anxiously through a timeline of national and state conflicts. The mural’s color patterns brought the characters to life and created a dynamic relationship of overlapping scenes. It reflected much more than the conflict, drama and restlessness unique to the state’s politics. It celebrated the simple over the sophisticated and reaffirmed local rather than East Coast European-like traditions. In many respects, the mural represented the embodiment of Benton’s lifetime of struggle. It highlighted the apex of his political self as well as his career.

The Regionalist movement propelled Benton to national attention and provided him the identity and attention he always craved. Milton Brown, in his textbook *American Art*, points out once again the irony of Benton’s antagonistic comments regarding European art when his murals largely reflected the figurative elements he studied while in Paris.¹⁰⁴ Benton’s chauvinist boast exposed his narrow view of history and his own experience. Brown saw little originality in the ideas behind regionalism. They were

“...overreacting to a nationalistic cultural climate...”and found “puritanical elements in their often fanatical pursuit of the American heritage.¹⁰⁵ Hughes observes Benton as the “top dog of Regionalism” and underscores the significant role the media played in feeding the myth. “The Regionalists’ vision of a rural Eden in America had two things in common with all other Edens. It attracted a lot of people, and it didn’t exist. Hughes sums up Benton’s work as...”flat out, lapel-grabbing vulgar...”¹⁰⁶ According to Lloyd Goodrich, the negative effect of the Regionalists was the xenophobic, anti-European response that it engendered. Conveniently, Benton’s embrace of Populism and its nativist, tendencies cleanly paralleled Regionalism, and gave him an outlet for venting his values and vision. Hughes does not take Benton’s values and vision of America’s heartland lightly. He reminds us of the parallels other social Realist were drawing between American regionalism and Nazi German cultural nationalism. Further, he acknowledges: “In New York, it was easy for leftists to paint Benton and Regionalists as ‘Fascist,’ which they were not-although Benton’s attachment to soil and race rather than class, his strident nationalism and his bullying ways could certainly be painted as ‘fascistic,’ and were.”¹⁰⁷

On the positive side, Goodrich recognizes the attention Regionalism gave mid-America. “And in purely artistic terms, the best regionalist painting had qualities of substance and energy that may well make it more highly valued in the future.”¹⁰⁸ Von Blum would agree. He saw Benton’s murals containing more respect for the working man than most other reviewers. Even though Benton avoided topics of class struggle and political disenfranchisement of the poor, he touched upon themes controversial in U.S.

history. In fact, Von Blum stands out in defense of Benton: “Infused with Benton’s characteristic vigor, the work is a modest antidote to racist stereotypes perpetuated even in ‘responsible’ contemporary publications.”¹⁰⁹ This blend of politics and art culminated in the Missouri mural to showcase a man of many contradictions.

Conclusion

The professional reputations of these two men have followed two interwoven courses, one relating to the fortunes of realism among art critics and the other tracing the political swings of the country.

In art, as in many areas of popular culture, what was once new becomes old, and then it becomes new again. Early in the twentieth-century John Sloan and the “The Eight” revolted against what had become the stodgy realism of the academy. Influenced by impressionism’s insistence on capturing the moment and the reformism of the Progressive Era, Sloan practiced a gritty, reportorial style of realism that wasn’t in favor with traditional critics.

Milton Brown found this to be a liberating era for artists and writers alike who were freed from past conventions. He refers to “The Eight” as humble, idealistic, yet not radical or intentionally political. Sloan would agree that his etchings and paintings had no ideological intent. But little financial support or artistic criticism ever materialized. His motivation throughout his career came from within; his commitment to the profession strengthened his resolve to maintain a long-range view. He continued to paint what he

saw to be true and would not compromise his beliefs for the sake of sales or popular reviews.

By the 1920's the Realist movement of the progressive era was seen as passe. During the boom years of the 1920s, Modernism prevailed. Ironically, critics in the early 1920s chastised Sloan for outgrowing an interest in urban, and therefore "modern" America. He was beginning to experiment with a more abstract style, but he found his subject matter outside of America's cities, in places like New Mexico. He responded, "I have earned the time to do my own work, to work as a humanist, a spectator of life around me. It can be a blessing to be ignored by the critics. You have the privacy to do your own work."¹¹⁰

Thomas Hart Benton, meanwhile, was still trying to find his niche. In the latter part of the 1920s, he left NYC and traveled throughout New England, the South and as far west as New Mexico. Sketchbook in hand, he made hundreds of drawings of the common worker for future use. His intent was to embrace Realism with American pride. This sense of purpose and determination, he felt, was missing in the new Modernist style. So when trends in the 1920's shifted toward Modernism, Benton went on the attack. He saw Modernism as a foreign import to be resisted, as he did later with Marxism.

In the 1930's Benton further angered his critics on the left by painting insulting caricatures of them. Artists like Sloan were disgusted by his personality, which they believed was manifested in his art. Richardson in *A Short History of American Art* forgives Benton's extreme contempt for coastal urbanites when he cites an anecdote about a New York lecturer in Kansas who said "...For East is East and West is West, but

the Middle West is terrible. “¹¹¹ Electoral politics today reflect a similar divide between urban and rural America. Interestingly, Benton did seem to impress large collectors, prestigious museums and influential art magazine editors. They honored him with huge commissions, lavish attention, and plenty of opportunities to exhibit his new style of art, Regionalism.

Artists were indeed politicized in the 1930’s with an interest in reform. Americans continued to look inward, but this time questioning the condition in which people were put by the Great Depression. Realism, an introspective medium, was then back in vogue. Two distinct schools emerged: Social Realism, inspired by Marxist critique, and Regionalism, an upbeat populist expression which championed the New Deal and celebrated the common person.

According to Susan Noyes Platt, in *Art and Politics of the 1930s*, the Communist Party held a lot of promise for Social Realist artists. Though it was a marginal party, it influenced the liberal ideas of the New Deal and drew in the cultural elite. Numerous organizations, including art guilds, linked themselves to “the cause”. Platt points to the significance of the destruction of Diego Rivera’s mural at Rockefeller Center as a collision between capitalism and communism in the art community. Artists also re-discovered Sloan at this time, but sensibilities had changed. Some viewed his perspective toward the working class as overly romantic, or even quaint. Like Benton’s work, Sloan’s was seen as not being critical enough.

Benton’s murals of the 1930’s represent the New Deal optimism of FDR’s first 100 days. Foster points out that criticism of these murals was either aesthetic or political.

Liberals found Benton's depictions of African Americans and some of his Klan scenes to be crude and distasteful. Nanette Brewer's essay "Benton as Hoosier Historian" from *Thomas Hart Benton and the Indiana Mural* argues that his Indiana Mural marks his shift in politics from Marxist principles to those of a Dewey pragmatist. As a muralist, his work told a chronological story and for that, he was compared to John Dewey, co-founder of the New School for Social Research. Like Dewey, Benton believed history should be presented as a series of social activities carried out by average people.

With the entry of the U.S. in WWII, the focus shifted to international affairs. Artists turned their attention to the changing role of the U.S in the world. By the war's end, Americans carried a new sense of pride and dominance. Insecurities were dropped. No longer did artists feel they had to turn to Europe for leadership. New York replaced Paris as the center for artistic innovation and Realism, both social realist and regionalist, was replaced by abstract expressionism as the premier style of American art. Having burned numerous bridges, and spurned the cultural elite, Benton's material fell flat and was considered provincial. Sloan, on the other hand, was held in high regard as an elder statesman in the artistic community. His role in bringing modern European art to the attention of Americans with the 1913 Armory Show cemented his reputation among critics who considered his work dated. Milton Brown, in a review of the 1952 retrospective exhibit of Sloan's work, concluded by saying, "if American art ever again should swing back into the orbit of realism, artists and critics (the public finds no difficulty in understanding him) may rediscover John Sloan as an Old Master."¹¹²

The American art world's attention did swing back to figurative art during the 1960s as did interest in the works of Sloan and Benton. According to Frances Pohl, "the populist politics of the 1960s and 1970s prompted a renewal of interest in the art of the 1930s and a reexamination of the division between 'high' and 'low' art."¹¹³ Numerous exhibitions of the work of both artists were mounted during this period. Sloan's former student and second wife Helen Farr Sloan was instrumental in the revival of his work, while Benton's students kept interest alive in their mentor. Though ignored by the art community and mellowed by the passage of time, Benton's edgy personality meant that journalists could regularly turn to him for a lively profile piece. The *Saturday Evening Post* ran a 1965 article entitled "Down the Wide Missouri with an Old SOB" and Mike Wallace did an article on him for the television show *60 Minutes* in 1973.

It wasn't until the 1990s that dispassionate scholarly biographies of either artist were undertaken. Earlier works were often either sentimental puff pieces written by acolytes seeking to simply revive interest in their mentor, or they were polemical pieces by partisans unable to move beyond old arguments. The contributions of John Sloan and Thomas Hart Benton to the development of the United States, both positive and negative, are just now being understood.

PAINTING IN AMERICA: THE ART CURATOR MUSEUM PROJECT

Introduction

Students, acting in the role of art museum curators, will research and present the life and work of American painters. This will be the culminating project for a year-long study of American History for juniors in high school. It will serve as a review of their entire course of study. The California History-Social Science Standards include several references about the significance of artistic expression during specific time periods in U.S. History. To access these, see Appendix B.

The theme of this project is to identify the role played by artists in the development of the United States. Since artists and their work mirror the aesthetic, social, political, and economic conditions of their time, any attempt to understand the history of the United States would be incomplete without a look at the arts. But artistic expression doesn't just reflect the time, place, and culture from which it springs, it also influences that culture. An exploration of the stylistic and thematic directions taken by artists will provide students an alternative approach to understanding American History.

With each unit throughout the year, the teacher will model what students will be expected to do for their art museum curator project. The teacher will give biographical information on an artist, discuss how this artist's work fits into the sociopolitical trends of their time, present several pieces of this artist's work, and ask analytical questions about these pieces. These modeling lessons, or content hooks, will be presented as journal entries.

At the end of the year students will choose an artist to research from a list of artists organized chronologically and stylistically (see Appendix A). Following the approach modeled by the teacher during their journal writes on artists, students will assume the role of art museum curators and prepare art exhibits for their peers. Students will research their artists for one week in the library, then present their exhibits to the class during the following week.

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

It is my expectation that most students, having reached their eleventh year of formal education, will have taken some training in the graphic arts. However, no specific prior study of the arts is necessary for a student to be able to grasp the concepts presented in this lesson. Guidance will be given by the teacher and the discussion and brainstorming element of this activity allows for the more perceptive and better prepared students to teach those with less understanding.

As this is a culminating activity for the year, students will have some prior knowledge of the time periods during which their subjects lived. This is important, for students will have to place their artists' ideas and works in context with the major events and issues of their day. It is expected that students will have the basic skills in researching, writing and presenting that the state has outlined in its eleventh-grade standards (see Appendix B).

Discussion of Content Hook

During each unit of study students will analyze works of art from selected historical sources and answer questions about them for their daily journal writes. These repeated lessons will model for students what they will be required to do during the art museum curator project. These art transparency activities are each meant to take up about twenty to twenty-five minutes of a class meeting. They can be inserted into a unit in a wide variety of ways: as an introductory hook, an illustration of lecture notes, or even as a visual assessment at the end of a unit.

Once students begin a new unit of study, I would ask them to imagine themselves to be visual artists with a concern for the events of their time. In order to express their understanding of a main idea, event, or character in the unit, they should think of something to represent in a graphic manner. What image would they choose? How would it be represented? What medium would they employ? What feeling or mood would be expressed? Would they embed an obvious message or moral in their graphic?

I would then place an art transparency on the overhead projector and explain that this was one person's expression of their existence during the time period under study. As already mentioned, this activity may itself be used as an introductory hook for a unit of study or the introduction of a particular concept. Representative works from each artist profiled will be projected on a screen with an opaque projector. Specific questions will be prepared for each work (see Appendix C for questions on works by John Sloan and Thomas Hart Benton).

Students have journals that they regularly use in a participatory segment of my class. These journals are used to respond to readings from the text, write creative stories

that express their understanding of what they are studying, respond to a video, and defend opinions. This lesson will involve students responding in their journals to the art works I will show.

First, I will read some biographical information about the artist, consciously adding any anecdotal trivia that may either hook my teenage audience or provide critical insight into the artist's character. This will be followed by some brief contextual information regarding the work of art shown, such as when it was created, where it was shown, and how it was received.

I will then read questions prepared specifically for each work of art, allowing ample time for students to share their ideas and pose questions of their own before they write their journal responses. Students could also be asked to demonstrate the skills modeled during one of these activities as a homework assignment. They could analyze and respond to works of art reproduced within their textbooks.

Lesson Content

Students will play the role of art curators preparing a survey of American painting for the class. They will define the period of art assigned to them, conduct biographical research on one artist from that period or genre, choose five paintings that best reflect that artist, and demonstrate how the artist's work both mirrored the aesthetic, social, political, and economic conditions of their time, and how this work influenced the culture of their time.

A) Choosing a Topic: Topics will be assigned randomly. Students will then be given five minutes to familiarize themselves with their topic and possibly conduct a trade with another student, or choose among those topics not assigned. After that time, they will not be allowed to make a change. No more than two students will be allowed to do research from a particular art movement or genre in order for materials to remain reasonably accessible to all. Most classes have on average 30 students.

B) Library Research: Students will be required to turn in all of their handwritten notes at the end of their typed report. All notes must be cited by title, author and page numbers used. They will be required to take notes from at least five sources and only one of the sources can be an encyclopedia.

C) Final Report: Final reports must be typed and contain no spelling or grammatical errors. They must be at least 1000 words in length and list five sources. The report should include:

- a definition of the style/genre/or period which their artist represents
- biographical research on the artist they have chosen
- a description of five paintings that best reflect the work of their artist
- a complete bibliography using the MLA style
- exhibition notes for each of the five paintings they have chosen (these should include the date the work was executed, information on the size and materials of the painting, techniques employed by the artist, the relation of each work to the art of the time and the mood or message of each painting). They should note their sources for each image (whether it is a website, or an art history book).

- an explanation of how the artist's work both mirrored the aesthetic, social, political, and economic conditions of his/her time and how this work influenced the culture of his/her time.
- D) Presentation to Class: Using an opaque projector for text image, or an LCD projector for images from a website, students will present their "museum exhibit" to the class. They will give biographical information on their artist, describe their artist's style, place their work in context with sociopolitical trends of their time, and then lead their peers through an analysis of five representative works of art.
- E) Teacher Preparation: Using a list of the artists chosen by students, the teacher will work with the librarian to gather appropriate books. Supplement this collection with books checked out from the county library and the Humboldt State University library. Prepare a list of web sites that have significant collections of American painting, such as www.artcyclopedia.com.

Evaluation

Journals are collected and graded about once a month. Art works can also be added to unit tests with questions about their relevance to the era being studied. See Appendix D for the grading rubric to be used for the Art Curator Project.

Unit tests will include an essay question related to a work of art during the unit. Students will be asked to; 1) describe what they see in the painting, 2) explain the message or theme presented by the artist, and 3) explain how the themes presented in that work of art fit into the sociopolitical trends of its time.

Appendix A

Art Museum Curator Project Topic List

Late Colonial Period / Revolutionary Period

John Singleton Copely (1738-1815)
 Benjamin West (1738-1820)
 Matthew Pratt (1734-1805)
 Ralph Earl (1751-1801)
 Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828)
 John Trumbull (1756-1843)

Federal Period (early Romanticism)

Washington Allston (1779-1843)
 John Vanderlyn (1775-1852)
 Samuel B.F. Morse (1791-1872)
 Peale Family (father Charles Willson Peale 1741-1827; brother James 1749-1831; sons Titian 1799-1885, Rubens 1784-1865, Raphaelle 1774-1825 and Rembrandt 1778-1860; niece Sara Miriam 1800-1885)

Hudson River School (1830s-1850s)

Thomas Cole (1801-1848)
 Thomas Doughty
 Asher Durand (1796-1886)
 George Inness (1826-1894)
 John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872)

"Luminists"

Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904)
 Fitz Hugh Lane (1804-1865)

"Second Generation" (1860s and 1870s)

Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)
 Frederick Church (1826-1900)

Genre Painting

William Sidney Mount (1807-1868)
 George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879)
 George Catlin (1796-1872)
 Eastman Johnson (1824-1906)

"American Folk Art" or "Primitive Painting"

Rufus Hathaway (1770-1822)
Edward Hicks (1780-1849)
Ammi Philips (1788-1865)

Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Thomas Eakins (1844-1916)
Henry O. Tanner (1859-1937) student of Eakins
Thomas Pollock Anshutz (1851-1912) student of Eakins

Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917)

The Expatriates

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)
Mary Cassat (1844-1926)
James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903)

Impressionists

William Merritt Chase (1844-1916)
Childe Hassam (1859-1935)
John Twachtman (1853-1902)

Post-Impressionists ("The Eight")

Maurice Prendergast (1859-1924)
Robert Henri (1865-1929)
John Sloan (1871-1951)
George Luks (1867-1933)
Ernest Lawson (1873-1939)
Everett Shinn (1876-1953)
Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928)
William Glackens (1870-1938)

Early Modernists

John Marin (1870-1953)
Arthur Dove (1880-1946)
Georgia O'Keefe (1887-1986)

Early Modernists (continued)

Edward Hopper (1882-1967)
 Stuart Davis (1894-1964)
 Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) “Precisionist”
 Charles Demuth (1883-1935)

Abstract Expressionists

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)
 Helen Frankenthaler (1928-)
 Willem de Kooning (1904-1997)
 Clyfford Still (1904-1980)
 Mark Rothko (1903-1970)
 Richard Diebenkorn (1922-1993)

Regionalists

Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975)
 Grant Wood (1891-1942)
 John Steuart Curry (1897-1946)

Realists

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000)
 Ben Shahn (1898-1969)
 Reginald Marsh (1898-1954)
 Andrew Wyeth (1928-1987)

Pop Artists

Robert Rauschenberg (1925-)
 Jasper Johns (1930-)
 Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997)
 Andy Warhol (1928-1987)

Photo Realists

Richard Estes (1936-)

Appendix B

Grade Level Standards

Surprisingly, there is no general reference made within The History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools (October 1998) that addresses the importance of studying art in order to understand the American experience. However, references are made regarding the significance of artistic expression in America during very specific times such as the early Republic (8.4.4), the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s (11.5.5) and the post-World War II era (11.8.8). So it is left to the educator to assume that such attention to the Arts should be included in every unit of study, not just during the eras randomly chosen in the document.

On the other hand, skills to be practiced and mastered by students during the art curator project are delineated by the following standards:

Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View

- B. Students distinguish valid arguments from fallacious arguments in historical interpretation
- 2. Students identify bias and prejudice in historical interpretations.
- A. Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate, and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations.

Historical Interpretation

- 1. Students show the connections, casual and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.

Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

There are several points within the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools (January 2001) that closely relate to this project.

They are as follows:

- 1.1 Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about ...works of art...
- 1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist's distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work.
- 3.3 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.

- 4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.
 - 4.2 Compare the ways in which the meaning of a specific work of art has been affected over time because of changes in interpretation and context.
 - 4.5 Employ the conventions of art criticism in writing and speaking about works of art.
- B. Demonstrate an understanding of the various skills of an artist, art critic, art historian, art collector, art gallery owner, and philosopher of art (aesthete).

Appendix C

Hook Questions Related to Works
by John Sloan and Thomas Hart Benton

John Sloan

- 1) “The Woman’s Page” (Etching from the “New York City Life” series. 1905.)
 - A. Describe the setting of this etching.
 - B. What do the details of this scene tell you about this woman’s social class? Explain.
 - C. What is she reading? Explain the irony of this. What is Sloan’s message?

- 2) “Hairdresser’s Window” (Painting. 1907.)
 - A. Describe the scene. What is happening? Where is it taking place? What details can you identify?
 - B. How would you describe the colors used by Sloan in this painting?
 - C. What is Sloan saying about the life of common people in NY? How does this relate to the sentiments expressed by reformers during the Progressive Era?

- 3) “The Wake of the Ferry (#2)” (Painting. 1907.)
 - A. Describe the scene.
 - B. How does Sloan convey a sense of motion in this painting?
 - C. What colors are used? What mood do these colors suggest?
 - D. Are Sloan’s lines distinct and crisp, or blurry? What effect does this have?
 - E. Imagine yourself to be the commuter on the back deck of this New York ferry reflecting on the workday behind you. Write up your thoughts. What are your experiences and what are your aspirations?

- 4) “Ludlow Massacre” (Cover of The Masses, June 1914.)
 - A. Describe what is going on in this scene. What identifies the occupation of the central figure?
 - B. Describe the lines and shading Sloan uses to frame the action. What does it suggest?
 - C. What feelings were meant to be provoked by the artist?

- 5) “The Master” (Cartoon for The Masses, September 1914.)
 - A. Identify the two characters in the cartoon. Who do they represent? Describe the details by which Sloan make their identities clear.
 - B. Describe the objects in the cartoon that are symbols. How do they add meaning to this cartoon?
 - C. Read the caption and explain the meaning of the cartoon.
 - D. What point of view does the cartoon present, and what argument (reasons for its opinion) does Sloan present?

Thomas Hart Benton

- 1) "Boomtown" (Painting. 1927-28)
 - A. What gives the painting its title?
 - B. Describe what you see going on in town. What details give the place a sense of liveliness? What details suggest that it may be a rough place?
 - C. Describe the landscape. What might this tell you about work in the oilfields?

- 2) "Deep South" (Egg Tempura on plywood panel from the "America Today" mural in the New School for Social Research in New York. 1930.)
 - A. Describe each of the vignettes presented in Benton's mural.
 - B. What do these images tell you about the hardships of rural life in the South before the Great Depression?
 - C. What hints of racial tensions are given? Explain.

- 3) "Changing West" (Egg Tempura on plywood panel from the "America Today" mural in the New School for Social Research in New York. 1930.)
 - A. Describe each of the vignettes presented in Benton's mural.
 - B. Given the title, what scenes represent the 'Old West' and which ones represent the 'New West'?
 - C. What do you think Benton's message is? Does he seem to favor one view? Explain.

- 4) "Coal, Gas, Oil, Brick" (Industrial Panel #9 from the Indiana Mural 1933. Egg tempura on plywood panels.)
 - A. Describe each of the vignettes presented in this section of Benton's mural.
 - B. What sources of energy were historically present in Indiana?
 - C. What indications are there that these industries experienced labor strife?
 - D. What might the gray stump of a tree represent?
 - E. Do you think Benton has a message in this mural? What is it?

- 5) "Parks, the Circus, the Klan, the Press" (Cultural Panel #10 from the Indiana Mural 1933. Egg tempura on plywood panels.)
 - A. Describe each of the vignettes presented in this section of Benton's mural.
 - B. What iconic values do each of these vignettes represent? Why might citizens of Indiana have objected to this portrayal?
 - C. What message do you think is given by the juxtaposition of the Klan rally and the hospital scene? Explain.

Appendix D

Grading Rubric

ART MUSEUM CURATOR PROJECT

Name _____

Total Points Earned /200

RESEARCH PROCESS

Consistently and actively works on project. Willingly accepts and fulfills individual responsibilities. Helps identify necessary changes.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

RESEARCH NOTES, ROUGH DRAFT, and SOURCES

Research Notes: Are there ample notes from all of the sources? Is it clear what source they come from? Do they represent a range of sources?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Rough Draft:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Sources: Are the five sources accurately cited?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

FINAL REPORT

Historical Knowledge: Does the essay demonstrate accurate knowledge of time and place? Does the essay provide concrete evidence to support arguments?

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

Biographical Sketch: Are all of the major periods of the artist's life and work addressed? Is their philosophy of art discussed? Is a description given of their artistic style or genre? Are the aesthetic, social, economic, and political conditions of the era addressed in relation to the artist's work?

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

Exhibit Notes: The five art works chosen to represent the artist are well-described.

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

Written Communication: Is the message clearly and effectively written? Is the information logically organized? Is the essay nearly free of errors in grammar and spelling?

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

PRESENTATION

Content: The historical, political, and cultural significance of the artist is described. The presenter demonstrates a solid understanding of the subject they are presenting.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Visual Images: Five works from the profiled artist are critically explained to the class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Communication Skills: Information is given clearly and slowly.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

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- ⁸⁸ Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton*, 188.
- ⁸⁹ Burroughs, *Thomas Hart Benton*. 112.

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- ⁹⁰ Kathleen A. Foster, Nanette Brewer and Margaret Contompasis, *Thomas Hart Benton and the Indiana Murals* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Art Museum, 2000), 21.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid*, 23.
- ⁹² Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton*, 215.
- ⁹³ Craven, *American Art*, 440.
- ⁹⁴ Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton*, 216.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 217-218.
- ⁹⁶ Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan, *The American Eye: Eleven Artists of the Twentieth Century* (NY: Delacorte Press, 1995), 38.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 39.
- ⁹⁸ Hughes, *American Visions*, 446.
- ⁹⁹ Craven, *American Art*, 440.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 440.
- ¹⁰¹ Richardson, *A Short History*, 294 .
- ¹⁰² Benton, *An Artist in America*, 274.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 275.
- ¹⁰⁴ Milton Brown, ed., *American Art* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), 447.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 448.
- ¹⁰⁶ Hughes, *American Visions*, 438.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 437.
- ¹⁰⁸ Goodrich, *Three Centuries*, 77.
- ¹⁰⁹ Von Blum, *The Critical Vision*, 53.
- ¹¹⁰ Helen, Farr-Sloan, *John Sloan: New York Etchings*, ix.
- ¹¹¹ Richardson, *A Short History*, 294.
- ¹¹² Milton Brown, "The Two John Sloans", *Art News*, 57.
- ¹¹³ Pohl, *Framing America*, 10.