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Power and Patronage: Public Art and Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles,  
1928–1936

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

Monica Elizabeth Jovanovich

Committee in Charge:

Professor Grant Kester, Chair  
Professor Teddy Cruz  
Professor Michael Davidson  
Professor Kuiyi Shen  
Professor John C. Welchman

2016



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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their endless love and support.

## EPIGRAPH

What did Time smell like? Like dust and clocks and people. And if you wondered what Time sounded like it sounded like water running in a dark cave and voices crying and dirt dropping down upon hollow box lids, and rain. And, going further, what did Time *look* like? Time looked like snow dropping silently into a black room or it looked like a silent film in an ancient theater, one hundred billion faces falling like those New Year balloons, down and down into nothing. That was how Time smelled and looked and sounded.

—Ray Bradbury, “Night Meeting,” *The Martin Chronicles* (1950)

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- 2016 Doctor of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

## PUBLICATIONS

“The Apotheosis of Power: Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles during the 1930s,” *Public Art Dialogue* 4 (2014): 42–70.

*Patronage, Inc.: Corporate Commissions of Art and Architecture in the United States, 1886–2010*, Monica Jovanovich and Melissa Renn, eds. (forthcoming).

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Power and Patronage: Public Art and Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles,  
1928–1936

by

Monica Elizabeth Jovanovich

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Grant Kester, Chair

This dissertation explores the intersections of public space, corporate cultural philanthropy, and public art in urban settings. It analyzes examples of corporate art patronage found within the lobbies and entryways of corporate headquarters in Los Angeles, California in order to examine how these oft-overlooked commissions represent far more than simple marketing strategies, and instead, constitute important contributions to the larger history of art in California. Corporations displayed a commitment to contributing to the culture of the city and challenged negative



perceptions around their public image through the strategic collecting and commissioning of modern art in the early twentieth century. By examining how corporations were able to strategically shape their public image through murals and architectural sculpture that presented a civically orientated corporate history, I contend that the commissioned artworks functioned as embodiments of the concept of corporate social responsibility. The resulting artworks have carefully constructed narratives of local history that present the corporation as protagonist and were marketed as lasting investments in Los Angeles's cultural heritage. These narratives also countered public fears around capitalism that ranged from economic instability to corporate greed. Chapter one examines the intertwined history of corporations and philanthropy, looking specifically at the corporate cultural philanthropy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chapter two contextualizes Los Angeles's emerging art scene from 1900 to 1929 and explores the 1931 six-panel mural series of the Title Guarantee and Trust Company, which created an educational and aesthetic space within the elevator lobby through its corporate-friendly reading of Los Angeles history. A second case study is included in chapter two which looks to the 1931 Southern California Edison murals whose civic narrative reinforced Edison's self-constructed role as a benevolent servant to the public and attempted to alleviate criticism around privately owned utilities. Chapter three investigates the 1935 *Los Angeles Times* murals that subtly referenced the antagonistic relationship between the newspaper and unions. Paired with this is a discussion of the 1936 California Fruit Growers Exchange murals in the Sunkist Building which contained idyllic depictions

of citrus production and harvesting that were at odds with the harsh reality of exploited immigrant labor in Sunkist's orange groves.

## Introduction: Interwar Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles

*Business needs art, but the artist often puts himself out of a job by thinking that his artistic ideals are too sacred to compromise with business. That is nonsense. The American public has been made art-conscious through commercial advertising; and, if art is to be extended to business surroundings, and become a part of our daily lives, as it should be, the artist will respect the businessman's idea, and will collaborate with him.<sup>1</sup>*

—Arthur Crisp, muralist, 1935

In May of 1932, prior to the opening of the Summer Olympics, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article claiming to solve its readers' "entertainment problems for out-of-town, art-thirsty" guests who would be asking: "Where are the works of your artists?"<sup>2</sup> The answer proposed by resident *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier was to take them on a tour of the region's murals. Plentiful in number, the great majority of these murals were painted recently and found in commercial spaces, not federal buildings or public institutions as many would assume. Out of the twenty-six sites listed, sixteen murals were located in commercial buildings, six were housed in movie theaters, and only two were found at universities.<sup>3</sup> Millier wrote in 1934 that "California is leading the modern wave of mural painting," but one must ask

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<sup>1</sup> "Murals in the Office," *The Literary Digest*, January 5, 1935, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Millier, "Take Your Olympic Guest on Mural-Paintings Tour," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1931, B9. Millier was art critic for the newspaper from 1926–58.

<sup>3</sup> For a list of sites included in Millier's article see the Appendix.

why the vast majority of murals in Los Angeles at this time were products of corporate commissions and located within the semi-private space of corporate buildings.<sup>4</sup>

Although examples of both governmental patronage and private sponsorship of art during the 1930s have been well documented, the history of corporate commissions has not yet received the same degree of critical attention. This study addresses this gap in scholarship by tracing the history of corporate mural and sculpture commissions in Los Angeles during the 1930s, arguing that this sponsorship of the arts was a way to frame public opinion and assert authority through carefully constructed narratives of local history.<sup>5</sup> These narratives placed the corporation as protagonist and reminded viewers of its on-going investment in the city's cultural and civic history. Found within the corporate headquarters for the Title Guarantee and Trust Company, Southern California Edison Company, California Fruit Growers Exchange, and *Los Angeles Times* are murals by Hugo Ballin, Frank Bowers, Conrad Buff, Barse Miller, and Arthur Prunier and the architectural sculpture of Robert Merrell Gage, Eugene Maier-Krieg, and Harold F. Wilson. Together, these commissions embody an interwoven corporate and local history that stressed the importance of an educational experience of art within a corporate setting.

By situating the commissions within an emerging understanding of modernity, larger concepts emerge beyond that of simple corporate branding. Themes found within the murals, such as the heroism of masculine labor, a modern notion of

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<sup>4</sup> Arthur Millier, "Mural Art as Civic Asset Is Theme of Library Display," *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 1934, A6. For the purposes of this dissertation, a corporation is defined as an incorporated company or business that has a board of directors, officers, and shareholders.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to this dissertation, see also Monica E. Jovanovich-Kelley, "The Apotheosis of Power: Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles during the 1930s," *Public Art Dialogue* 4 (2014): 42–70.

progress, local history, civic identity, and art's pedagogical purpose, reflect the complicated and often paradoxical role of private corporations in the emerging city of Los Angeles during the early twentieth century. Progressive Era educational and pedagogical policies that carried over from the early twentieth century into the 1930s complicated the public reception these commissions. This context of pedagogical reception is coupled with the rise of the concept of corporate social responsibility that also takes into account an increasing distrust of laissez-faire capitalism during the Depression. Through a style that will be described as corporate realism, these artworks functioned in four critical ways: firstly, they filled the void left by the lack of a functional art department within the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art through the framing of these commissions as a significant cultural contribution to the city; secondly, the artworks were extensions of earlier notions of welfare capitalism, as they were thought to directly benefit employees, patrons, and visitors by enhancing workplace conditions, sparking creativity, and transmitting local and cultural history; thirdly, they fostered a sense of civic identity by aligning the corporations' interests with those of the city; and, finally, the commissions were a veiled form of advertising that functioned to legitimize corporate actions, increase public profiles, and ultimately add to profits.

The intersection of mural commissions and corporate philanthropy presents a complex lens through which to read Los Angeles's corporate mural commissions of the 1930s. The long history of murals as instructional devices, in particular, allowed corporations to capitalize on this shared history, and the audience for corporate murals

took an active role in viewing the progress of the companies and their contributions to the city within a layered public/private space. In the United States during the 1930s, murals were in high demand, bolstered by the popularity of Los Tres Grandes—the Mexican muralists David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco—and the country's own federally funded arts programs beginning in 1933 that championed the medium of the mural. A discussion of viewership and placement further complicates the argument, as the entryways and lobbies where murals tended to appear are commonly overlooked meeting spaces that have not truly been included in the expanding discourse of public space in early twentieth-century American urban studies. The relationship between corporate art commissions and public spaces, framed within the emerging city of Los Angeles, presents a unique and cross-disciplinary contribution to the larger fields of mural painting, public art, and corporate cultural philanthropy.

### **The Rise of Corporate Cultural Patronage and Commissions**

California and the larger United States saw a rise in corporate art commissions, namely that of site-specific lobby murals and architectural sculpture, during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The inclusion of murals in commercial spaces such as banks, theaters, hotels, and office buildings mirrored the popularity of civically-themed murals during the American Renaissance of the 1890s and 1900s. However, the commercial murals of the early twentieth century were overwhelmingly decorative, rarely striving to communicate the lofty ideals found in their federal

counterparts at state capitols, courthouses, and city halls. These artworks improved an interior space by bringing a sense of refinement and beauty, acting much like expensive drapery or chandeliers. It was during the late 1920s and 1930s, in cities like New York, Denver, Chicago, and Los Angeles, that a shift to educationally-themed art commissions occurred, the result of multiple factors that, together, point to a rise in corporate cultural philanthropy. This turn began with the unprecedented growth of corporations in the 1920s, causing an organizational shift from individual ownership to ownership by stockholders, managers, and executives.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the once popular profit-ethic mode of operating fell out of favor and a trusteeship model was adopted instead, foreshadowing the modern concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR).<sup>7</sup> Instead of focusing solely on maximizing profits for the short term through a trusteeship, as had been popular prior to World War I, managers sought equitable returns for all parties involved, from employees, clients, and suppliers to community members and stockholders.

This trusteeship was coupled with Progressive Era notions of social reform and welfare capitalism that led to the proliferation of programs seeking to improve employee wellbeing at work as well as outside of it. As union membership waned in the 1920s, corporations took a growing interest in their workers' overall welfare—

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter one of this dissertation as well as chapter three of Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2006); and chapter one, two, and three of Thomas K. McCraw, *American Business Since 1920: How it Worked* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2008).

<sup>7</sup> See chapter one of this dissertation for a more detailed explanation of corporate social responsibility as well as Archie B. Carroll, "A History of Corporate Social Responsibility: Concepts and Practices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility*, eds. Andrew Crane, Abigail McWilliams, Dirk Matten, Jeremy Moon, and Donald Siegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19–45, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199211593.003.0002 and Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

though union participation would grow again in the 1930s during the Great Depression. Additionally, the concept of service that arose in the 1920s echoed much of the modern day CSR rhetoric found in the concept of trusteeship, though here it was directed more towards consumers. It was, furthermore, during the 1920s, especially following the Stock Market Crash of 1929, that corporations needed to aggressively defend their legitimacy through marketing, philanthropy, and public relations campaigns against mounting criticism that positioned the companies as corrupt, soulless, and power-hungry. Corporations actively sought opportunities for positive publicity that reinforced a carefully crafted corporate image, which they hoped would contribute to employee and community loyalties.

Cultural patronage, specifically in the form of art commissions, would fulfill all these requirements, as it was a form of philanthropy that supported the local community through employing artists, was seen as being seemingly free from ulterior motives, and could easily be touted as an investment in a city's cultural heritage. Research by political scientist Steven R. Neiheisel into what drives corporate philanthropy is useful here. Of his three models—what he terms as the Altruistic, Profit-Maximizing, and Political—it is Neiheisel's Political model that is most applicable to this study.<sup>8</sup> For corporate art commissions of the 1930s, political posturing and image building were at the forefront of such philanthropic acts, whereas the extremes of altruism and pure profit were secondary motivations given that the public's perception of corporate greed and excess following the Stock Market Crash

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<sup>8</sup> Steven R. Neiheisel, *Corporate Strategy and the Politics of Goodwill: A Political Analysis of Corporate Philanthropy in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 25–48.



needed to be countered.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital complements Neiheisel's theory about the forces inspiring philanthropy and the corporate patronage of the interwar period. For Bourdieu, cultural capital serves as "an instrument of domination" by which "the transmission of the arts from generation to generation serves to preserve and reproduce the dominant position of a dominant class."<sup>9</sup> It is undeniable that prestige and social status are bestowed on a corporation when it amasses cultural capital. But while a corporation's accrual of cultural capital is a way to exert its dominance, this accrual, too, has multiple, complementary functions. Such actions could easily be used in public-relations campaigns to foil negative perceptions and bring positive press about, say, a company's priorities not being exclusively profit-driven. Often, many of the more popular forms of cultural patronage, such as investments in local community organizations or donations to performing arts centers, are neutral enough not to be interpreted as propagandistic, self-serving, or contrived. With the move to trusteeship, corporations, and not the individual owners, were free to reinvest a portion of their profits back into the community through cultural patronage—a move that offered multipronged returns over the long term as opposed to high short-term profits. Within the realm of cultural patronage in the 1920s and 1930s, mural commissions had the potential, I will argue, to offer the greatest returns for corporations.

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<sup>9</sup> Chin-tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (London: Verso, 2002), 7.

Today, corporate cultural philanthropy takes many forms—from partnerships with cultural institutions and the commissioning of artworks to the sponsoring of museum exhibitions and the establishment of art collections—though during the 1920s and 1930s, it was far more limited in its scope. While there are examples of early corporate art collections and donations made by corporations to various cultural establishments, these were customarily initiated by individuals, not corporations.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, corporations during this time would most often engage artists or illustrators to create artwork for advertising campaigns, artists such as Maxfield Parrish for Adlake Camera (1897) and Fisk Tire (1914), N. C. Wyeth for Cream of Wheat (1906–07), or Edward Steichen’s work for the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson (1923–31). Yet these projects were by and large not considered philanthropic activities; instead, they were squarely within the realm of the commercial and their marketing potential clear.

It is only in the late 1920s and 1930s, then, that numerous corporate commissions for murals and architectural sculpture came to occupy an alternative realm beyond advertising and functioned to serve multiple purposes.<sup>11</sup> These art commissions offered a greater return on a corporation’s philanthropic investment than a check written to a cultural organization. Increasingly, the commissions were framed

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<sup>10</sup> As discussed in chapter one and in the epilogue of this dissertation, corporate art collections would become increasingly popular after World War II. Corporate commissions still existed after World War II though abstract sculpture was far more desirable than lobby murals.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, murals by Maxfield Parrish, Edward Trumbell, Dean Cornwell, Frank Brangwyn, and Hildreth Meière in New York, NY; Allen True in Denver, CO; Maynard Dixon in Phoenix and Tucson, AZ; Parrish, Hilaire Hiler, Victor Arnautoff, Lucien Labaudt, and William Coulter in San Francisco, CA; Louis Grell in St. Louis, MO; John Alexander, Edwin Blashfield, and Francis Millet in Pittsburg, PA; Hildreth Meière, Griffith Baily Coale, and Robert McGill Mackall in Baltimore, MD; Cora Millet Holden and Jules Guerin in Cleveland, OH; and N.C. Wyeth in Boston, MA.

as fine art, free of ulterior motives and not something that would be used for commercial gains in an advertising campaign but a true contribution to the culture of a city. Additionally, given the nationwide construction boom at the time, corporations may have seen, at some level, murals as a cost-effective alternative to expensive lobby flourishes such as marble, ironwork, wood inlay, and the like, yet with far greater public-relations power. The marketing potential for such commissions was not lost on executives, as press releases, interviews, articles, and opening day festivities were frequently organized around the high-profile artists hired for the commissions.

These forms of patronage, and the mural in particular, were also seen as contributing to employee welfare through incorporating educational art within a corporate setting that had the potential to offer pedagogical moments and spark creativity among employees and clients. This notion built on the centrality of murals in civic buildings and the growth of Progressive educational ideology at the turn of the century. The flourishing of civically orientated mural painting that took place in the 1890s was a result of the integration of large-scale murals into the architecture of three sites—the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), the Boston Public Library (begun in 1890), and the Library of Congress (1895–97). As art historian Annelise Madsen argues in her work on pageantry and murals of this period, the Library of Congress commissions represent a clear embrace of murals as pedagogical tools.<sup>12</sup> This, Madsen claims, came at a time when New Education reforms shifted

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<sup>12</sup> Annelise K. Madsen, “Model Citizens: Mural Painting, Pageantry and the Art of Civic Life in Progressive America” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2010).

traditional places of learning from the classrooms into the everyday.<sup>13</sup> Artists became both civic teachers and aesthetic reformers through their “painted lessons,” which were educational tools used to teach national ideals and a form of citizen training.<sup>14</sup> The civically instructive nature of murals continued into the early decades of the twentieth century with numerous state capitol commissions across the country that were intended to be edifying and educational visual documents of local and national history. Madsen’s argument around public murals functioning as non-traditional sites of educational experiences works in tandem with the theories of John Dewey, in particular those found in his 1934 publication, *Art as Experience*.<sup>15</sup> Dewey claims that art must be a part of one’s everyday experience and cannot be kept separated, as it had become in the 1930s as a result of museums becoming, in his words, increasingly elitist.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that this integration of art and life, what Dewey described as restoring “continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doing, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience,” was expressed through the murals found within corporate lobbies.<sup>17</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that the interwar period builds upon earlier celebrations of the mural’s pedagogical potential. The educational emphasis of the Mexican mural movement coupled with the New Deal’s interest in the instructional value of murals

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<sup>13</sup> Madsen, “Model Citizens,” 62.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Perigree Books, 1980). See also Jeffrey Trask, *Things American: Art Museum and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Paul DiMaggio, “Progressivism and the Arts,” *Society* 25, no. 5 (July–August 1988): 71.

<sup>17</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 2.

created an intriguing conjunction, and corporate commissions occupy a domain that requires further study through the lens of pedagogical history. As Henry A. Giroux has argued, it is the primacy of culture that allows it to “play a central role in producing narratives, metaphors, and images that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others.”<sup>18</sup> This present study will illuminate the role corporations had in defining and negotiating the tensions between public and private concerns through cultural patronage.

This study contends that the corporate murals of the 1930s were often instructional in nature and featured historical subject matter that signaled a unique artistic style, what I define as corporate realism, and constitute the first of three waves of mural painting in Los Angeles.<sup>19</sup> Corporate realism was at once traditional and accessible to a wide audience, but also drew on avant-garde tendencies of the time. It did not simply embellish a space, as was a characteristic of earlier murals, but would often feature a utopian view of industry (one that was all too frequently at odds with the pastoral roots of Southern California) and celebrate the promise of progressive urban growth as seen during the region’s boom years of the 1920s. The commissioned artists concurrently drew stylistic inspiration from three key sources: the allegorical murals of the American Renaissance that were featured in civic spaces such as state capitols, city halls, and courthouses; the growing visibility of the Mexican mural movement, especially those who spent time and created work in Southern California;

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<sup>18</sup> Henry A. Giroux, “Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 62.

<sup>19</sup> The second wave of mural painting in Los Angeles is that of the Chicano mural movement that began in the 1960s and the third wave followed the lifting in 2013 of the ordinance that banned mural painting.

and the social realist aesthetic of the numerous federally funded murals that were a result of New Deal relief programs. The outcome of this combination is murals that were nostalgic for Los Angeles's often-imaginary rural Spanish past, but also optimistic about an urban—even utopian—future that was being realized with the help of corporations. Other shared characteristics of this style include the use of civically orientated vignettes featuring local history and figures; the persistence of conservative, academic styles that later featured nods to the avant-garde art of the time; and the proliferation of accompanying pamphlets that often included artist's statements and color reproductions of the works. Together, these features were associated with a dramatic rise in the commissioning of murals and bas-relief sculptures during the building phase that had a clear purpose beyond simple, ornamental wall painting.

### **Los Angeles as a Case Study**

Los Angeles is uniquely suited to function as a case study of larger trends in corporate art commissions because of its distinctive commercial growth and economic prosperity in the 1920s. During the first three decades of the twentieth century the city experienced unprecedented growth in its population as well as commercial and residential construction, and Los Angeles boomed from 1925 to 1935 as a result of this massive influx of residents. Many corporations grew rapidly in size and needed larger offices, but instead of adapting to preexisting office space in outdated, smaller buildings, many companies opted to build their own offices, which would be better suited to their specific needs. Given the economic downturn of the 1930s, land was

inexpensive, as were labor and raw building materials, and often the build-to-suit option was more cost-effective than renting office space over the long term. Initially concentrated in downtown Los Angeles, commercial construction moved south during the 1920s from its turn-of-the-century center at Temple and Spring Streets to a three-block stretch close to Pershing Square on Spring Street between Fourth and Seventh Streets. The close proximity of various financial institutions and banks prompted this section of downtown to be dubbed the “Wall Street of the West.”<sup>20</sup> By the 1930s, many companies were looking to purchase buildings north of Pershing Square that could be easily and inexpensively torn down.

Private philanthropy in early twentieth-century Los Angeles was spearheaded by prominent figures such as Dora and John Randolph Haynes, Henry E. Huntington, Edward L. Doheny, Griffith J. Griffith, and George Allen Hancock. Likewise, numerous foundations, women’s clubs, and charitable organizations, such as the Friday Morning Club, Daughters of Charity, and Hebrew Benevolent Foundation, contributed to the welfare of the city. The performing arts in the city were equally vibrant during this time, with the opening of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1919, early theater productions at what would become the Hollywood Bowl in 1916, and the debut of the Los Angeles Grand Opera in 1924. In contrast, the city’s visual arts had little support as evidenced by the lifeless art department of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, founded in 1913.

Early precedents of public art, most often in the form of murals, built on a

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<sup>20</sup> Cecilia Rasmussen, “‘Wall Street of the West’ Had Its Peaks, Crashes,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2000, accessed May 1, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/jun/11/local/me-39908/2>.

growing interest in arts education and Progressive Era ideology surrounding pedagogy during the early twentieth century. By the 1930s, California already had numerous large-scale civic mural installations, including those found at the Panama Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco (1915), the Panama California Exposition in San Diego (1915), the State Capitol Building in Sacramento (1913–15), the Santa Barbara Courthouse (1929), and the Los Angeles Public Library (1928–33). Given the failings of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, as argued by both Nancy Dustin Wall Moure and Sarah Schrank, alternative exhibition spaces in the city were often incorporated into hotels, businesses, and restaurants and organized by numerous art clubs, associations, and private collectors.<sup>21</sup> Thus in the 1930s it would not have been considered unusual for corporations to begin commissioning artworks in earnest and framing them as cultural contributions to the city's art scene.

As the United States experienced the worst years of the Depression in 1932 and 1933, Los Angeles by contrast experienced a surge in cultural projects in 1931 and early 1932 as the city prepared to host the Summer Olympics. While this event spurred civically orientated public art throughout the city and offered a wave of economic optimism that summer, the lingering economic prosperity of the late 1920s quickly faded after the Olympics closed. Commercial and residential construction dwindled in late 1932 and no sizeable building projects debuted again until 1935.

Federal funding for the arts began in 1933 under the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). The

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<sup>21</sup> See Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, "The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum, 1890-1940," *Southern California Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (1992): 247–75; and Sarah Schrank, *Art and the City: Civic Imagination and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009): 12–42.



Department of the Treasury Section of Painting & Sculpture (more commonly known as the Section, the Treasury Section, or the Section of Fine Arts) was formed in 1934 and awarded mural commissions through open competitions. Functioning under the Treasury Section, the Treasury Relief Art Program (TRAP) was established in 1935 and offered mural and sculpture commissions for federal offices. In 1935 the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was formed during Franklin D. Roosevelt's second term as President, creating the Federal Project Number One (Federal One) and its five divisions—the Federal Art Project, the Federal Music Project, the Federal Theatre Project, the Federal Writers Project, and the Historical Records Survey.

In California, these programs brought countless construction, beautifying, and infrastructure projects ranging from road repairs to parks to schools.<sup>22</sup> In Los Angeles, there were over one hundred and fifty individual projects that were completed under the auspices of New Deal programs including the Federal Courthouse (1937–40), Santa Monica City Hall (1938–39), and an expansion of Hollywood High School (1934–35). Over two hundred artists painted government-sponsored murals across the state, the majority of which can be found in San Francisco and Los Angeles.<sup>23</sup> While many of these murals have been lost due to neglect or a lack of preservation efforts, key surviving examples in Los Angeles include Stanton Macdonald-Wright's 1935 mural cycle for the Santa Monica Public Library, Edward Biberman's *Abbot Kinney*

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the California section of The Living New Deal website at <https://livingnewdeal.org/california>; Robert D. Leighninger, Jr., *Long-Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007); and Gray Brechin, "A New Deal for California: Recovering a History Hidden in Plain Sight," *Boom: A Journal of California* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 64–70.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Steven M. Gelber, "Working to Prosperity: California's New Deal Murals," *California History* 58, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 98–127.

*and the Story of Venice* mural that hung in the Venice Post Office from 1941 to 2012, and Helen Lundeberg's 1940 petrachrome mosaic mural in Inglewood, *The History of Transportation*.

By 1932, the work of Mexican artists and muralists had become increasingly popular in Los Angeles, as in the wider United States. As Margarita Nieto has noted, an inherent contradiction existed in such artwork, as there was “on the one hand, the intellectual and aesthetic fascination with Mexican art and, on the other, the politics of discrimination against the Mexicans and Mexican Americans residing in the United States.”<sup>24</sup> Leading up to 1932, multiple collectors and gallerists patronized the work of Mexican artists and the city had already experienced a renaissance of Spanish and Latin American culture—albeit a highly romanticized version built on the region's deep roots in capitalizing on a constructed Spanish Fantasy Past. Olvera Street, for example, opened in 1930 as a pedestrian mall of open-air shops and restaurants styled after a Mexican *puebla* and built around the original Plaza dating to the 1810s. A year later marked the revival—after a 15-year hiatus—of the civic-building event *La Fiesta de Los Angeles*. Much like Olvera Street, this ten-day festival, with multiple events through the city, celebrated a highly fabricated notion of the region's ties to Spain and Mexico.

David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, two of *Los Tres Grandes*, spent time and produced murals in Southern California. Since 1930, Orozco's fresco *Prometheus* has been on view at Pomona College in Claremont, some thirty miles

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<sup>24</sup> Margarita Nieto, “Mexican Art and Los Angeles: 1920-1940,” in *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900-1950*, ed. Paul J. Karlstrom (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 122.

from downtown Los Angeles. Of Los Tres Grandes, Siqueiros had by far the greatest impact on Los Angeles following his arrival in 1932. While teaching a course in fresco painting at the Chouinard Art Institute, Siqueiros founded the Bloc of Mural Painters, a group of prominent local artists that included Barse Miller and Robert Merrell Gage. Of the three murals Siqueiros executed in the city, it was his mural on Olvera Street, *América Tropical*, which proved to be the most controversial. By 1934 it was partially hidden from public view under whitewash and completely obscured by the late 1930s. It is worth noting that alongside Orozco and Siqueiros, another celebrated Mexican artist, Alfredo Ramos Martínez, lived in Los Angeles from 1929 to 1946. Martínez had multiple exhibitions of his work throughout California as well as numerous fresco commissions and was friends with many local artists including Hugo Ballin, Conrad Buff, and Millard Sheets.<sup>25</sup>

While Diego Rivera did not create murals in Los Angeles, his work was admired and included in local exhibitions and gallery shows in the city at the time. While in San Francisco, Rivera completed three frescos: the *Allegory of California* (1931) at the City Club within the Pacific Stock Exchange, the *Making of a Fresco*, *Showing the Building of a City* (1931) at the San Francisco Art Institute, and *Pan American Unity* (1940) at the City College of San Francisco. In 1932 he received two important commissions, the first of which was for a large mural in the lobby of the Rockefeller Center's new RCA building. This mural came under heavy scrutiny because of Rivera's inclusion of an image of Vladimir Lenin, which led to its covering

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<sup>25</sup> Nieto, "Mexican Art and Los Angeles," 131.

in May 1933 and ultimate destruction in February 1934. The second Rivera commission of 1932 came from William Valentiner, Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, and another American industrialist, Edsel Ford of the Ford Motor Company. The resulting mural, *Detroit Industry*, was completed in March 1933 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

### Historical Context and Literature Review

The corporate art commissions discussed in this dissertation have received only passing acknowledgement in general histories of Los Angeles's art and architecture and virtually no scholarly attention.<sup>26</sup> As a result they have had to be contextualized within larger corporate histories and cultural studies of early twentieth-century Los Angeles. Sarah Schrank's 2009 book, *Art and the City: Civic Imagination and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* is, to date, the most comprehensive examination of how modern art from 1903 to the late 1960s was strategically positioned within debates that defined the city's civic and cultural identity.<sup>27</sup> Schrank

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<sup>26</sup> This is compounded by the Getty's initiative Pacific Standard Time that has since 2002 organized multiple exhibitions, events, and publications in Los Angeles, and beyond that aims to reclaim the history of art in Southern California after 1940. Criticisms of these initiatives revolve around the assertion that modernism in Southern California, and Los Angeles in particular, began only in the 1940s. Doing so ignores the rich history that precedes this period. Pacific Standard Time gives little attention to artists working prior to 1940 and, as a result, like many other art historical surveys of Southern California, overlooks the groundwork and contributions of early twentieth-century artists working in the region. To date, the initiatives include *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980* (October 2011–April 2012), *Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A.* (April–September 2013), and *Pacific Standard Time: L.A./L.A. (Los Angeles and Latin America)* (September 2017–January 2018). Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty with arts institutions across Southern California, accessed January 1, 2014, <http://www.getty.edu/pacificstandardtime>.

<sup>27</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 8. See also Sarah Schrank, "Public Art at the Global Crossroads: The Politics of Place in 1930s Los Angeles," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 2 (2010): 435–57; and Sarah Schrank, "Art and the City: The Transformation of Civic Culture in Los Angeles, 1900–1965" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2002).

explores how, in the early decades of the twentieth century, booster organizations, art clubs, wealthy benefactors, and “politically progressive modernists” promoted competing cultural visions of Los Angeles and sought control over what was shown in the city’s various exhibition venues.<sup>28</sup> Through tracing this early history of modern art in Los Angeles, Schrank raises questions around its promotion, funding, and reception that have informed this dissertation. Furthermore, this study builds on Schrank’s scholarship by examining the corporate art commissions and activities of Los Angeles’s corporate patrons that were taking place alongside the debates analyzed by Schrank in her book.

Schrank’s examination of civic organizations, municipal governments, and arts institutions is complemented by the work of the late Clark Davis who focused on Los Angeles’s corporate history. His scholarship outlines the historical significance of early corporate history in the region with case studies of Union Oil, Pacific Mutual Life Insurance, Security-First National Bank, and Pacific Electric Railway in his 2001 book, *Company Men: White-Collar Life and Corporate Cultures in Los Angeles, 1892-1941*.<sup>29</sup> This research offers an important contribution not only to corporate history in the United States but also to the historical shaping of Los Angeles by corporations that has been central to my discussion of corporate cultural philanthropy and early concepts of CSR in the city. Working in tandem with Davis’s scholarship is John Ott’s 2014 book, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California*:

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<sup>28</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Clark Davis, *Company Men: White-Collar Life and Corporate Cultures in Los Angeles, 1892-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). See also Davis, “‘You Are the Company’: The Demands of Employment in the Emerging Corporate Culture, Los Angeles, 1900-1930,” *The Business History Review* 70, no. 3 (1996): 328–62.

*Cultural Philanthropy, Industrial Capital, and Social Authority*.<sup>30</sup> While focused on the philanthropic legacies in Northern California of Edwin Crocker and Leland and Jane Stanford, his analysis offers a helpful framework to understanding early corporate patronage in California. Complementing this is Tom Sitton's study of the philanthropic history of the Haynes Foundation in Los Angeles.<sup>31</sup> The role of Progressive reform in the city that contextualizes my argument around corporate philanthropy is outlined by Tom Sitton and William Deverell in their edited anthology, *California Progressivism Revisited*, as well as by Clark Davis's essay on the philanthropic role of women's clubs in the city.<sup>32</sup> Together, these examinations reframe the city's social reform, philanthropy, and cultural development within the larger considerations of class, race, and gender.

In addition to Davis's examination of the formative years of Los Angeles's corporations, a number of general histories written on the individual corporations examined in this dissertation were of central importance as they give greater context and understanding to the motivations driving each corporation's commissioning of art and architecture.<sup>33</sup> Complicating these corporate histories are arguments in this

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<sup>30</sup> John Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California: Cultural Philanthropy, Industrial Capital, and Social Authority* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Tom Sitton, *The Haynes Foundation and Urban Reform Philanthropy in Los Angeles: A History of the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation* (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> William Deverell and Tom Sitton, *California Progressivism Revisited* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); and Clark Davis, "An Era and Generation of Civic Engagement: The Friday Morning Club in Los Angeles, 1891-1931," *Southern California Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2002): 135-68.

<sup>33</sup> See William A. Myers, *Iron Men and Copper Wires: A Centennial History of the Southern California Edison Company* (Glendale, CA: Trans-Anglo Books, 1983); Scott Huler and John Jurewitz, *Edison International: Celebrating 125 Years of Innovation* (St. Louis, MO: Essex Publishing Group, Inc., 2011); R. H. Barker, ed., *Selling the Gold: History of Sunkist and Pure Gold* (Upland, CA: The Upland Public Library Foundation, 1999); C. H. Kirkman, *The Sunkist Adventure* ([n.p.]: Farmer Cooperative

dissertation that explore depictions of race, gender, and labor in the murals as they relate to racialized readings of public space in Los Angeles from Pershing Square to Olvera Street. These arguments are central to my dissertation and informed by historical studies on race and labor in the city by William Deverell, Phoebe S. Kropp, William D. Estrada, Jennifer Beatriz Gonzalez, Gilbert G. Gonzalez, John H. M. Laslett, Cary McWilliams, and Matt Garcia.<sup>34</sup> My analysis of depictions of masculinity and gendered labor in this dissertation build upon the foundational work of Bailey Van Hook, Erika Doss, and Barbara Melosh.<sup>35</sup>

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Service, 1975); Douglas Cazaux Sackman, *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); *Heritage of Gold: The First 100 Years of Sunkist Growers, Inc., 1893-1993* (Van Nuys, CA: Sunkist Growers, Inc., 1993); David Boulé, *The Orange and the Dream of California* (Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 2014); Lew Irwin, *Deadly Times: The 1910 Bombing of the Los Angeles Times and America's Forgotten Decade of Terror* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2013); Dennis McDougal, *Privileged Son: Otis Chandler and the Rise and Fall of the L. A. Times Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001); and Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times, Its Publishers, and Their Influence on Southern California* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977).

<sup>34</sup> See William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); William D. Estrada, "Old Plaza and Olvera Street: Imagined and Contested Space," *Western Folklore* 58, no. 2 (1999): 107-129; William D. Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008); Jennifer Beatriz Gonzalez, "Los Fiesteros of Olvera Street: Constructing an Imagined Spanish Heritage for Los Angeles," *Perspectives: A Journal of Historical Inquiry* 39 (2012): 75-88; John H. M. Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough: Los Angeles Workers, 1880-2012* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014); Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); and Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> Bailey Van Hook, *The Virgin & The Dynamo: Public Murals in American Architecture, 1893-1917* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003); Erika Doss, "Looking at Labor: Images of Work in 1930s American Art," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 24 (2002): 230-57; Erika Doss, "Toward an Iconography of American Labor: Work, Workers and the Work Ethic in American Art, 1930-1945," *Design Issues* 13, no. 1 (1997): 53-66; and Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1991). See also Josep M. Armengol, "Gendering the Great Depression: Rethinking the Male Body in 1930s American Culture and Literature," *Journal of Gender Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014): 59-68, and Melissa Dabakis, *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture: Monuments, Manliness and the Work Ethic, 1880-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Generally informing this dissertation are several key studies on modern art in California and the rare few that focus on Los Angeles during the interwar period.<sup>36</sup> Though focused largely on easel painting, Paul J. Karlstrom and Susan Ehrlich co-curated the exhibition *Turning the Tide: Early Los Angeles Modernists 1920–1956* for the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1990.<sup>37</sup> Drawing heavily on Ehrlich's 1985 dissertation, Karlstrom's catalog essay argues, much like Schrank, that the dearth of exhibiting possibilities and lack of institutional support for local artists in Los Angeles prior to World War II caused many California modernists to be forgotten in favor of their better-known East Coast counterparts. Another key text that served to

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<sup>36</sup> See also the following exhibition catalogs and publications: Michael G. Wilson and Dennis Reed, *Pictorialism in California: Photographs 1900-1940* (Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1994); Claire Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Patricia Trenton, ed., *Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West, 1890-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Stephanie Barron, Sheri Bernstein, Ilene Susan Fort, and Howard N. Fox, *Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900-2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Stephanie Barron, Sheri Bernstein, and Ilene Susan Fort, eds., *Reading California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900-2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Wendy Kaplan, ed., *California Design, 1930-1965: "Living in a Modern Way"* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011); Thomas Albright, *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-1980: An Illustrated History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Richard Cándida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Susan Ehrlich, *Pacific Dreams: Currents of Surrealism and Fantasy in California Art, 1934-1957* (Los Angeles: Armand Hammer Museum of Art, 1995); Victoria Dailey, Natalie Shivers, Michael Dawson, and William Deverell, *LA's Early Moderns: Art, Architecture, Photography* (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 2003); Tom Teicholz, *Wilshire Boulevard Temple and the Warner Murals: Celebrating 150 Years* (Novato, CA: ORO Editions, 2013); and Ruth Lilly Westphal and Janet B. Dominik, *American Scene Painting: California, 1930s and 1940s* (Irvine, CA: Westphal Publishing, 1991). For that after 1945 see, for example, Lars Nittve and Helle Crenzien, *Sunshine Noir: Art in L.A. 1960-1997* (Humblebaek, Denmark: Louisiana Museum for Modern Art, 1997); Peter Plagens, *Sunshine Muse: Art on the West Coast, 1945-1970* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975); and Cécile Whiting, *Pop L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008). See also Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Rebels in Paradise: The Los Angeles Art Scene and the 1960s* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011); Andrea Thabet, "Culture as Urban Renewal: Postwar Los Angeles and the Remaking of Public Space" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2103), and Adam Arenson, "The Art of Home Savings," accessed January 6, 2014, <http://adamarenson.com/homesavingsbankart>.

<sup>37</sup> Paul J. Karlstrom and Susan Ehrlich, *Turning the Tide: Early Los Angeles Modernists, 1920-1956* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1990); and Susan Ehrlich, "Five Los Angeles Pioneer Modernists: A Study of the 1940s Paintings of Peter Krasnow, Knud Merrild, Oskar Fischinger, Lorser Feitelson, and Helen Lundeberg" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1985).



contextualize the cultural commissions made by corporate patrons is Winfred Haines Higgins' dissertation from 1964 that offers an examination of the motivations behind the art collections of private individuals in Los Angeles during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> Further informing this dissertation is Margarita Nieto's essay in *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900–1950*.<sup>39</sup> Nieto brings to light how Mexican artists visiting Los Angeles worked closely with not only each other but also local artists who eagerly collaborated with their visiting counterparts. Nieto's research works in tandem with discussions of race around the whitewashing of David Alfaro Siqueiros's mural on Olvera Street by Shifra M. Goldman and Sarah Schrank.<sup>40</sup> Lastly, this dissertation argues that corporations in Los Angeles often framed their art commissions as a cultural gift to the city and visiting their lobbies to see these murals was an educational experience on par with going to an art museum. Furthermore, this rise of corporations as art patrons and their offering of alternative exhibition spaces in the city during the 1930s was informed by the scholarship of Sarah Schrank as well as Nancy Dustin Wall Moure's essay, "The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum, 1890–1940."<sup>41</sup> Both historians have offered valuable arguments that outlined the history and complexities faced by the city due to the lack of a strong museum presence.

Individual artists' biographies by Sarah Schrank, Caroline Luce, Arthur Millier,

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<sup>38</sup> Winifred Haines Higgins, "Art Collecting in the Los Angeles Area, 1910-1960" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1964).

<sup>39</sup> Nieto, "Mexican Art and Los Angeles," 121–35.

<sup>40</sup> See Schrank, "Public Art at the Global Crossroads," 435–57; Schrank, *Art and the City*, 57–60; and Shifra M. Goldman, "Siqueiros and Three Early Murals in Los Angeles," *Art Journal* 33, no. 4 (Summer 1974): 324.

<sup>41</sup> See Schrank, *Art and the City*, 12–63, and Moure, "The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum," 262, 264.

Merle Armitage, Will South, Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, and Edan Milton Hughes have been of vital importance in uncovering the lives of these all-to-often overlooked artists.<sup>42</sup> General overviews of murals in California's early twentieth century that have helped to contextualize their corporate counterparts include those by Robin J. Dunitz, Steve Gelber, and Melba Levick.<sup>43</sup> This dissertation is also indebted to foundational histories of California by Kevin Starr, Robert M. Fogelson, Tom Sitton, Carey

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<sup>42</sup> See Merle Armitage, *The Work of Maier-Krieg* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932); Armitage, "The Sculptures of Eugene Maier-Krieg," *California Arts & Architecture* (July–August 1932): 28–29; Edan Milton Hughes, *Artists in California, 1786-1940* (San Francisco: Hughes Publishing Company, 1986); Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *California Art: 450 Years of Painting & Other Media* (Los Angeles: Dustin Publications, 1998); Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *Publications in Southern California Art no. 1, 2, 3* (Los Angeles: Dustin Publications, 1984); and Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, Phil Kavinick, and Marian Yoshiki-Kavinick, *Publications in Southern California Art no. 4, 5, 6* (Los Angeles: Dustin Publications, 1999).

See also Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *Loners, Mavericks & Dreamers: Art in Los Angeles before 1900* (Laguna Beach, CA: Laguna Art Museum, 1993); Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *Painting and Sculpture in Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980); Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *Los Angeles Painters of the Nineteen-Twenties* (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Gallery, 1972); and Nancy Dustin Wall Moure and Phyllis Moure, *Artists' Clubs and Exhibitions in Los Angeles before 1930* (Los Angeles: [privately printed], 1974). Will South, "A Singular Vision: The Life and Art of Conrad Buff," in *The Art & Life of Conrad Buff* (West Hollywood, CA: George Stern Fine Arts, 2000), 35–74. Conrad Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, transcript of oral history interview by Elizabeth I. Dixon as part of the University of California, Los Angeles Oral History Program, June 2 through September 16, 1964, 1968, 138. Caroline Luce, "Hugo Ballin's Los Angeles," September 2014, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/hugo-ballins-los-angeles>.

<sup>43</sup> Robin Dunitz, *Street Gallery: Guide to 1000 Los Angeles Murals* (Los Angeles: RJD Enterprises, 1998); Gelber, "Working to Prosperity," 98–127; and Melba Levick, *The Big Picture: Murals of Los Angeles* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988). For more on this murals in San Francisco see Mark Dean Johnson, *At Work: The Art of California Labor* (San Francisco: California Historical Society Press, 2003); Nicholas A. Veronico, *Depression-Era Murals of the Bay Area* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014); *Bernard Zakheim's Living Art: WPA Murals in San Francisco*, directed by Margot Smith and Nathan Zakheim (Berkeley, CA: Off Center Video, 2009), DVD; and Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999). For a discussion of the Chicano Mural movement in California see Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnett-Sanchez, *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (Venice, CA: Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1993); Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Sojin Kim, *Chicano Graffiti and Murals: The Neighborhood Art of Peter Quezada* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1995); Sandra de la Loza, *The Pocho Research Society's Field Guide to Erased and Invisible Histories* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2011); and *Los Four Murals of Aztlan: The Street Painters of East Los Angeles*, directed by Jim Tartan (Los Angeles: Bronson Films, 2004), DVD.

McWilliams, Mike Davis, Greg Hise, and William Deverell.<sup>44</sup> In examining the architecture of the corporate headquarters that make up my case studies, seminal texts examining the 1930s by David Gebhard and Harriette Von Breton, Reyner Banham, Richard Longstreth, and Thomas Hines have been invaluable.<sup>45</sup> Longstreth's scholarship on how the automobile shaped the architecture of commercial and retail spaces contributed to my understanding of how corporate headquarters were similarly

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<sup>44</sup> See Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Kevin Starr, *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*; William Deverell and Greg Hise, eds., *A Companion to Los Angeles* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Tom Sitton and William Deverell, eds., *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine Smith, 1973); and Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990). See also Bruce Henstell, *Sunshine & Wealth: Los Angeles in the Twenties and Thirties* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1984); Jeremiah B. C. Axelrod, *Inventing Autopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009); Kropp, *California Vieja*; and William A. McClung, *Landscapes of Desire: Anglo Mythologies of Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> David Gebhard and Harriette Von Breton, *Los Angeles in the Thirties: 1931-1941* (Los Angeles: Hennessey + Ingalls, 1989), and Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). See also Sam Hall Kaplan and Julius Shulman, *LA, Lost & Found: An Architectural History of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Hennessey + Ingalls, 2000); Greg Goldin, Sam Lubell, and Thom Mayne, *Never Built Los Angeles* (New York: Metropolis Books, 2013); and James Steele, *Los Angeles Architecture: The Contemporary Condition* (London: Phaidon Press, 1993). Architecture following World War II has been recently covered by the most recent Getty's Pacific Standard Time initiative, *Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940-1990*; see Wim de Wit and Christopher James Alexander, eds., *Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940-1990* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013). The intersection of Hollywood and architecture has, likewise, been the subject of many publications. See, for example, Donald Albrecht, *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Howard Mandelbaum and Eric Myers, *Screen Deco: A Celebration of High Style in Hollywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Robert Winter, *The Architecture of Entertainment: LA in the Twenties* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2006); and Charles Salas and Michael Roth, *Looking for Los Angeles: Architecture, Film, Photography, and the Urban Landscape* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001). See also Louise A. Mazingo, *Pastoral Capitalism: A History of Suburban Corporate Landscapes* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), and Melissa Renn, "LIFE in the Art World, 1936-1972" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2011).

shaped by the various modes of transportation available at the time.<sup>46</sup> Thomas Hines' book on modernist architects in Los Angeles such as Irving Gill, Frank Lloyd Wright, Rudolph Schindler, Richard Neutra, and John Lautner, *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism 1900–1970*, offered a counterpoint to my discussion of the conservative architecture of corporations during the same period.<sup>47</sup>

In understanding the role corporate cultural philanthropy played in shaping the civic landscape of Los Angeles prior to 1940, this dissertation looked to broader studies of cultural patronage, collecting, and the intersection of art and commerce. The field of twentieth-century corporate cultural patronage in the United States is still emerging, but has benefited greatly from recent scholarship by Michele H. Bogart, Marjorie Garber, Roland Marchand, Chin-tao Wu, among others.<sup>48</sup> Bogart's *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (1995) offered examples of the ways in which corporations strategically engaged the arts in advertising as a way to shape public

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); and Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Hines, *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism 1900-1970* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> See also Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Marjory Jacobson, *Art for Work: The New Renaissance in Corporate Collecting* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1993); Rosanne Martorella, *Corporate Art* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Mark W. Rectanus, *Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and Ryan McGinness, ed., *Sponsorship: The Fine Art of Corporate Sponsorship/the Corporate Sponsorship of Fine Art* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2005). See also Violet Ciotti Rashad, "From Patrons to Partners: Corporate Sponsorship in Museums" (Master's thesis, University of Manchester, Manchester Business School, 1998), and Monica Jovanovich and Melissa Renn, eds., *Patronage, Inc.: Corporate Commissions of Art and Architecture in the United States, 1886-2010* (forthcoming).

opinion around their products and their company's public image.<sup>49</sup> *Patronizing the Arts*, Garber's 2008 book, analyzes the contrasting ways in which foundations, corporations, universities, and private donors have patronized the arts thus presenting the larger context of corporate cultural philanthropy that was useful to this dissertation.<sup>50</sup> Two seminal books on the subject of corporate advertising by Marchand trace how the negative reception of a corporation's "soullessness" was mediated through advertising imagery and philanthropic partnerships which, when applied to corporations in Los Angeles, provided invaluable framing.<sup>51</sup> Given the more recent proliferation of corporate partnerships with visual artists since the 1980s, Chin-tao Wu's research was particularly helpful in understanding the motivations and consequences stemming from these close relationships and informed arguments in this dissertation around how the collecting of art functioned as material and symbolic capital for corporations.<sup>52</sup> Further informing this dissertation are those who have examined the many ways in which art and business have partnered in the United States and include scholars such as Alan Trachtenberg, William Leach, Regina Lee Blaszczyk, and Melissa Renn.<sup>53</sup> Studies of philanthropy, cultural or otherwise, by the

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<sup>49</sup> Michele H. Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Patronizing the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); and Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>52</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*.

<sup>53</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Regina Lee Blaszczyk, "The Colors of Modernism: Georgia O'Keeffe, Cheney Brothers, and the Relationship Between Art and Industry in the 1920s," in *Seeing High & Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture*, ed. Patricia

Rockefellers in the 1930s by Mary K. Coffey, Anna Indych-López, Christine Roussel, and William J. Buzton helped to illuminate larger trends in corporate patronage as many business executives looked to emulate the actions of this powerful dynasty.<sup>54</sup>

Publications dedicated more broadly to cataloging corporate art collections, such as early scholarship by Nina Kaiden and Bartlett Hayes, Richard S. F. Eells, and Gideon Chagy, offered an understanding of how such collections came to thrive in the 1960s and the historical context which supported their rise.<sup>55</sup> Further informing the historical underpinnings of this dissertation is Judith Barter's 1991 doctoral thesis *The New Medici: The Rise of Corporate Collecting and Uses of Contemporary Art, 1925–1970*.<sup>56</sup> Barter offers one of the few comprehensive historical contexts for the rise of corporate collecting prior to World War II; however, her research and arguments are weighted heavily towards the trend of collecting abstract art after 1945. As such, her discussion of corporate collecting in the 1920s and 1930s is focused mainly on advertising imagery, not collecting in the true sense of the word. More recent publications dedicated to individual corporate art collections—such as those on the

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A. Johnston (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 228–44; and Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Color Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 147–60. See also Catherine Coleman Brawer and Kathleen Murphy Skolnik, *The Art Deco Murals of Hildreth Meière* (New York: Andrea Monfried Editions, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> William J. Buxton, *Patronizing the Public: American Philanthropy's Transformation of Culture, Communications, and the Humanities* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009); Christine Roussel, *The Art of Rockefeller Center* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); Mary K. Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museum and the Mexican State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); and Anna Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927-1940* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> See Nina Kaiden and Bartlett Hayes, eds., *Artist and Advocate: An Essay on Corporate Patronage* (New York: Renaissance Editions, 1967); Richard S. F. Eells, *The Corporation and the Arts* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); and Gideon Chagy, ed., *The State of the Arts and Corporate Support* (New York: P.S. Eriksson, 1971).

<sup>56</sup> Judith A. Barter, "The New Medici: The Rise of Corporate Collecting and Uses of Contemporary Art, 1925-1970" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, 1991).

Container Corporation, Absolut Vodka, Philip Morris, or Chase Manhattan—present general overviews of each collection’s history and holdings and proved useful in understanding the trends and motivations that shaped these collections.<sup>57</sup> In looking to the scholarship around the corporate sponsorship of public art, the work of Erika Doss, Harriett Seine, Amanda Douberley, and others was particularly helpful in considering the complexities that inform such commissions.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, given the importance and popularity of the mural as an embodiment of corporate patronage as outlined in this dissertation, my argument is indebted the numerous scholars who have examined the vast history of murals, both public and private, as makers of meaning and civic identity in the United States.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See also Peter Harris and Shirley Reiff Howarth, *The Celebration of Corporate Art Programmes Worldwide* (Sittingbourne, UK: Wapping Arts Trust, 2014). Bank of America, in particular, has no formal collection housed for public view, as it only loans artwork directly to museums for exhibitions. Complementing these are museum catalogs published to accompany exhibitions of corporate art collections like those held recently by Bronx Museum of the Arts, Montclair Art Museum, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.

<sup>58</sup> See Erika Doss, “Public Art in the Corporate Sphere: Public Relations/Public Seduction” in *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 71–112; Harriet F. Seine, “Baboons, Pet Rocks, and Bomb Threats: Public Art and Public Perception,” in *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context and Controversy*, eds. Harriet F. Seine and Sally Webster (New York: Icon Edition, 1992), 237–46; and Amanda Douberley, “Building the Corporate Image: Abstract Sculpture in the Architecture of SOM” (paper presented at the Southeastern College Art Conference, Savannah, Georgia, November 10, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Sally M. Promey, *Painting Religion in Public: John Singer Sargent’s Triumph of Religion at the Boston Public Library* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Sally Webster, *Eve’s Daughter/Modern Woman: A Mural By Mary Cassatt* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Wanda M. Corn, Charlene G. Garfinkle, and Annelise K. Madsen, *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011). For a history of murals and wall painting in the United States prior to 1850, see Nina Fletcher Little, *American Decorative Wall Painting: 1700-1850* (New York: Dutton, 1972). See also Sally Webster, “A Mural Carved in Stone: Delaroche’s *Hemicycle* for the Façade of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts,” *Museum History Journal* 5, no. 2 (2012): 283–302; Sally Webster, “Unitarianism and the Iconography of Democracy: Decorations for the Library of Congress,” *The Library Quarterly: Information Community, Policy* 80, no. 4 (2010): 357–83; and Sally Webster, “Writing History/Painting History: Early Chronicles of the United States and Pictures for the Capitol Rotunda,” in *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context and Controversy*, eds. Harriet F. Seine and Sally Webster (New York: Icon Edition, 1992), 33–43. Renee Ater, “Creating a ‘Usable Past’ and a

This study is based on research in the corporate archives of the *Los Angeles Times*, Southern California Edison, and Sunkist companies. The *Los Angeles Times* and Edison archives can be found at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, while the Sunkist archives are still privately held by the company. The Title Guarantee and Trust Company's archives are held with Fidelity and are not open to the public at this time.<sup>60</sup> Additional primary sources analyzed include internal corporate memos, employee newsletters and magazines, newspaper and trade journal articles, public relations photographs, pamphlets, and advertisements.

Although all the featured artists in this study are deceased, oral histories were consulted when available as well as contact with living relatives. The Hugo Ballin Papers and the papers of Albert Raymond Walker, of the Walker & Eisen architectural firm, can be found in the Library Special Collections of the Charles E. Young Research Library at the University of California, Los Angeles (Collections #407 and #199, respectively). The Robert Merrell Gage Papers are held at the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, and the University of Southern Mississippi holds the Mary and Conrad Buff Papers, which are related to the

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'Future Perfect Society': Aaron Douglas's Murals for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition," in *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 95–114; Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Hart Benton and the Indiana Murals* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Stephanie Mayer Heydt, *Rising Up: Hale Woodruff's Murals at Talladega College* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2012); Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and Jody Patterson, "Modernism and Murals at the 1939 New York World's Fair," *American Art* 24, no. 2 (2010): 50–73.

<sup>60</sup> Its archives came to be with Fidelity when Title Guarantee and Trust was purchased by its rival, the Title Insurance and Trust (TICOR), in 1943; after changing hands, and names, numerous times, TICOR ultimately became part of Fidelity. For more on the history of the Title Insurance and Trust Company, see Ernest J. Loebbecke, *Serving the Nation's Needs for Diversified Financial Services: The Story of the TI Corporation (of California)* (New York: Newcomen Society, 1973); and Judson A. Grenier, "Growing Together for a Century: Southern California and the Title Insurance and Trust Company," *Southern California Quarterly* 75, nos. 3–4 (1993): 351–439.



fourteen children's books they co-authored. The Frank Bower Papers, held at the Cornell University Library, relate to his time as a map draftsman during World War I. Lastly, the papers of architect Gordon B. Kaufmann are found at the Architecture and Design Collection at the Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara.

The murals examined in this study all still exist in their original locations and in various states of conservation, with the exception of the Sunkist Building, which was torn down in 1972. With foresight prior to its demolition, Sunkist removed the murals and had the four canvases professionally cleaned, framed, and reinstalled in the boardroom of its third corporate headquarters in Valencia, California. Likewise, the architectural sculpture for all the case studies may still be found in their original locations, save for the bas-relief sculptures by Harold F. Wilson for Sunkist as these were destroyed along with the building.

## **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter one offers a brief history of corporate philanthropy during the twentieth century and contextualizes the rise of the concept of a socially responsible corporation. This chapter also examines the various forms corporate cultural patronage may take—from corporate art collections and commissions of artists and illustrators to sponsorships and partnerships with cultural institutions and artists.

Chapter two begins with an exploration of the early groundwork laid by large-scale, civically orientated murals at sites in California and a contextualization of Los

Angeles's emerging art scene from 1900 to 1929 through an examination of how local art associations, art institutes, local collectors, and commercial spaces offered alternative exhibition spaces as the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art did not. Exemplifying the popular yet purely decorative commercial mural commissions of the late 1920s is the artwork found in the buildings of the Title Insurance and Trust Company (1928), Guaranty Building and Loan Association (1928), and Bullock's Wilshire Department Store (1929). The chapter continues with the year 1931 and two building projects in downtown Los Angeles, the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings, both of which use murals and exterior bas-reliefs to further claims of local authority through instrumentalized depictions of history and technology.

Part two of the chapter analyzes the mural commission painted by Hugo Ballin and the bas-relief sculpture by Eugene Maier-Krieg at the corporate headquarters for the Title Guarantee and Trust Company (1931). These two artists created an educational and aesthetic space at the building's entrance and within its elevator lobby through its corporate-friendly reading of Los Angeles history. The six-panel mural commission by Ballin was framed as a philanthropic cultural contribution to Los Angeles by a company that hoped to survive the Depression with ease. It also solidified Ballin's relationship with corporations through the refining of his corporate realist style. Ballin plays a key role in the history of corporate mural commission in Los Angeles, as he was a prolific local artist and corporate art darling who today has receded from public knowledge. In this mural cycle, Ballin was careful to choose

moments that highlighted the region's sanctioned land acquisition as it was directly related to the title company's own dealings and its historical archive of records covering every lot in the county since the beginning of the United States government in California. Panels featured Lieutenant E. O. C. Ord, who first mapped the city; the 1847 signing of the Treaty of Cahuenga; and a romanticized *mise-en-scène* panel glorifying the Spanish and Mexican period of Southern California. Three additional panels illustrated the coming of the railroad to Los Angeles in 1876 contrasted with an 1853 view of the pueblo; the promise of progress through the building of a metropolis; and the envisioning of a prehistoric Los Angeles.

Ending chapter two is a study of the Southern California Edison murals and bas-reliefs from 1931. This commission directly relates to the company's larger strategy to aggressively pursue maximum profits while also attempting to recuperate its public image given the mounting suspicion of its regional monopoly and national criticism of private utilities. Edison, firstly, attempted to portray itself as a self-described Home Company owned by stockholders that the company publically termed "typical citizens" and as committed to enhancing the lives of its customers through the provision of electricity. Secondly, Edison constructed a state-of-the-art corporate headquarters that showcased its philanthropic side through the inclusion of large-scale art commissions for the benefit of its employees, customers, and the general public. Sculptor Robert Merrell Gage was commissioned to create three classically-themed bas-reliefs over the entrance representing hydroelectric energy, light, and power. Hugo Ballin appears again as he was commissioned to paint an extensive mural on the

history of electricity and power that dominated the main lobby. Two other local artists, Barse Miller and Conrad Buff, split the six-panel mural elevator lobby commission representing the allegorical figures of power and energy set within the Sierra Nevada mountains. The commission points not only to an implied prestige for Edison by virtue of the sponsorship itself, as it was the largest of the decade, but also to the importance placed on the educational and instructive experience of art within an everyday setting. Viewers were invited to learn, not only about the robust history of Edison and hydroelectric power, but also the company's civic investment in the continuing cultural and economic success of Los Angeles. With these artworks, Edison countered public attacks of abuses of power by championing the viewer's role in the progress of the company, which it argued was owned by the public and existed only to bring electricity to the people for the betterment of their lives.

Chapter three explores two large-scale mural programs and architectural sculpture commissions from 1935 in the Sunkist and Times Buildings. These murals explore issues of race and labor in the region. As with the Edison murals in chapter two, these companies frame their authority through the lens of local history. Part one of the chapter resituates the mural and sculpture commissions of the California Fruit Growers Exchange in 1936 within a climate of growing unrest amongst citrus workers that was the direct result of the Exchange's anti-union tactics during the 1920s and 1930s. Representing one of only three known collaborations by Frank Bowers and Arthur Prunier, the two sets of pendant murals, along with sculptor Harold F. Wilson's bas-reliefs on the exterior of the building, depict complementary idyllic views of

historical and present-day citrus growing and harvesting by family farmers, furthering Sunkist's nostalgic public image and its core ideals of production, cooperation, and distribution. Yet the reality the murals fail to reveal is Sunkist's fervent battles against agricultural unionization and the increasing power exercised from within by commercial growers, not family farmers, during the 1920s and 1930s. The mounting discontent stemming from the Sunkist's severe labor strategies climaxed in Orange County, California during the summer of 1936, just six months after the opening of its new headquarters in the Sunkist Building. Mexican laborers, organized under the Confederación de Uniones Campesinos y Obreros de Mexicanos, clashed very publically with the Associated Farmers of California, a countermovement supported by Sunkist. The resulting strike of citrus workers was the largest and most violent to date. It is this context that frames the previously overlooked commission and necessitates a rereading of the murals found within the Sunkist Building.

Chapter three continues with an investigation of the 1935 *Los Angeles Times* murals by Hugo Ballin located in the Globe Lobby and bas-reliefs by Robert Merrell Gage that watch over the Spring Street entrance. Gage's allegorical sculptures of Father Time, the Spirit of the Times, and Johannes Gutenberg are stylistically in line with his earlier works at the Edison Building. These three figures point to the principles of the newspaper: the recording of news, the defense of liberty, and the lasting importance of knowledge. The murals, by contrast, differ dramatically in style and subject matter from Ballin's past work at the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings. They illustrate the direct political influence of Mexican muralism with

depictions of monumental laborers that subtly reference the 1910 bombing of the *Los Angeles Times*' second headquarters and the newspaper's ongoing antagonistic relationship with unions. Ballin takes a clear political position, centralizing both the process of labor and the laborer, himself, in the sepia-toned murals that wrap around the circular Globe Lobby. This temporary shift in his work is argued to be attributed to his experimentation with characteristics of modern art as Balling was attempting to reconcile these tendencies with his conservative, academic style. Additionally, Ballin's variations may be due to his awareness of the Mexican mural movement and its artists in the region, given the much debated censoring of Siquieros' Olvera Street mural *América Tropical* in 1932 and the removal of Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads* in 1934 from Rockefeller Center.

The conclusion examines the lasting influence of what is argued to constitute this first wave of mural painting in Los Angeles, which foreshadows the second wave of Chicano muralists that spanned the 1960s to 1990s and a third wave of mural painting that is taking place now, during the twenty-first century, after the ban on murals was lifted in 2013. It ends with one of the last great examples of corporate art commissions in Los Angeles, a pair of murals by Charles Alston and Hale Woodruff for the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1949. The two murals are a sprawling panorama entitled *The Negro in California History* and celebrate the African and African-American figures whose contributions in exploring and settling the state from 1527 to 1949 had been grossly neglected.

Together, the works examined here illustrate the argument that corporations in Los Angeles during the 1930s were active in commissioning artwork as a way to position themselves within the civic identity and cultural heritage of Los Angeles. What can be considered to be Los Angeles's first wave of mural painting using a style that is defined as corporate realism, these commissions helped to reinforce the corporations' claimed benevolent relationship with the public and its ongoing altruistic service to it, defining themselves as public when in fact they were unquestionably private. This corporate patronage of the arts ensured that the role of these corporations was entwined with every phase of California's history—past, present, and future.

## Chapter 1: Contextualizing the Corporate Patron: Cultural Philanthropy, Collections, and Art Commissions

*A too common practice among captains of commerce and industry has been to debase popular taste by flooding the land with ugly articles for use or wear, and then—an echo of medieval death-bed piety—leave large slices of the profits to found art museums which house relics of past ages when leaders encouraged the fine arts. Such people are called art patrons. They are and we should be grateful for their remorse. But they belong to the past.<sup>61</sup>*

—Arthur Millier (1929), art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*

In the quote above, *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier writes disdainfully of the traditional character of cultural philanthropy popular in the early twentieth century in order to welcome a new arts patron to Los Angeles—the corporation. Millier saw the Wilshire Boulevard branch of the successful department store chain, Bullock's, which opened on September 26, 1929, as emblematic of this shift in patronage, writing that the corporate heads “who make such things possible are genuine art patrons of the highest rank” and “there is no end to the beneficent consequence growing out of such a fine piece of genuine art patronage!”<sup>62</sup> When it opened, Millier delightedly proclaimed the death of the established collecting paradigm—one he reduced to images of private collections of dusty Old Master

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<sup>61</sup> Arthur Millier, “Beauty Seen in Building,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1929, B13.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, B21.



paintings locked away from public view and the inevitable deathbed donations to art museums born out of capitalist guilt. Millier's enthusiasm for the corporate patronage of Bullock's Wilshire was understandable, as it represented not only the largest private arts commission the city had seen but, with over a dozen artists and multiple designers hired to beautify its retail space, the largest corporate commission to date in Los Angeles. Earlier corporate art commissions found in hotels, banks, and movie theaters were often small-scale murals populated with romanticized landscapes referring back to the Italian Renaissance or French Rococo. Bullock's Wilshire, in contrast, was unique in that the majority of its art was abstract and, like its architecture, unabashedly contemporary. Likewise, the fact that a for-profit company had engaged numerous contemporary artists, many of them local, to create works of art differed greatly from the established model of cultural philanthropy of the time. And while a new era of corporate art commissions in Los Angeles was in fact being ushered in with Bullock's Wilshire, traditional forms of arts patronage would still continue in the United States, as the complexities of art patronage and collecting—corporate or otherwise—were deeply entrenched within a larger history of power, cultural capital, and commerce that spans centuries.

This chapter moves beyond Los Angeles as a site in order to uncover the underlying motivations of the seemingly altruistic drive behind corporate cultural philanthropy in the early twentieth century. It contextualizes the early history of such giving in the United States in order to illustrate how corporate patronage of the arts in the form of cultural philanthropy, art collections, and art commissions was driven by a

larger need that served specific purposes: defining and maintaining a corporate image.

### **Royal and Private Collections in Europe prior to the Twentieth Century**

Prior to analyzing the rise of corporate philanthropy in the United States during the twentieth century, one must look to its earlier history in Europe to understand its interest for corporate power building. Historically, the patronage and collecting of art has served many purposes, from symbolizing political and economic power to functioning propagandistically and operating as a marker of taste and culture. Whether undertaken by royalty, civic entities, religious bodies, individuals, or corporations, the resulting collections and commissions serve the specific needs and desires of the patron. During the Renaissance, a shift in art patronage occurred, as wealthy private patrons, such as the powerful Florentine banking family, the Medici, were able to rival the commissioning power of churches and governments.<sup>63</sup> As early as the 1420s, these commissions were the result of growing personal fortunes and a celebration of visual displays of power and wealth through conspicuous consumption, as embodied in the concept of *magnificenza*.<sup>64</sup> For historians Kathleen Wren Christian and David J. Drogin, Renaissance art patronage, and specifically that of sculpture, could

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<sup>63</sup> In neighboring Siena, the first example of a corporate commission during the Renaissance is thought to come from the Monte dei Paschi di Siena bank. In 1481, the bank commissioned Benvenuto di Giovanni del Guasta to paint a fresco of the Madonna of Mercy for their headquarters, commemorating the bank's founding in 1472. Throughout the bank's history, it has continued to collect, exhibit, loan, and commission artwork. For more, see "The Origin of Our Collection," Monte dei Paschi di Siena Bank, accessed June 23, 2014, <http://english.mps.it/La+Banca/Arte>; and Keith Christiansen, Laurence B. Kanter, and Carl Brandon Strehlke, *Painting in Renaissance Siena 1420-1500* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988).

<sup>64</sup> Helge Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2007), 6.

appropriate the civic connotations and political clout of other forms of patronage.<sup>65</sup> As Wren Christian and Drogin argue, sculpture could successfully embody a patron's accomplishments, political status, and wealth, while at the same time blurring the lines between public and private spaces and patronage.<sup>66</sup> Today corporations that engage in cultural philanthropy are quickly dubbed "modern Medici" or "corporate Medici" in reference to the legacy of art collecting and patronage that began with Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici in the fifteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to commissioning of works of art for public spaces, the aristocracy of the Italian Renaissance also created a demand for opulent domestic possessions, including furniture, decorative arts, and artwork. As Richard A. Goldthwaite has noted, urban Italian elites, in contrast to their courtly Northern European counterparts, collected luxurious objects that connoted status, authority, and power, as their social

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<sup>65</sup> Kathleen Wren Christian and David J. Drogin, "Introduction: The Virtues of the Medium; The Patronage of Sculpture in Renaissance Italy," in *Patronage and Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, eds. Kathleen Wren Christian and David J. Drogin (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 3.

<sup>66</sup> According to Wren Christian and Drogin sculpture was a more prestigious type of commission in comparison to other forms of art during the early Renaissance due to a number of factors including the higher expense of raw materials, greater visibility in public spaces, and its ability to withstand weather.

<sup>67</sup> For "modern Medici," see the Bonhams exhibition *Modern Medicis and their Art Collections 1472-2014*, January 13-24, 2014 and its accompanying catalog, Harris and Reiff Howarth, *A Celebration of Corporation Art Programmes Worldwide*. For "corporate Medici," see Rosanne Martorella, "Art and Business: An International Approach on Sponsorship," in *Art and Business: An International Perspective on Sponsorship*, ed. by Rosanne Martorella (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 3. For more on the history of Italian arts patronage, see Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (London: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1997); Colum Hourihane, *Patronage, Power, and Agency in Medieval Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Elizabeth Bradford Smith, *Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting, 1800-1940* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); and F. W. Kent and Patricia Simons with J. C. Eade, eds., *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

identity was derived from their autonomy and wealth.<sup>68</sup> In a shift examined by Jonathan Brown, art collecting returned to the realm of royalty in seventeenth-century Europe, as picture galleries replaced cabinets of curiosity to become the most potent symbol of prestige, taste, and wealth. With the dispersal of the English collections of King Charles I, the Earl of Arundel, and the Dukes of Buckingham and Hamilton in the mid-seventeenth century, other European courts, like those of Philip IV of Spain, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, Isabella Clara Eugenia, Regentess of the Netherlands, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, and Cardinal Jules Mazarin and Louis XIV of France, vied to develop their own collections.<sup>69</sup> These collections, Robert W. Scheller explains, were characteristically built around works by Old Masters to “flaunt the status and distinction or, as it was often called in documents, the *splendor* of the house, but on an even more grandiose scale, thus expressing the sovereign’s rank both in his own country and in relation to other contemporary monarchs.”<sup>70</sup> From 1770 to 1830, precisely the period when England’s ruling class began collecting in earnest, the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars caused French nobles to unload their collections on a scale never before seen. Following the French Revolution and into the first decades of the nineteenth century, many royal and private collections became the property of public

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<sup>68</sup> Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); and Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> See Jonathan Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs: Collecting Art in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Jerry Brotton, *Sale of the Late King’s Goods: Charles I and His Art Collection* (London: Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> Robert W. Scheller, “Art of the State: Forms of Government and Their Effect on the Collecting of Art 1550-1800,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 24, no. 2/3 (1996): 276, doi: 10.2307/3780842.

institutions such as the Louvre in Paris (1793), Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (1817), the Prado in Madrid (1819), National Gallery of London (1824), Berlin Gemäldegalerie (1823), and Hermitage in St. Petersburg (1852). In the mid-nineteenth century Americans were finally poised to enter the realm of art collecting and by 1900, private collections in the United States would rival those of Europe and its museums.

In contrast to Europe's long history of art collecting, the practice was rare in antebellum America. It was only with the advent of the Gilded Age that an unprecedented and dramatic surge in the acquisition of fine art finally occurred. Private collections in the United States, as art historian William G. Constable has argued, differed from European examples due to the fact there were no real traditions of collecting or histories by which collections could be framed.<sup>71</sup> Unlike Europe, the United States had no existing royal art collections to build upon or extended family lineages through which artworks would be passed down. As a result, American collections would often last for just one generation and then be sold at auction or donated to museums, causing subsequent collectors to begin anew, driven by their own individual tastes.

Interest in collecting was spurred in the late nineteenth century by the economic prosperity of the Gilded Age, as well as by the numerous art exhibitions organized around the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and the incorporation of multiple American museums during that decade: the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1870), the Art Institute of Chicago (1879), the Corcoran Gallery of

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<sup>71</sup> W. G. Constable and Elizabeth Gibson Holahan, *Art Collecting in the United States of America: An Outline of a History* (London: Nelson, 1964).

Art (1869), and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1870). Collecting at this time, for wealthy American industrialists and tycoons, came to symbolize not only status and prestige, but also became a type of patriotic activity that contributed to nation-building.<sup>72</sup> Collectors vied fiercely to acquire artworks previously held in private European collections, desiring collections that closely mirrored the scope and tastes of their European equivalents. American collectors tended not to pursue works by fellow American artists, as they were seen as lacking in gravitas and cachet. Instead, they opted to purchase works by European artists to create collections that echoed the patterns of past noble houses. “Without a long and distinguished heritage of their own,” Richard L. Kagan explains, “Americans looked abroad, especially to Europe, to create the artistic and cultural patrimony that their nation...supposedly lacked.”<sup>73</sup> Old Master paintings, drawings, and sculpture were most sought after, as these artworks represented a cultured refinement, greater inherent prestige, and a level of taste many Americans felt their country was lacking. These artworks also “served to bridge the Atlantic and establish a close linkage between the United States and those European countries from where many of its citizens originated,” Kagan argues.<sup>74</sup> Old Masters “would set a standard for American artists and public taste, and help define and advance American culture,” Cynthia Saltzman writes, “and work as artistic capital to

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<sup>72</sup> Richard L. Kagan, “‘The Spanish Turn’: The Discovery of Spanish Art in the United States, 1887-1920,” in *Collecting Spanish Art: Spain’s Golden Age and America’s Gilded Age*, eds. Inge Jackson Reist and José Luis Colomer (New York: Frick Collection, in association with Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, Madrid, and Center for Spain in America, New York, 2012), 21–22.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

stimulate the development of American art.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, collections of Old Masters served to legitimize the cultural standing of the United States in comparison to Europe. American collections offered the “artistic capital to stimulate the development of American art” as, instead of attending art school in Europe, artists would only need to visit local museums and the public would be able to easily view such masterpieces in their respective metropolises.<sup>76</sup>

As in Europe, art collecting and patronage in the United States by both private individuals and public institutions served specific purposes. From the 1890s through to World War I, these activities addressed deep-seated feelings of cultural inadequacy regarding the taste level, artistic refinement, and aesthetic sensibility of Americans. The lampooning in popular media of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s failure to open with an established, permanent collection that would rival European museums served as evidence of this inferiority complex.<sup>77</sup> Successful real-estate mogul and banker Henry Gurdon Marquand, who served as the museum’s President, Trustee, and Treasurer, earnestly sought out acquisitions of Old Masters for the museum from 1871–1903 (as well as procuring works for his own personal collection, which was auctioned off at his death in 1903). His passion to acquire Old Masters such as Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Vermeer, and Frans Hals for the Metropolitan was, on one

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<sup>75</sup> Cynthia Saltzman, *Old Masters, New World: America’s Raid on Europe’s Great Pictures, 1880–World War I* (New York: Viking, 2008), 12, 20.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>77</sup> See also Christine I. Oaklander, “Jonathan Sturges, W. H. Osborn, and William Church Osborn: A Chapter in American Art Patronage,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 43 (2008): 173–94.

level, a desire to improve the museum's reputation, but simultaneously it served to inspire and educate American artists, thus elevating the contemporary art of the time.<sup>78</sup>

The many factors that initiated the American boom in collecting reached their zenith in the 1890s, inciting even greater demand and higher prices. This, in turn, caused the international art market to be flooded with works as European collections were liquidated for wealthy buyers from the United States. Coinciding with the moment American collectors were poised to enter the art-collecting market, much of the English nobility was suffering economical difficulties resulting from a combination of low returns on farmed estates and high taxes from newly passed Reform Acts. In 1882, the Settled Land Act in England reversed a historical law that finally allowed the noble class to sell their land and property—including artworks that previously were barred from being sold. Ironically, many of these private collections in England had been formed as a result of the liquidation of private collections of art during the era of the French Revolution, which were consequently purchased by the English between 1770 and 1830.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller ushered in a new era of philanthropy declaring it was one's moral duty to give away one's wealth instead of passing it down to succeeding generations so that it might benefit the larger society. This trend resulted in well-known American collectors, such as Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., William Henry Vanderbilt, John Taylor Johnston, August Belmont, and Solomon R. and Irene Guggenheim,

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<sup>78</sup> Saltzman, *Old Masters, New World*, 20. Consequently, this also would benefit Marquand's own collection of American art.



allowing the public access to their private collections or playing instrumental roles in founding public museums. In addition, private collectors across the United States founded museums to house and showcase their collections, often in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> Other collectors instead opted to bequeath portions of, or their entire collections, to expand the permanent holdings of established museums in the early twentieth century.<sup>80</sup>

### **Corporations and Philanthropy**

The history of corporate philanthropy in the United States often begins with examinations of the legacies of John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie as well as other wealthy American industrialists such as J.P. Morgan, Henry Ford, and Cornelius

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<sup>79</sup> These included William Wilson Corcoran (Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC); Edward Drummond Libbey (Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH); Isabella Stewart Gardner (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA); Henry Walters (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD); Henry E. Huntington (Huntington Library, San Marino, CA); Charles Lang Freer (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC); J. P. Morgan (Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY); Andrew Carnegie (Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA); John Ringling (Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL); John L. Severance (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH); Daniel Wadsworth (Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, CT); the Kimbell family (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX); August Heckscher (Heckscher Museum, Huntington, NY); Henry Francis du Pont (Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE); Charles Phelps Taft and Anna Sinton Taft (Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, OH); Edwin Bryant Crocker (Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA); Duncan Phillips (Phillips Collection, Washington, DC); Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY); Albert C. Barnes (Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA); Leland Stanford Jr. (Leland Stanford Jr. Museum, Stanford, CA); and Henry Clay Frick (Frick Collection, New York, NY).

<sup>80</sup> These include notable examples as such the donations to the National Gallery of Art by Andrew Mellon, John Gellatly, Samuel H. Kress, Chester Dale, Lessing Julius Rosenwald, and Joseph Widener; donations to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Alexander Smith Cochran, James F. Ballard, Clarence Mackay, Benjamin Altman, Henry Osborne Havemeyer and his wife Louisine Waldron Elder, Jules S. Bache, George A. Hearn, and Edward C. Moore; donations to the Philadelphia Museum of Art by John G. Johnson, Clara Bloomfield Moore, and Anna H. Wilstach; donations to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts by John S. Phillips, Joseph and Sarah Harrison, Edward L. Carey, and Henry C. Gibson; donations to the San Diego Museum of Art by Archer M. Huntington, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Timken, the Spreckels family, Alice Klauber, Mr. and Mrs. George D. Pratt, Mrs. Henry A. Everett, and Amy and Anne Putnam; and donations to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art by William Preston Harrison, Merle Armitage, and General Johan Wilhelm Normann Munthe.

Vanderbilt. Through a stewardship model, these men would act as trustees and invest their personal fortunes into charitable foundations. While donations to such foundations offered large tax incentives, especially following charitable donation legislation in 1917, such acts also fulfilled the need to “give back” to the community and larger society through foundations dedicated to culture, higher learning and medicine (it is no coincidence that these were institutions that became tax-exempt in 1917). This kind of social responsibility morphed as the twentieth century unfolded and often times merged with a notion of welfare capitalism to create what is today termed as corporate social responsibility.

For the decades prior to the 1940s, charitable giving by corporations was minimal, as it was considered directly at odds with a company’s larger purpose of creating profits for stockholders. Charitable donations, no matter how beneficial to society, were seen as taking away from overall profits and the decision to make such contributions was felt not to be within the power of the corporation. This mentality persisted until World War II. Private individuals and nonprofit foundations, not corporations, initiated the majority of large-scale philanthropy. Motivated by a variety of political and altruistic factors, it was only in the 1960s that American corporations began to engage in widespread charitable giving. David Rockefeller expressed this shift in corporate thinking and the rise of a responsible corporate citizen in 1966 when he addressed the National Industrial Conference Board on its fiftieth anniversary:

Almost imperceptibly over the past several years, the modern corporation has evolved into a social as well as economic institution. Without losing sight of the need to make a profit, it has developed ideals and responsibilities going far beyond the profit motive. It has become, in

effect, a full-fledged citizen, not only of the community in which it is headquartered but of the county and indeed the world. The public has come to expect organizations...to live up to certain standards of good citizenship. ...The corporation must initiate its share of socially responsible actions, rather than merely responding passively to outside forces. ...Corporations genuinely concerned about their environment cannot evade responsibly for seeing that this leisure is channeled into rewarding activities such as those the arts afford.<sup>81</sup>

Yet after framing cultural philanthropy's altruistic benefits for a corporation, Rockefeller is quick to include the economic benefits similar to those that his company, Chase Manhattan Bank, had experienced when it supported the arts, suggesting that such patronage "can provide a company with extensive publicity and advertising, a brighter public reputation, and an improved corporate image."<sup>82</sup> He also affirmed that "Promotion of the arts can improve the morale of employees and help attractant qualified personnel. ...It can build better customer relations, a readier acceptance of company products, and a superior appraisal of their quality."<sup>83</sup> This idea—that a relatively small budget dedicated to cultural philanthropy could, in essence, serve as a high-yield, low-risk investment for corporations while also fulfilling a sense of corporate responsibility—is one that became increasingly popular after 1970 as an unprecedented number of corporations engaged in various forms of cultural philanthropy. Corporate support of culture steadily continued through the 1980s as the Reagan administration courted private funding for the arts as a way to counter the government's own diminishing support.

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<sup>81</sup> David Rockefeller, *Culture and the Corporation: An address by David Rockefeller, President, The Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A. at the 50th Anniversary Conference Board, New York City, September 20, 1966* (New York: Chase Manhattan Bank, 1966), 4–5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

Such corporate giving takes many forms ranging from donations made to local and national cultural institutions such as museums or performing arts centers to strategic partnerships with like-minded local charities and community arts organizations to the commissioning, collecting, or sponsoring of artists. Regardless of its shape, corporate cultural philanthropy serves altruistic, political, and economic purposes, the varying degree of which greatly depends on each corporation's larger ambitions, which may or may not be readily transparent. Prior to tracing the history of corporate collecting and patronage, one must analyze the underlying motivations for corporations to engage in philanthropic activities.

### **A Corporation's Responsibility to Society**

The rise of the American corporate art patron in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mirrored its private counterparts in that a corporation's engagement with the arts supported a carefully crafted public image and served to legitimize activities, embody prestige, and function as a civic and cultural contribution. More broadly speaking, corporate cultural philanthropy, as Marjorie Garber has argued, "endeavors to combine fiscal and social profit motives to do good while doing well," serving to "edge out the competition, and/or gain fame, goodwill, and prestige, and therefore...augments the bottom line."<sup>84</sup> Historians often cite legislation passed in 1935 allowing corporate charitable donations to be tax-deductible as the beginning of the modern era of corporate giving. However, examples can be cited from almost a

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<sup>84</sup> Garber, *Patronizing the Arts*, 103–4.

century earlier as the acceptance of corporate philanthropy emerged alongside the concept that a corporation should be invested in the welfare its employees and society as a whole, not merely pure profit.

More commonly known today as corporate social responsibility (CSR), the idea of corporate citizenship was, until the late 1970s, referred to as social responsibility (SR). Inquiries into the social consciousness of corporations began to appear in earnest following the Stock Market Crash of 1929, with publications by Chester I. Barnard, J. M. Clark, Theodore J. Kreps, and others.<sup>85</sup> In 1946 the understanding of this concept was widespread enough for *Fortune* magazine to poll business executives regarding their position on a corporation's responsibility to society to which 93.5% affirmed that "businessmen were responsible for the consequences of their actions in a sphere somewhat wider than that covered by their profit-and-loss statement."<sup>86</sup> In *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (1953), Howard R. Bowen was one of the first to clearly define SR as "the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines

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<sup>85</sup> Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938); J. M. Clark, *Social Control of Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938); and Theodore J. Kreps, "Measurement of the Social Performance of Business," in *An Investigation of Concentration of Economic Power for the Temporary National Economic Committee* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940). For more on this early history, see Archie B. Carroll, "Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct," *Business & Society* 38, no. 3 (1999): 268–95; Archie B. Carroll, "A History of Corporate Social Responsibility: Concepts and Practices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility*, eds. Andrew Crane, Abigail McWilliams, Dirk Matten, Jeremy Moon, and Donald Siegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19–45, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199211593.003.0002; Richard C. Hoffman, "Corporate Social Responsibility in the 1920s: An Institutional Perspective," *Journal of Management History* 13, no. 1 (2007): 55–73; and Dirk Matten and Andrew Crane, "Corporate Citizenship: Toward an Extended Theoretical Conceptualization," *The Academy of Management Review* 30, no. 1 (2005): 166–79.

<sup>86</sup> Howard R. Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 44, quoted in Carroll, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 270.

of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society.”<sup>87</sup>

Other key books published on the subject in the 1950s and 1960s include those by Morrell Heald, Benjamin Selekman, Richard Eells, Keith Davis, William C. Frederick, and Clarence C. Walton.<sup>88</sup> The history, execution, and repercussions of SR were re-examined in the 1970s by scholars.<sup>89</sup> At the close of the decade, in what would be one of his many groundbreaking publications on CSR, management historian Archie B. Carroll fully articulated the idea of corporate citizenship.<sup>90</sup> For Carroll, a corporation’s responsibility to society and important stakeholders beyond its shareholders, such as its employees and community, can be divided into four categories: economic (to be profitable and carry its own weight), legal (to obey the law), ethical (to engage in ethical behavior), and philanthropic (to give back through corporate contributions).

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<sup>87</sup> Bowen, *Social Responsibilities*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Morrell Heald, “Management’s Responsibility to Society: The Growth of an Idea,” *Business History Review* 31 (1957): 375–84; Benjamin Selekman, *A Moral Philosophy for Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959); Richard Eells, *Corporate Giving in a Free Society* (New York: Harper, 1956); Keith Davis, “Can Business Afford to Ignore Social Responsibilities?” *California Management Review* 2 (1960): 70–76; Keith Davis, “Understanding the Social Responsibility Puzzle: What does the Businessman Owe to Society?” *Business Horizons* 10 (1967): 45–50; William C. Frederick, “The Growing Concern over Business Responsibility,” *California Management Review* 2 (1960): 54–61; and Clarence C. Walton, *Corporate Social Responsibilities* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1967).

<sup>89</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, “What History Tells Us about Corporate Responsibilities,” *Business and Society Review/Innovation* (1973): 76–81; Patrick Murphy, “An Evolution: Corporate Social Responsiveness,” *University of Michigan Business Review* 30, no. 6 (1978): 19; Robert Hay and Ed Gray, “Social Responsibilities of Business Managers,” *Academy of Management Journal* 17, no. 1 (1974): 135–43; Edward H. Bowman and Mason Haire, “A Strategic Posture Toward Corporate Social Responsibility,” *California Management Review* 18 (1975): 49–58; Harold L. Johnson, *Business in Contemporary Society: Framework and Issues* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1971); George A. Steiner, *Business and Society* (New York: Random House, 1971); Robert W. Ackerman, “How Companies Respond to Social Demands,” *Harvard Business Review* 51, no. 4 (1973): 88–98; S. Prakash Sethi, “Dimensions of Corporate Social Performance: An Analytic Framework,” *California Management Review* 17 (1975): 58–64; and Sandra Holmes, “Executive Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility,” *Business Horizons* 19 (1976): 34–40.

<sup>90</sup> See Archie B. Carroll, “A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Social Performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 4 (1979): 497–505; and Archie B. Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders,” *Business Horizons* 34, no. 4 (1991): 39–48, doi: 10.1016/0007-6813(91)90005-G.

This last category, that of the philanthropic, is further defined as when “a good private or corporate citizen is imbued with this sense of charity—this sense of improving life for others while at the same time improving life for oneself.”<sup>91</sup> Carroll does acknowledge this in his essay, but “does not entertain the question” that there often exists a combination of strategic philanthropy, motivated by the financial interests of the corporation, and true altruistic philanthropy, which stems from a genuine concern for its beneficiaries.<sup>92</sup>

While Carroll’s model of CSR posits that corporations engage in philanthropic acts because there is a moral imperative to do so, studies by Steven R. Neiheisel, Jerome L. Himmelstein, Morrell Heald, and David Vogel argue that moral duty alone cannot explain corporate benevolence, pointing instead to a number of complicated and layered motivations.<sup>93</sup> These impetuses arise from the real and imagined economic, social and political “returns on investments” of such philanthropy and include demonstrating a social responsibility that can have a lasting effect on society; strategic giving that furthers the political goals of a company; using the publicity as a more authentic form of advertising and supporting causes that are directly linked to the

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<sup>91</sup> Archie B. Carroll, “The Four Faces of Corporate Citizenship,” *Business and Society Review* 100–101, no. 1 (1998): 5, doi: 10.1111/0045-3609.00008.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Neiheisel, *Corporate Strategy and the Politics of Goodwill*; Jerome L. Himmelstein, *Looking Good and Doing Good: Corporate Philanthropy and Corporate Power* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Morrell Heald, *The Social Responsibilities of Business: Company and Community, 1900–1960* (Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970); and David Vogel, *The Market for Virtue: The Potential and Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 2005). See also Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Frank Emerson Andrews, *Corporate Giving* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1952); Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee, *Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005); and Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits,” *New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970, accessed April 30, 2014, <http://www.umich.edu/~thecore/doc/Friedman.pdf>.

goals of the corporation or C-level executives and will also benefit employees, clients and the larger community. M. Todd Henderson and Anup Malani offer two additional arguments as to why corporations engage in philanthropy. One frames corporate giving as simply an extension of earlier notions of philanthropy, “an example of managerial graft: executives spend corporate profits on their pet charities rather than returning that money to shareholders.”<sup>94</sup> The other states that these acts do not necessarily reduce profits, but instead increase them as “philanthropy buys goodwill from consumers, employees and regulators.”<sup>95</sup> Both arguments contribute to what makes corporate philanthropy controversial for Henderson and Malani—that a “contortion of the usual producer-consumer relationship” causes consumers, employees, and shareholders to pay in some monetary way for corporate generosity.<sup>96</sup> Corporations must ultimately balance these contradictory impulses: being a “good corporate citizen” by giving back to a community through cultural philanthropy and being aware of the financial bottom line which such giving inherently reduces.

This balance is what political scientist Steven R. Neiheisel explores in his study on the political nature of corporate philanthropy. Neiheisel argues that philanthropy is one of the most effective ways to demonstrate social responsibility due to the fact that “if marketed appropriately, it can be as high-profile an activity as image and advocacy advertising,” albeit one with more lasting results.<sup>97</sup> His three models of corporate philanthropy, the Altruistic Model, the Profit-Maximizing Model,

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<sup>94</sup> M. Todd Henderson and Anup Malani, “Corporate Philanthropy and the Market for Altruism,” *Columbia Law Review* 109, no. 3 (2009): 572.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 574–75.

<sup>97</sup> Neiheisel, *Corporate Strategy and the Politics of Goodwill*, 25.



and the Political Model, are useful in understanding the underlying motivations behind corporate giving. The Political Model is most applicable to American corporations in the early twentieth century, as companies strove, through their cultural philanthropy, to adjudicate the fine line between being both Altruistic and Profit-Maximizing Models.<sup>98</sup>

Neiheisel argues that according to the Altruistic Model, a corporation's philanthropic endeavors, whose causes must be freely chosen by the corporation for noble reasons and not by outside demands in order to appear wholly sincere, are "driven by non-economic motives derived largely from a sense of social responsibility" and go beyond simple profit maximization.<sup>99</sup> He believes that this type of philanthropy is driven by a sense of *noblesse oblige*, the moral obligation of those with power and wealth to help others, and that it is "simply the right thing to do."<sup>100</sup> Neiheisel cites the Cummins Engine Corporation in Indiana as an example of this model; their principal objective, since the company's founding in 1919, was "being fair and honest and doing what is right even when it is not in our immediate benefit."<sup>101</sup> Criticism of this model suggests that there is greater complexity to the motivations prompting such CSR. Furthermore, these actions are often in direct conflict with the basic principle of business—to increase profits and the value of market shares—meaning that significant philanthropic giving cannot generally be supported in the long term.

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<sup>98</sup> Robert Hay and Ed Gray use the term "profit maximizing management" in their 1974 article "Social Responsibilities of Business Mangers" to refer to the period in American business history between the Industrial Revolution and the Great Depression.

<sup>99</sup> Neiheisel, *Corporate Strategy and the Politics of Goodwill*, 26.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 28.

The Profit-Maximizing Model argues that the sole ambition of a corporation, even in regard to its philanthropic strategies, is that of profit and continuous growth as any corporate giving intrinsically threatens the bottom line. Unpacking this model, Neiheisel uses the term “enlightened self-interest” to explain “social behavior designed primarily to further the interests of the corporation; ‘enlightened’ because it creates public goods that contribute to the common good, and ‘self-interested’ because the act of giving, and/or the good themselves when consumed by the corporations, generate a plus for the firm’s bottom-line.”<sup>102</sup> Returns on philanthropic investments need to be measured, weighed, and calculated in order to justify contributions that take away from profit maximization; if giving blindly or without fully understanding the implied benefits of such giving, a corporation would receive no benefits in return. When profit-maximizing corporations give to social service organizations or cultural institutions, it is for the purpose of enhancing the quality of life of the local community and increasing employee morale and loyalty. This in turn may cause employees to “value these community amenities enough to be willing to work for lower wages in cities that offer more of them.”<sup>103</sup> As a marketing tactic, an instrumental use of philanthropy can increase sales through the appearance of being a generous good corporate citizen, which generates a larger clientele base, increases name recognition and visibility to a selected audience, and can serve as a form of advertising through the targeted donation of goods and products. However, following a strict interpretation of this model overlooks the fact that if a corporation were

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<sup>102</sup> Neiheisel, *Corporate Strategy and the Politics of Goodwill*, 33–34.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 35.

interested only in profits, it would not concern itself with philanthropy in the first place. While large global corporations take measures to ensure their philanthropic efforts are not seen as being motivated by profits, an example of the Profit-Maximizing Model would be cause-related marketing, where the company that donates goods or services is widely advertised.<sup>104</sup>

Neiheisel's third model, the Political Model, is a hybrid of the previous two, informed by an awareness of the broader political concerns that serve both the shareholder and society. This mode of philanthropy is framed as selfless acts of service, Neiheisel explains, yet "this veneer of altruism is important because one primary political object of philanthropy is to play down the notions that the corporation possesses too much power and that its power is used in the mindless pursuit of profit-maximization, often at the expense of the public welfare."<sup>105</sup> Corporate philanthropy, therefore, is a political activity first, with nods to profits and altruism ranking second. Taking two forms, this kind of charity is primarily seen as an image-building strategy that counters negative public opinion regarding the power and wealth corporations hold. Secondly, donations serve a strategic political end, either through gaining proximity to politicians or lawmakers or through backing their legislation to secure future rewards.

Chi-tao Wu reaches the same conclusion in her book, *Privatising Culture*, arguing that corporate:

interest in cultural activities, particularly when these are publicly

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<sup>104</sup> Neiheisel, *Corporate Strategy and the Politics of Goodwill*, 36.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 41.

endorsed by government, has to be seen as part of an overall strategy to bring together private economic power and public cultural authority. This is done with the prospect that the cultural capital thus created can, in due course and at the appropriate juncture, be transformed into political power, either openly or otherwise, to serve business's own specific economic interests.<sup>106</sup>

The actions of the tobacco giant, Philip Morris Companies, Inc. (rebranded in 2003 as the Altria Group, Inc.) illustrate how a corporation uses its cultural philanthropy instrumentally for political gains in an effort to counter negative public opinion.

Historically devoting approximately 25% of its philanthropy budget to the arts, Phillip Morris has had a hand in various cultural programs since 1958 and at one time was thought to be the largest corporate sponsor of the arts in the United States.<sup>107</sup> In 1967, it was the first corporate sponsor of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and from 1982 to 2007, the museum had a 900-square-foot exhibition space within its corporate headquarters in New York.<sup>108</sup> The company also sponsored numerous art exhibitions, some of which were canceled after public outcry when the source of their funding was made public.<sup>109</sup> But at many junctures, it was revealed that Philip Morris was using its philanthropy to garner public support and sway voters and politicians in their favor.

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<sup>106</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 16.

<sup>107</sup> "Altria Group, Inc./Philip Morris Companies Inc.," Americans for the Arts, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/promotion-recognition/awards-for-arts-achievement/bca10/altria-group-incphilip-morris>; and Mervyn Rothstein, "Uneasy Partners: Arts and Philip Morris," *New York Times*, December 18, 1990, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/18/arts/uneasy-partners-arts-and-philip-morris.html>.

<sup>108</sup> The Whitney Museum of American Art consequently had other "corporate-funded branch museums" housed within corporate spaces, including the Equitable Center (New York, 1986–92) and the Champion International Corporation building (Stamford, CT, 1981–2001). See "History of the Whitney: Founding," Whitney Museum of Art, accessed May 3, 2014, <http://whitney.org/About/History>.

<sup>109</sup> For example, see Hans Haacke's piece *Helmsboro Country* (1990), the Festival Latino's rejection of Philip Morris' sponsorship in the 1980s, the San Diego Museum of Art's canceling of its Philip Morris-funded Deborah Butterfield exhibition in 1996, and protests at UCLA over the Philip Morris sponsorship of the Romare Bearden exhibition in 1991.

One such instance occurred when it was reported that Philip Morris sought to call in support from arts groups it sponsored to help oppose a city-wide ban on smoking in public spaces in New York.<sup>110</sup> In 1990, a leaked memo regarding their business in Singapore revealed how sponsorships were used to “create constituent goodwill that benefits PM by influencing public opinion, which turn is used by us to influence political opinion/action” and that company involvement in community programs “can only be of real value [to PM] if they succeed in gaining us political friendships and the opportunity to engage key Government decision makers in an on-going dialogue that may be to our benefit.”<sup>111</sup> More recently, in 2006, Philip Morris positioned ending its support of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Art Awards as the result of realigning funds to help victims of the 2004 tsunami. But the more plausible explanation, as Ross MacKenzie and Jeff Collin have argued, was due to regional restrictions around tobacco advertising and protests surrounding the award itself by Thailand’s international tobacco control advocates. “By switching to disaster relief...and funding community level initiatives,” MacKenzie and Collin explain, “[Philip Morris] can effectively project its philanthropic credentials while creating a visible presence in Thailand’s ‘dark market’ to replace the much criticised arts award.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Garber, *Patronizing the Arts*, 109.

<sup>111</sup> Jeremy H. Jilla, memorandum to Peter L. Barnes, “Corporate Affairs Issues / D. Harris Visit,” April 20, 1990, University of California, San Francisco, Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/gav19e00>.

<sup>112</sup> Ross MacKenzie and Jeff Collin, “Philanthropy, Politics and Promotion: Philip Morris’ ‘Charitable Contributions’ in Thailand,” *Tobacco Control* 17, no. 4 (2008): 285, accessed May 5, 2014, doi: 10.1136/tc.2008.024935.

### **Corporate Philanthropy in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries**

In the twenty-first century, corporate philanthropy in support of the arts in the United States—and increasingly worldwide—is widely accepted and even heavily relied upon. To understand how today’s society has come to expect such giving, one must look to the development of corporate philanthropy and its early roots in the charitable practices of private individuals during the nineteenth century. Prior to 1750, it was older European models of philanthropy brought over by colonists that greatly influenced early charitable activities in the United States. In the second half of the eighteenth century, religious congregations were the primary sources of philanthropic giving, along with educational institutions, local almshouses, fraternal organizations, clubs, and voluntary associations. The decades between 1800 and 1860 saw a rise in private philanthropic institutions and charitable trusts in the Northeast and upper Midwest, a region that had favorable tax laws for private initiatives. These entities, dedicated to such causes as emancipation or care for the blind and deaf, were funded by and resided on land donated by wealthy merchants.

Professional and commercial elites in the latter part of the nineteenth century established numerous medical school hospitals, like Massachusetts General Hospital, as charitable institutions. During the Civil War, these groups secured private funding and oversight of the United States Sanitary Commission, which sought higher standards of health and hygiene for battlefield hospitals and encampments. As historian Peter Dobkin Hall explains, “their unsentimental approach to suffering, which included focusing on its causes rather than its alleviation, would give rise to a

revolution in American social welfare, under the banners of ‘charity organization’ and ‘scientific philanthropy.’”<sup>113</sup> Between the Civil War and World War I, private research institutions and universities in the United States—such as Harvard, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, the University of Chicago, and Stanford—became more and more aligned with corporations as they received a large amounts of funding from such entities and, in the process, amassed intellectual, financial, human, and institutional capital. These private research institutions were, as Dobkin Hall argues, “The most important locus of basic research in the social, life and physical sciences and the chief source of the experts, professionals and executives that would be the distinguishing feature of twentieth-century life.”<sup>114</sup>

Corporate philanthropy prior to the twentieth century was overwhelmingly in support of causes that directly benefited a company and its employees as charitable contributions by corporations were seen as taking away profits that legally belonged to stockholders. This perception was upheld by federal law even into the early twentieth century, as evidenced by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dodge v. Ford Motor Company* (1919), which stated, “a business corporation is organized and carried on primarily for the profit of the stockholders. ...It is not within the lawful powers of a corporation to share and conduct a company’s affairs for the merely incidental benefit

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<sup>113</sup> Peter Dobkin Hall, “A Historical Overview of Philanthropy, Voluntary Associations, and Nonprofit Organizations in the United States, 1600-2000,” in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook – Second Edition*, eds. Richard Steinberg and Walter W. Powell (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 42. Born from this approach is one of the earliest modern foundations, the Russell Sage Foundation, established in 1907 by Sage’s widow, Margaret Olivia Sage, with the goal of improving social and living conditions through scientific philanthropy. It served as a precursor of today’s grant making foundations and sought to solve social problems through research to understand its root causes versus treating only the symptoms.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

of shareholders and for the primary purpose of benefiting others.” In lieu of broad philanthropic support, a more common form of corporate philanthropy following the Civil War was partnerships between companies and charities that were clearly advantageous to the companies’ bottom line, such as that between the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and railroad companies. Providing lodging and meeting spaces for its workers, the YMCA received large donations from railroad companies to construct buildings in the 1870s and 1880s, such as Cornelius Vanderbilt’s \$250,000 gift in 1888. Furthermore, the YMCA was the first organization to champion fundraising from businesses in place of private individuals.<sup>115</sup> A notable, yet rare, early example of corporate giving with no direct benefit to its shareholders occurred in 1875, when the R. H. Macy Company began giving annually to an orphan asylum, illustrating what Carroll calls “a social sensitivity on the part of its management” that shows “a sense of relationship to the community that extends beyond the walls of the company.”<sup>116</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, progressive beliefs around the societal benefits of scientific principles, empathy, and expertise were merged with the ideals of scientific management that believed increased efficiency and productivity led to

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<sup>115</sup> Benjamin J. Soskis, “The Pre- and Early History of American Corporate Philanthropy,” in *History of Corporate Responsibility Project, Working Paper No. 3* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Ethical Business Cultures, 2010), 12, accessed May 15, 2014, <http://www.cebcglobal.org/index.php?/knowledge/history-working-papers>. See also Alfred L. Thimm, *Business Ideologies in the Reform-Progressive Era, 1880-1914* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1976); Christopher J. Schmitz, *The Growth of Big Business in the United States and Western Europe, 1850-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1910* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973); and Louis Galambos and Barbara Barrow Spence, *The Public Image of Big Business in America, 1880-1940: A Quantitative Study in Social Change* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

<sup>116</sup> Carroll, “A History of Corporate Social Responsibility,” 22.



increased profitability. This coupling of principals created a climate welcoming to welfare capitalist programs such as those implemented in department stores during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries offering housing, education, training programs, and etiquette classes to their employees.<sup>117</sup> These reforms were believed to improve employee productivity, morale, and retention, though—equally as important—it also served as positive publicity. The National Cash Register Company formulated a well-known, successful example of this kind of corporate paternalism at the turn of the century when president and founder John Patterson attempted to improve working conditions and employee satisfaction through the introduction of numerous amenities, including a library, clubhouse, calisthenics classes, kindergartens, reduced-cost meals in the company dining room, gardens, and educational classes of all kinds.<sup>118</sup>

The application of welfare capitalism on a much larger scale, but with varying degrees of success, can be found in the construction of company towns, one of the earliest being the infamous Pullman experiment of 1893. George M. Pullman, founder of the Pullman Palace Car Company, established the town of Pullman in south Chicago and provided employees with everything to fulfill their needs: housing, parks, schools, churches, and other infrastructural elements that would improve their living conditions and overall quality of life. Yet when workers went on strike following wage cuts due to the Panic of 1893–94, Pullman’s refusal to negotiate and the wholesale firing of employees caused waves of sympathy strikes to take place around

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<sup>117</sup> See Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers and Customers in American Department Stores 1890-1940* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

<sup>118</sup> Soskis, “The Pre- and Early History of American Corporate Philanthropy,” 11.

Chicago, suggesting that Pullman's benevolence did little to garner good will from employees. It is important to remember that while both examples illustrate an investment by corporations in their employees' overall well-being, these programs were not purely altruistic, as they ultimately contributed to the bottom line of the corporations and therefore were sanctioned by shareholders.

At the close of the nineteenth century, in light of laws restricting corporate giving and negative public opinion around the use of shareholder profits for peripheral charitable causes, there emerged a movement wherein prosperous businessmen felt they had an ethical responsibility to return a portion of their wealth back to the larger community. Advocating a trustee or stewardship model of charitable giving and investment, American capitalists used their private fortunes—and not the direct profits of their companies—to establish numerous foundations and charitable institutions. As Benjamin J. Soskis explains, “By the dictates of stewardship, men could not claim ultimate ownership over their possessions, but held them only as trustees for some higher authority—in the concept's Protestant manifestations, God, and in its secular version, a broadly defined public. . . . Stewardship provided a bridge between the imperatives of service and self-interest.”<sup>119</sup>

The two foremost industrialists who followed this stewardship model were steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, who followed the secular version of this model, and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., of Standard Oil, who was more aligned with the Protestant version of the ethic. In his two-part essay published in the *North American Review* in

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<sup>119</sup> Soskis, “The Pre- and Early History of American Corporate Philanthropy,” 4.

1889, titled “Wealth” and “The Best Fields for Philanthropy,” Carnegie put forth the moral imperative of responsible stewardship to his fellow millionaires. He explained that:

The best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise—parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste; and public institutions of various kinds, which will improve the general condition of the people—in this manner returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.<sup>120</sup>

In his lifetime Carnegie not only established twenty-three nonprofit foundations worldwide but also funded, through grants, the construction of over 2,500 libraries across the globe. Rockefeller followed suit, founding numerous philanthropic institutions dedicated to education, medicine, and religion, including the General Education Board (1903) and the Rockefeller Foundation (1913), which was dedicated to the betterment of mankind.<sup>121</sup> The philanthropic foundations created by Rockefeller and Carnegie were, over time, largely seen as being distinct from their respective corporations and their profits as these entities were funded by personal fortunes—albeit fortunes generated by their prosperous corporations.

However, the establishment of organizations dedicated to educational, religious, and charitable causes at this time was not coincidental. With the passage of the War Income Tax Revenue Act in 1917, these were exactly the categories of

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<sup>120</sup> The first published was Andrew Carnegie, “Wealth,” *North American Review* 148, no. 391 (June 1889): 653–65, and the second was Andrew Carnegie, “The Best Fields for Philanthropy,” *North American Review* 149, no. 397 (December 1889): 682–99.

<sup>121</sup> The Rockefeller Foundation originally came under great scrutiny between 1910 and 1913, as many saw it as a foundation that functioned solely to serve the Rockefeller family’s private interests. This was amplified even more when the foundation tried to secure a charter from the government. It succeeded in 1913 with a charter from the state of New York.

institutions that became tax-exempt, granting individuals the ability to deduct charitable donations of up to fifteen percent of their net income to such organizations. Thus, the establishing of charitable foundations in the early twentieth century instantly became beneficial on many levels for wealthy philanthropists wishing to act as good citizens while also sheltering their fortunes from excessive federal taxation.

Despite corporate fear of donating profits without shareholder authorization or demonstrating the direct benefits of donations, the period during World War I saw widespread corporate giving to organizations such as the Salvation Army, YMCA and YWCA, Red Cross, Boy Scouts, and local War Chests. The Red Cross in particular received more than \$18 million in corporate donations in 1917; in 1918, the YMCA received close to \$20 million from various corporations. Donations to Community Chests, which began prior to World War I in Cleveland, Ohio, were meant to democratize corporate giving as it funneled money from annual drives into one fund overseen by local civic leaders who divided the monies between appropriate local causes.<sup>122</sup> Community Chest donations thus satisfied the need for a corporation to be responsible to its community while being a form of giving that would not too greatly take away from shareholder profits. In 1920, contributions to Community Chests were close to \$2.5 million, and by 1929, they had risen to \$12.9 million.<sup>123</sup> While there is little reporting data that tracked corporate contributions during the second half of the 1920s and early 1930s, there is evidence that charitable donations rose slightly in the first years of the Great Depression, as corporations gave to unemployment relief funds

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<sup>122</sup> See, for example, Pierce Williams and Frederick E. Croxton, *Corporation Contributions to Organized Community Welfare Services* (New York: Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., 1930).

<sup>123</sup> Heald, *The Social Responsibilities of Business*, 118.

and Community Chests, but this philanthropy tapered off until World War II.

The period following World War I is often categorized as an era of trusteeship management, an early form of CSR, as the ethical dealings of corporations became of growing importance to Americans and executives alike during the 1920s. Management historian Richard C. Hoffman explains that this was due to the emergence of a fully developed corporate culture that, by the end of the 1910s, was seen by the public as an authority on everything economic, political, and cultural—one that was committed to social responsibility “from a corporate rather than an individual perspective.”<sup>124</sup>

Corporations tried to reconcile the principles of the stewardship model popularized by Rockefeller and Carnegie advocating for a clear division between the aggressive pursuit of corporate profits for its shareholders at all costs and a corporation’s responsibility to generously support philanthropic causes. This led to what historians Hay and Gray have described as a time of “corporate managers taking on the responsibility for both maximizing stockholder wealth and creating and maintaining an equitable balance among other competing claims, such as claims from customers, employees, and the community.”<sup>125</sup> Upper-level executives were now motivated to contribute to the betterment of society by spending corporate profits through the corporation, not their own individual fortunes.<sup>126</sup> An example of this trustee management model is General Electric (GE) in the mid-1920s, when its chairman, Owen D. Young, and president, Gerard Swope, argued that shareholders were only

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<sup>124</sup> Hoffman, “Corporate Social Responsibility in the 1920s,” 56.

<sup>125</sup> Hay and Gray, “Social Responsibilities of Business Managers,” 135–43, cited in Carroll, “A History of Corporate Social Responsibility,” 23.

<sup>126</sup> Hoffman, “Corporate Social Responsibility in the 1920s,” 68.

one of several groups to which the corporation was responsible. Young and Swope controversially proclaimed that it was the wellbeing of the public and the company's employees that should be placed ahead of its shareholders.

Yet, the seemingly altruistic motivations for a corporation's growing awareness of philanthropy during the 1920s were not uncomplicated. Increasingly more powerful and prosperous, corporations were often criticized for unchecked growth and ever more aggressive pursuit of profits. Allegations of monopolies, market domination, and corruption became rampant as large corporations were accused of becoming soulless. The concept of the soulless corporation had its roots in the nineteenth century, as companies vied for personhood through Supreme Court cases in order to secure greater legal protection under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. First in 1819 with *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, and more significantly with *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company* in 1886, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations could in fact be legally considered a person and offered the same rights.<sup>127</sup>

During the early decades of the twentieth century, corporations—and, by extension the men in charge of them—were increasingly seen as corrupted by power and lacking in moral integrity. In the words of historian Roland Marchand, corporations at this time were “greedy and ruthless in their pursuit of profits” and “driven by a cold economic logic that defined its every decision as a money

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<sup>127</sup> See Francis N. Stites, *Private Interest & Public Gain: The Dartmouth College Case, 1819* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972); and Morton J. Horwitz, “Santa Clara Revisited: The Development of Corporate Theory,” *West Virginia Law Review* 88 (1986): 173–224.

equation.”<sup>128</sup> The unyielding drive for efficiency in production and maximization of profits created colossal, faceless corporations that were perceived as being amoral, lacking basic humanity and no longer in touch with their employees, customers, or community.<sup>129</sup> In order to counter such accusations, corporations engaged in greater amounts of publically visible philanthropy and embarked upon carefully crafted advertising campaigns, which served to legitimize their activities and generate a positive public image. Arthur W. Page, vice president and director of AT&T from 1927 to 1946, embodied early CSR sentiments in his editorials published in the monthly magazine *The World's Work* from 1913 to 1927.<sup>130</sup> In what came to be known as the Page Principles, he outlined the need for AT&T to “tell the truth, prove it with action, listen to the customer, manage for tomorrow, conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it, realize a company’s true character is expressed by its people, and remain calm, patient and good-humored.”<sup>131</sup> This good corporate

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<sup>128</sup> Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 8. As Dobkin Hall has also astutely observed of this interwar period, “Philanthropically supported institutions would play key roles in both moderating the excesses of capitalism and at the same time expanding its reach into every aspect of public and private life.” Dobkin Hall, “A Historical Overview of Philanthropy,” 48.

<sup>129</sup> Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 9.

<sup>130</sup> See David Remund, “*The World's Work*: Arthur W. Page and the Movement towards Social Responsibility in Corporate Communications in the United States, 1913-1927” (paper presented at the First International History of Public Relations Conference, Bournemouth, England, July 8, 2010).

<sup>131</sup> The Page Principals, in full, are: “Tell the truth. Let the public know what’s happening and provide an accurate picture of the company’s character, ideals and practices. Prove it with action. Public perception of an organization is determined 90 percent by what it does and 10 percent by what it says. Listen to the customer. To serve the company well, understand what the public wants and needs. Keep top decision makers and other employees informed about public reaction to company products, policies and practices. Manage for tomorrow. Anticipate public reaction and eliminate practices that create difficulties. Generate goodwill. Conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it. Corporate relations are a management function. No corporate strategy should be implemented without considering its impact on the public. The public relations professional is a policymaker capable of handling a wide range of corporate communications activities. Realize a company’s true character is expressed by its people. The strongest opinions—good or bad—about a company are shaped by the words and deeds of its employees. As a result, every employee—active or retired—is involved with public relations. It is the responsibility of corporate communications to support each employee’s

citizen mentality went hand-in-hand with Page's efforts to recuperate AT&T's public image as a monopoly through advertising campaigns that stressed its friendly nature, hometown style, and concern for its customers' wellbeing.<sup>132</sup>

The Stock Market Crash of 1929 halted the prosperity of the 1920s as well as the discourse around a corporation's responsibility to society. Regardless of their motives, many corporations were no longer able to funnel excess profits into altruistic activities and what funds were directed to philanthropy went to Community Chests. Yet the criticism of corporations' soullessness only intensified as they were blamed for their failure to protect people's investments and jobs in the wake of 1929. In response, those corporations that weathered the Great Depression needed to swiftly turn public opinion in their favor by presenting themselves as benevolent, altruistic, and generous to their employees and communities.

Likewise, the massive unemployment and business failures of the Great Depression were something the United States government was unqualified to handle. "President Herbert Hoover, a millionaire mining engineer, was philosophically opposed to the idea of big government," Dobkin Hall explains. "His attempts to deal with the Depression through the system of voluntary associations...proved

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capability and desire to be an honest, knowledgeable ambassador to customers, friends, shareowners and public officials. Remain calm, patient and good-humored. Lay the groundwork for public relations miracles with consistent and reasoned attention to information and contacts. This may be difficult with today's contentious 24-hour news cycles and endless number of watchdog organizations. But when a crisis arises, remember, cool heads communicate best." "The Page Principles," The Arthur W. Page Society, accessed July 1, 2014, <http://www.awpagesociety.com/about/the-page-principles>.

<sup>132</sup> For more on the discussion of AT&T's marketing strategies, see Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 48–87.



ineffective.”<sup>133</sup> When Franklin D. Roosevelt took office following Hoover, he sought to stimulate the economy through massive public works projects such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and by promoting partnerships between government and business. Roosevelt’s extensive tax reforms, while having little effect on the average citizen, were aimed at redistributing the wealth of successful Americans.

As a result of sharp increases in income and estate taxes in the 1930s, the moneyed classes were motivated to find creative ways to avoid excessive taxation. Coupled with this impetus was the Revenue Act of 1935, which allowed corporations to legally deduct charitable gifts in amounts up to five percent of their annual income. The Act’s passage was due in large part to lobbying by Community Chest officials, who stressed the need for greater corporate donations during the 1930s. Prior to this legislation, donations were considered a business expense only if there was a direct benefit to the corporation or its employees (again furthering the idea that corporate profits were the property of its shareholders and not to be distributed for other purposes, regardless of how “charitable” they were deemed to be). The combination of the 1935 Act and steep federal taxes on personal fortunes caused a second wave of individuals founding charitable institutions, such as the Ford Foundation in January of 1936, as a way to avoid taxation. While the formation of private, corporate, and community foundations continued steadily after 1935, it was in the 1950s that the

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<sup>133</sup> Peter Dobkin Hall, “Historical Perspectives on Nonprofit Organizations in the United States,” in *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, ed. Robert Herman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004), 17.

majority was established.<sup>134</sup> The surge was so great and eyed with such suspicion that from 1952 to 1969 congressional committees were set up to investigate tax loopholes within these foundations.<sup>135</sup> In 2012, benefit corporations were established in nine states as an alternative to the strict for-profit or nonprofit categories. These corporations strive to earn profits but are also astutely aware of social and environmental responsibilities, or what is more commonly known as the triple bottom line: people, profit, and planet.<sup>136</sup>

### **The Business of Collecting Art: Corporate Art Collections in the United States**

As argued earlier, the key to successful philanthropy—whether public or private—is for it to appear completely altruistic and politically neutral; any hint of it being self-serving will cause such giving to be questioned and, ultimately, negate its larger purpose. Within corporate cultural philanthropy, the tendency to establish art collections is no different. In the United States, the early roots of corporate art collections are found in the mid-nineteenth century, following trends established by private collectors and peaking in the latter half of the twentieth century. As noted earlier in this chapter, prior to World War II, corporate cultural philanthropy in the United States existed mainly as small-scale, strategic donations to cultural organizations, favored for their lack of direct involvement, and through the commissioning of art that could be easily adapted for advertising.

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<sup>134</sup> Dobkin Hall, “Historical Perspectives on Nonprofit Organizations in the United States,” 19.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> For more on Benefit Corporations, see Benefit Corporation Information Center, <http://benefitcorp.net>; and Peter Fisk, *People, Planet, Profit: How to Embrace Sustainability for Innovation and Business Growth* (London: Kogan Page, 2010).

In addition, the motivations behind establishing such a collection as well as what artworks are amassed are varied and depend on many factors, including those that are made public and those that are not. In their 2012 book, *Corporate Art Collections*, Charlotte Appleyard and James Salzmann put forth three theories as to the motivations of corporate collecting that took place after 1960 that are largely applicable to those in the first half of the century and still hold true today: as a means of enhancing office environments for the benefit of employees and clients; as an extension of a corporate identity or brand; or as a form of cultural philanthropy.<sup>137</sup> As anticipated, there are often multiple factors behind the drive to collect and a multi-authored 2007 article on Deutsche Bank's art collection offered ten possible motivations that overlap in some ways with Appleyard and Salzmann. These include: investment opportunities; a philanthropic outlet; contributing to a corporate identity, culture, or brand; a statement about the owners; collecting based on the chief executive officer's interests; enhancing the workplace or an extension of corporate hospitality; or impressing clients and signaling the corporation's knowledge of collecting.<sup>138</sup> Through interviews with Deutsche Bank executives and managers, the five authors discovered that its collection, one of the largest in the world, most often functioned in service of projecting the company's core values found in their corporate identity of diversity, creativity, and modernity. Secondary functions were its use as a high-profile marketing and branding tool and its perceived fostering of a dynamic and

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<sup>137</sup> Charlotte Appleyard and James Salzmann, *Corporate Art Collections: A Handbook to Corporate Buying* (Farnham, UK: Lund Humphries, 2012).

<sup>138</sup> Rita Kottasz, Roger Bennett, Sharmila Savani, Wendy Mousley, and Rehnuma Ali-Choudhury, "The Role of the Corporate Art Collection in Corporate Identity Management: The Case of Deutsche Bank," *International Journal of Arts Management* 10, no. 1 (2007): 19–31.

imaginative workplace through employees' exposure to contemporary art. The collection was less thought of as—or not explicitly identified as—an investment, office enhancement, altruistic act, or extension of C-level executives' tastes in art. While this case study highlights the views of high-level employees at one particular company, it fails to include the perspectives of non-managers and clients and neglects to analyze a variety of corporate collections to see if these factors are applicable across businesses. By applying this context of contemporary examinations around the motivations behind corporate art collecting to earlier examples, one can gain a better understanding of the complexity surrounding its function.

Nineteenth-century corporate art collections in the United States developed alongside private collections. While rare for the time, these early corporate collections were frequently guided by the aesthetic tastes of the founder or chief executive officer (CEO) and often included historical artifacts related to the business.<sup>139</sup> Two of the oldest corporate collections in the United States that were built around artifacts directly related to their companies' purpose include the Insurance Company of North America (today the CIGNA Corporation) of Philadelphia and the Baltimore & Ohio

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<sup>139</sup> Chester Garfield Fisher and Roy Eddleman are two notable examples of corporate collections that come from the field of chemistry and have their roots in the private collections of Albert C. Barnes (the A. C. Barnes Company and the Barnes Foundation) and Alfred R. Bader (the Aldrich Chemical Company and Sigma-Aldrich). Chester Garfield Fisher founded the Pittsburgh-based Fisher Scientific Company in 1902 and began collecting works of art and artifacts related to the themes of chemistry and alchemy as early as the 1920s. Fisher felt collecting would give the field a sense of historical weight and he included reproductions of his artworks in company catalogs and sold prints to laboratories. Following his death in 1965, the collection was on view at the company's headquarters until 2000 when it was donated to the Chemical Heritage Foundation. Roy Eddleman, founder of Spectrum Laboratories, was inspired by the artwork in Fisher's laboratory supply catalogs and modeled his own collection of chemistry-themed Old Master paintings that began in the 1960s after that of Fisher's and Bader's. In 2002, Eddleman's collection was also donated to the Chemical Heritage Foundation. One can still today order "museum quality reproductions" of works in the Eddleman collection for nine dollars each from Spectrum Laboratories. See "The Eddleman Alchemical Art Collection," Spectrum Laboratories, Inc., accessed February 22, 2014, <http://eu.spectrumlabs.com/generic/art.html>.

Railroad of Baltimore. The Insurance Company of North America opened in 1792 as a fire and marine insurer and began collecting firefighting- and maritime-related works of art and artifacts as early as the 1870 to display in its offices.<sup>140</sup> This collection grew throughout the twentieth century and eventually was housed in the CIGNA Museum & Art Collection. In 1936, the Insurance Company of North America loaned firefighting objects for an exhibition in the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building. Beginning in 2004, the bulk of the collection was auctioned through Sotheby's or donated to museums; what remains of the collection stayed in their corporate offices.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was founded in 1827. Its collection began with an exhibition of historical railway cars and locomotives at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.<sup>141</sup> Like the Insurance Company of North America, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's collection expanded until the Great Depression, when it was put into storage. In 1953, it returned to public view as the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum, which became an entity independent from its corporate parent in 1990. The Union Pacific Railroad followed the precedent set by the Baltimore & Ohio

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<sup>140</sup> See Thomas Harrison Montgomery, *A History of the Insurance Company of North America of Philadelphia: The Oldest Fire and Marine Insurance Company in America* (Philadelphia: Press of Review Publishing and Printing Company, 1885); and M. J. McCosker, *The Historical Collection of the Insurance Company of North America* (Philadelphia: Insurance Company of North America, 1945). The company commissioned sculptor Claudius Francis LeGrand in 1796 to create a lead eagle-themed fire mark for homes that would signify that the properties were insured against fire damage. LeGrand was paid \$512 for 256 fire marks. The CIGNA collection was sold through Sotheby's in 2004 and in 2005 the company donated 5,000 objects to various museums, including the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Wadsworth Hall in Hartford, CT, and Fireman's Hall in Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>141</sup> See Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, *The Catalogue of the Centenary Exhibition of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 1827-1927* (Baltimore: Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 1927); and Edward Hungerford, *The Story of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 1827-1927* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928).

Railroad, opening the Union Pacific Railroad Museum in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1921 after discovering pieces of Abraham Lincoln's silverware in its corporate vaults.<sup>142</sup>

Corporate museums like the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's became increasingly popular in the early decades of the twentieth century, with numerous examples opening to the public: Rudolph Wurlitzer Company's collection of works on paper related to musical themes that was hung throughout its headquarters in 1892; historic horse-drawn carriages and early examples of automobiles that were shown by the Studebaker Brothers Corporation in 1908; American Telephone & Telegraph Company's small museum on the subject of historical telephones and equipment that opened in 1913; Seamen's Bank for Savings' 1928 lobby display of children's penny banks; and Henry Ford's collection of Industrial Revolution artifacts, which were installed in a dedicated museum in 1929.<sup>143</sup> During the interwar period, corporate collecting in the United States was modest as corporations opted to commission artists for works that could be featured in advertising or marketing campaigns, as will be discussed below. When collecting did take place, it was still quasi-private and often revolved around the interests of the CEO, like Pierre S. du Pont's collection of art comprised of works by multiple generations of Wyeths and artists from the Brandywine Valley School.<sup>144</sup> An extension of this mentality exists today in Wells

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<sup>142</sup> Joel Seligson, "Corporate Culture? One Part Education, One Part Sales: This is the Corporate Museum," *Museum* (2010): 38.

<sup>143</sup> Victor Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 6–7.

<sup>144</sup> Joanna L. Arat, *Hotel du Pont* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 8. See also Nancy E. Allyn, *Four Decades: The Hotel du Pont Collection* (Wilmington, DE: Delaware Art Museum, 1982).

Fargo Bank's eleven History Museums showcasing local history as it relates to the company.<sup>145</sup>

A notable exception to standard corporate collecting activities during this interwar period is International Business Machines (IBM).<sup>146</sup> Its president, Thomas J. Watson, initiated the IBM corporate collection in 1937 with the goal of acquiring a painting from each of the seventy-nine countries in which IBM operated. Selected by local juries, the amassed collections were displayed at the New York and San Francisco World's Fair in 1939. The following year, in order to support domestic artists, IBM moved to collect a work from each state by contemporary American painters. Aware that the public could view this activity with distrust, and internally motivated by fears concerning public image, Watson "insisted that IBM's patronage was dedicated to the edification and enjoyment of employees and the public, and that it reflected the corporation's sense of cultural responsibility."<sup>147</sup> He even went so far as to ban the use of any collected work in advertising campaigns or the reselling of any pieces (which didn't happen until the corporation auctioned off its collection in 1995).<sup>148</sup>

Corporate collecting developed in full force after World War II as the

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<sup>145</sup> Wells Fargo had exhibited a stagecoach and other artifacts related to its early banking practices at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. In the 1930s, it opened a museum in San Francisco on the site of its first bank, which dated back to 1852. For more, see "Wells Fargo History Museums," Wells Fargo Bank N.A., accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.wellsfargohistory.com/museums>.

<sup>146</sup> For more, see *Contemporary Art of 79 Countries: A Collection of Paintings* (New York: International Business Machines Corporation, 1939); Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 273–74; and Jacobson, *Art for Work*, 10–13.

<sup>147</sup> Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 274.

<sup>148</sup> See Annalyn Swan, "The Rise and Fall of Lobby Art," *New York Magazine*, May 29, 1995, 44–48.

commissioning of fine art for advertising fell out of favor.<sup>149</sup> In 1959, David Rockefeller, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank (today JPMorgan Chase), in collaboration with the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and the Art Advisory Committee, made Chase one of the first corporate entities to engage in widespread collecting for the purposes of including artwork throughout the bank's New York headquarters. With Rockefeller leading the impetus to begin establishing corporate art collection *en masse* during the 1960s, collecting became an increasingly popular form of cultural philanthropy, as it proved to be an excellent tool to express corporate identity, enhance office space environments, and incorporate into marketing campaigns. Corporate art collections proved to be so popular throughout this era that by 1985, nine hundred American corporations and two-thirds of all Fortune 500 companies had established art collections. Despite the economic downturn of the early twenty-first century and the subsequent liquidation of many holdings, there are still over eight hundred international corporations with art collections.<sup>150</sup>

### **Engaging Advertising: Artists and Corporate Commissions**

Occupying a contested space between fine and commercial art are, on one hand, the twentieth-century artists who worked as commercial illustrators, such as N.C.

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<sup>149</sup> Rosanne Martorella estimates that ninety percent of current corporate collections were established after World War II, eighty percent of which were founded after 1960. See Martorella, *Corporate Art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 53.

<sup>150</sup> Judith Jedlicka, president of the Business Committee for the Arts Inc., as quoted in Randall Hackley, "Corporations Find Art collections Add Extra Dimension to Workplace," *The St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, December 23, 1985, 3B. By 1995, this number had fallen to about half of all Fortune 500 companies; see Matthew D. Chmielewski, "Successful Corporate Art Collections: Two Case Studies" (Master's thesis, University of Akron, Ohio, 2010), 4. See also *International Directory of Corporate Art Collections* (Tampa, FL: International Art Alliance, 2013).



Wyeth, Norman Rockwell, Edwin Austin Abbey, Rockwell Kent, Frank Schoonover, and Howard Pyle and, on the other, those who were commissioned to produce work for advertising, such as Maxfield Parrish, Georgia O’Keeffe, Edward Steichen, and Thomas Hart Benton. Artists sought out these commissions for a number of reasons ranging from a desire to bring fine art to a larger, popular audience to a need for a steady paycheck. As scholars such as Michele H. Bogart and Roland Marchand have argued, the late nineteenth century marked the beginning of professional illustrating as an occupation that emerged alongside poster designing, yet both were consistently marginalized by the realm of fine art. Likewise, fine artists who were commissioned to create work or have their work appropriated for advertising were often criticized by peers.<sup>151</sup> The moral debate around art as advertising centered around questions of the instrumentalizing nature of such imagery, the autonomy of the artist, and the commodification of art in general. Bogart and Marchand argue that the distancing of commercial art from fine art in the early twentieth century was achieved through ascribing the term “illustration” to such legible and anecdotal work, whereas true fine art used in advertising was instead created not by illustrators but “art-artists,” a term popular in the 1920s for artists who had complete creative freedom and autonomy.<sup>152</sup> The Philadelphia-based advertising firm N. W. Ayer & Sons popularized the commissioning of modern art over incorporating modernistic illustrations in

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<sup>151</sup> Ansel Adams was criticized by fellow photographer Imogen Cunningham for “selling out” to commercial interests when, in 1969, he licensed one of his photographs for reproduction on Hills Brothers Coffee cans. Following the criticism over his collaboration with Datsun in 1972, he refused additional corporate work. See Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: A Biography* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1996), 255.

<sup>152</sup> Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 9. See also Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, and Barter, “The New Medici.”

advertisements under the guidance of art director Charles T. Coiner.<sup>153</sup> He was responsible for a number of extremely successful campaigns that featured commissions by modern artists such as Miguel Covarrubias, A. M. Cassandre, and Georgia O’Keeffe for Dole Pineapple, Edward Steichen for Steinway Pianos, Charles Sheeler for Ford Motor Company, Leo Lionni for Du Pont Chemicals, and Irving Penn, Pablo Picasso, and Salvador Dali for De Beers Consolidated Mines. Most famously, Coiner worked under the direction of Walter Paepcke, president of the Container Corporation of America, and its art director, Egbert Jacobson, to create its series of highbrow advertisements in 1937. Two artists whose work lent itself easily to advertising were Thomas Hart Benton and Ansel Adams. Given Benton’s accessible Regionalist style, he was commissioned a number of times to create works for companies such as Abbot Laboratories, American Tobacco, and Standard Oil of New Jersey.<sup>154</sup> Ansel Adams also accepted a number of corporate commissions, including the Yosemite Park & Curry Company (1931–36), Bishop National Bank of Hawai’i (today First Hawaiian Bank, 1957), and Hills Brothers Coffee (1969).<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> See, for example, the commissioned advertisements for Cream of Wheat in David Stivers, *The Nabisco Brand Collection of Cream of Wheat Advertising Art* (San Diego, CA: Collectors’ Showcase, 1986). For more on N.C. Wyeth, see Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 56–58. For more on the commissions of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway, see Keith L. Bryant, Jr., “The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway and the Development of the Taos and Santa Fe Art Colonies,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1978): 437–54; *Standing Rainbows: Railroad Promotion of Art, the West and its Native People: A Special Exhibition of Paintings from the Collection of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway* (Topeka, KS: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1981); and Sandra D’Emilio and Suzan Campbell, *Visions and Visionaries: The Art and Artists of the Santa Fe Railway* (Layton, UT: Gibbs-Smith, 1991).

<sup>154</sup> See Erika L. Doss, “Regionalists in Hollywood: Painting, Film, and Patronage, 1925–1945” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1985); and Erika L. Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>155</sup> Beginning in 1931, the Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YP&CC) commissioned Adams to photograph the park, and in 1936 the company published the book *The Four Seasons in Yosemite: A*

In addition to advertisements, magazines would often hire well-known artists to create works for their covers, such as *Fortune* magazine's commissioning of Antonio Petruccelli, Diego Rivera, Thomas Benrimo, Joseph Binder, and Charles Sheeler.<sup>156</sup> The second half of the twentieth century also saw the rise of partnerships or collaborations with artists that allowed for corporations to still stipulate the desired outcome of the final work yet allowed the artist to keep some degree of autonomous control. Examples of these collaborations, often called limited editions in order to garner more sales and publicity, include the seventeen Art Cars commissioned by BMW between 1975 and 2010 with designs by Alexander Calder, Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, and Olafur Eliasson or the five hundred and fifty artists commissioned by Absolut Vodka to create artwork for advertisements from 1986 to 2004.<sup>157</sup>

## Conclusion

Numerous factors contribute to the complexity of the history of corporate art commissions in the United States, including the shifting nature of relationships

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*Photographic Story of Yosemite's Spectacular Scenery* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1936), without Adams's permission or knowledge. Adams had to take YP&CC to court for his missing royalties and the case was settled out-of-court in 1939 for a reported \$500. In 1957, Ansel Adams visited Hawaii on a photographic commission for the Bishop National Bank of Hawaii (today First Hawaiian Bank). For more on this commission, see Lauren Walton, "American Made: Ansel Adams and the Bishop National Bank's 'The Islands of Hawaii'" (Master's thesis, University of Connecticut, 2012). Hill Brothers Coffee purchased the rights from Adams in 1969 to reproduce his *Winter Morning, Yosemite Valley* (1940) on its 3-pound coffee cans.

<sup>156</sup> See Daniel Okrent, *Fortune: The Art of Covering Business* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Publishing, 1999), and "An Unsung American Illustrator: Works by Antonio Petruccelli," *Society of Illustrators*, October 16, 2012–December 1, 2012. Another commission for Bourke-White was in 1936 when she was sent to Brazil by the American Can Company to photograph its coffee industry for what would become a small publication containing twelve prints, Margaret Bourke-White, *Coffee Through the Camera's Lens* (New York: American Can Company, 1936).

<sup>157</sup> For more on the BMW Art Car, see <http://www.bmwartcarcollection.com>. The Absolut art collection is at the Spritmuseum in Stockholm, Sweden.

between artist and corporation; the growing importance to corporations of collecting and commissioning art; the rise of the notion of corporate social responsibility; and the changing financial nature of cultural patronage for corporations. While early examples of corporate patronage were concentrated within the advertising realm of illustration as well as acutely focused corporate collections, this patronage shifted in the 1920s and 1930s to commissioning site-specific murals for newly built corporate headquarters and acquiring artworks for advertising campaigns. Following World War II, spearheaded by David Rockefeller and Chase Manhattan Bank, corporations turned from mural commissions to collecting art that could be more readily adapted to the politicized goals of a corporation.

The sheer range and scale of corporate patronage reveals how intertwined American corporations have always been with the arts. The relationships between artists, cultural institutions, and corporations are, by their very nature, complex, and do not easily fit within traditional definitions of patron and artist. Neither can this kind of patronage be characterized, for either party, as being purely positive or negative—oftentimes artists enter into these partnerships willingly, while others are hesitant; some actively seek commissions as a steady source of income, others out of sheer desperation; some are criticized by peers, while others are praised for bringing high art to the masses; and if some corporate intentions may be clear and honorable, others are calculated and disingenuous. It is precisely these complexities and contradictions that serve to contextualize the corporate cultural commissions found in Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s that appear in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2: Power Personified: The Edison and Title Guarantee Buildings

*The growing vogue for mural decoration in public buildings in Southern California is a gratifying indication of the aesthetic advancement of its people. No great mental capacity is required for an appreciation of the general run of 'pretty' easel pictures. ...With wall decorations the situation is different. ...This penchant for utilizing symbolism and establishing concealed implications makes the mural a complex art form, not immediately stimulating to the ordinary observer. But by the same token it becomes one of the finest media for artistic expression. That murals have won and are winning such popularity in this region can be regarded only as an indication of an increased sensitivity to their intrinsic merits.*<sup>158</sup>

—“The Art of Mural Painting in California,” *Touring Topics*, March 1930

As a result of the economic boom of the 1920s, office buildings in 1930 occupied thirty percent of the land in downtown Los Angeles.<sup>159</sup> In that same year, as the quote above demonstrates, there was great excitement at the increase of sophisticated public murals that went beyond the decorative because they conveyed substantial—if sometimes “hidden”—meaning and pointed to an increased cultural awareness around public space.<sup>160</sup> *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier expressed the same optimism in June 1929 when he observed that “All the arts connected with building in Los Angeles are experiencing a new thrill of mutual activity” as “important new buildings are planned, architects are turning more and

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<sup>158</sup> “The Art of Mural Painting in California,” *Touring Topics*, March 1930, n.p.

<sup>159</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 19. In 1890 office buildings made up only five percent.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

more to the sculptor and mural painter” for commissions.<sup>161</sup> Following the success of the numerous corporate art commissions undertaken during the late 1920s, a number of office buildings with large-scale artistic programs were already in progress in downtown Los Angeles when the stock market crashed in October 1929. This chapter will examine the corporate headquarters for the electrical utility company Southern California Edison and the title insurance company Title Guarantee and Trust (figs. 1 and 2).<sup>162</sup>

Both buildings opened in 1931 and therefore warrant historical comparison to each other. These case studies offer examples of how corporations, large and small alike, set aside significant budgets and dedicated highly visible lobby space to mural commissions. Such cultural patronage in the early years of the Great Depression was used strategically to shape public opinion and advocate for the place of these businesses in Los Angeles’s economic future. Furthermore, the commissions illustrate how the city and these corporations grounded themselves in history—especially at a time when Los Angeles was considered to be a city without much of a past. These buildings also serve to mark the transition from the overly opulent use of Art Deco architecture found in the 1920s to the more reserved, streamlined Moderne style of the 1930s. However, some Art Deco flourishes, like the use of colorful marble, intricately designed elevator doors, and superfluous exterior ornament, conveyed a fiscal confidence and persisted despite the increasingly bleak economy. Lastly, both

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<sup>161</sup> Arthur Millier, “Arts Working Together,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1929, 18.

<sup>162</sup> The Edison Building is located at 601 West Fifth Street. The contractor was the P. J. Walker Construction Company. The Title Guarantee Building is located at 401 West Fifth Street. The contractors were the P. J. Walker Construction Company with the Gladding, McBean & Company.

corporations offered employees, clients, and tenants, as in the case of the Title Guarantee Building, attractive amenities and a prime location to secure their patronage.

Corporations, especially those with direct relationships to the general public, need to strike a tenuous balance, appearing to be servants of the public good but also keeping their financial interests close at hand. The activities of Southern California Edison (Edison) and Title Guarantee and Trust (Title Guarantee) illustrate this balancing act. As Edison entered into the early years of the Great Depression, it needed to recuperate its public image, given the mounting suspicion of its regional monopoly and national criticism of private utilities. At the same time, Edison continued to aggressively pursue maximum profit and market domination. Its strategy was twofold; it first attempted to portray itself as a self-described “Home Company” committed to enhancing the lives of its customers through electricity that was owned by a “family” of stockholders it termed as “typical citizens of this great community.”<sup>163</sup> The second element of the company’s strategy was to construct a lavish, state-of-the-art corporate headquarters that showcased Edison’s philanthropic side through the inclusion of multiple art commissions for the benefit of its employees, customers, and the general public. After it opened to the public on March 20, 1931, visiting the Edison Building’s lobby became an educational experience as viewers were invited to learn not only about the robust history of Edison and the success of its hydroelectric power, but also about the company’s civic investment in the continuing cultural and economic success of Los Angeles. This version of a civic narrative

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<sup>163</sup> “A New Home for a Home Company,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1931, 17.

ultimately reinforced Edison's self-constructed image as a benevolent servant to the public and was an attempt to alleviate Depression-era criticism of privately owned utilities and corporate greed.

Less than three months after the completion of the Edison Building, Title Guarantee invited the general public and local "financiers, business men, civic leaders and clubwomen" to celebrate the formal opening of its newly constructed corporate headquarters, the Title Guarantee Building, on June 14 and 15 of 1931.<sup>164</sup> Title Guarantee, like Edison, also attempted to boost sales, compete with rival companies, and burnish its public profile by using the cultural capital accrued around its ultra-modern corporate headquarters, which showcased a large-scale mural commission. Capitalizing on the publicity generated by its modern building and its six-panel mural commission by Hugo Ballin, Title Guarantee presented itself as a confident, prosperous, and economically-sound company that would withstand the recession with ease.<sup>165</sup> Yet unlike the Edison Building, which was occupied exclusively by the company, Title Guarantee inhabited only half its approximately 111,000-square-foot building, leaving the rest to be leased by other commercial tenants—an extremely challenging task in 1931.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the promotion of the building's location and its modern amenities, including its lobby murals, coupled with the outward appearance of a financially stable company, were central strategies to how Title Guarantee attempted to endure the Great Depression. Ballin's lobby murals were key to this program; they

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<sup>164</sup> "Title Company Opens Building," *Los Angeles Examiner*, June 15, 1931, Finance Section II 8.

<sup>165</sup> "Title Guarantee Building Sold to Equitable Life for \$1,000,000," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1943, A.

<sup>166</sup> There are some newspaper reports that mention the sixth floor of the Edison Building was leased out to other electrical industry businesses, but no evidence supporting this has been found to date.



functioned to create an educational and aesthetic space that set the company apart from its rivals and signaled that it was a cultural taste maker. Framed as a philanthropic cultural contribution to the city, the mural cycle offered a corporate-friendly reading of Los Angeles history and reinforced the dominant framing of the region's "Spanish Fantasy Past" —the idea that the progressive and modern Los Angeles was born not from a Mexican past, but a romanticized Spanish one.<sup>167</sup>

### **The Place of Murals in Los Angeles Prior to 1930**

In order to understand the context of the Edison and Title Guarantee commissions, one must begin with an understanding of both the history of mural painting and corporate art commissions in Los Angeles prior to 1930 and its emerging art scene which offers an examination of how local art associations, art institutes, collectors, and commercial spaces offered alternative exhibition spaces that the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art rarely provided.

The history of murals in California is a long one that has its roots in the 1910s. The murals found at the Panama Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco (1915), the Panama California Exposition in San Diego (1915), and the State Capitol Building in Sacramento (1913–15) served to introduce many of the state's residents to their first examples of large-scale, civically orientated murals. In the late 1920s, Daniel Sayre Groesbeck's courthouse murals, which depict the history of Santa

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<sup>167</sup> Carey McWilliams coined the concept of a "Spanish Fantasy Past"—a nostalgic celebration of the Spanish Mission period of California's history that was popularized through Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* in 1884 and the Mission Revival mania of the 1890s through the 1910s—in his book *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. See also Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*.

Barbara over 6,400 square feet, helped to shape expectations in California that public art should have content related to a site's historical memory. Furthermore, it reinforced the connection between civic spaces, murals, and education as these ideas functioned as extensions of earlier Progressive Era beliefs that championed the experience of art and moments of learning in the everyday. These associations, by extension, contributed to ideas around what was proper for murals found outside of civically orientated spaces. In essence, murals with didactic subject matter that contributed to a viewer's sense of local history and contributed to notions of civic pride were found within public spaces traditionally associated with local government and the municipal, such as libraries, courthouses, and city halls. By contrast, murals that were found in commercial spaces—hotels, restaurants, banks, movie theaters—did not have to confirm to the same standards and could be less instructive and more decorative.

In discussions around the patronage of the arts of any kind, the concept of decorum arises and the subject matter and style of a mural being dictated by its public or private setting is an embodiment of just that. E. H. Gombrich defined decorum as that which was “fitting” to a given situation—a simple example being an image of Vulcan placed over a fireplace or water nymphs appearing on a fountain.<sup>168</sup> Within the context of art patronage, the theory of decorum involved an artist understanding and giving priority to those elements that are appropriate for the specific commission, what

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<sup>168</sup> E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance II* (New York: Phaidon, 1972), 7.

Gombrich explains as the “principal of intersection.”<sup>169</sup> In following this, an artist would successfully fulfill the requirements of the commission, thus satisfying the patron and producing a work that is decorous. The finished product, by virtue of it being proper, very rarely gives offense or is displeasing. Despite this, Gombrich does concede that difficulties may arise when an “artist’s creative bent” is taken into account and a symbol’s meaning is left open to interpretation, most often as the result of it being in the wrong context.<sup>170</sup> This is often found best expressed in complaints about a lack of decency, taste, and deportment.

Illustrating the public’s beliefs around decorous murals in Los Angeles can be found in the contrasting examples of its City Hall and Public Library, both located in downtown and both from 1928. When the new City Hall formally opened on May 6, 1928 an article ran in the *Los Angeles Times* written by “The Iconoclast” entitled “City Hall Has No Real Murals.”<sup>171</sup> This anonymous writer, who was most likely the newspaper’s art critic Arthur Millier, lamented the lost opportunity to include murals, what he thought could depict “some colorful story of the city’s life and growth” and would “interest the mind and touch the imagination.”<sup>172</sup> Instead, City Hall was filled with ornamental tile that he likened to “the decorations of a movie-star’s bathroom.”<sup>173</sup> In explaining the supremacy of murals over tile, he said it was “Because everyone likes a good story and when it is presented with color and when finely framed it

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<sup>169</sup> Gombrich, *Symbolic Images*, 8.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>171</sup> The Iconoclast, “City Hall Has No Real Murals,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1928, C30.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

becomes an endless source of pleasure.”<sup>174</sup> He pleads with mural painters to organize and create a company with which to lobby for commissions, much like the tile company did, but knows this will fall on deaf ears. It is interesting to note that The Iconoclast ends his article with a reference to what he felt is proper and improper for such a setting as City Hall: “the north-south corridor...is covered with those puny little decorative figures beloved of every two-by-four Italian paperhanger and decorator—the sort of thing we have become resigned to in American hotels, but by no means the sort of thing we should have expected in the grand new City Hall.”<sup>175</sup> This last comment may have been directed at the Biltmore Hotel’s 1923 ceiling murals by Giovanni Smeraldi for its Crystal Ballroom and painted in an Italian Renaissance Revival style. Comparatively, a civically orientated mural cycle that was widely celebrated was Dean Cornwell’s series, *Four Great Eras of California History*, that encircle the rotunda of the Los Angeles Public Library. Although they were painted over a five-year period, the four forty-foot-wide panels took as their subjects key moments in California’s history such as the founding of the Pueblo of Los Angeles to the building of missions—a topic well suited to a building dedicated to learning and thus an excellent expression of decorum.

A counterpoint to civic murals are those found in the buildings of the Title Insurance and Trust Company (1928), Guaranty Building and Loan Association (1928), and Bullock’s Wilshire Department Store (1929) that function as examples of the popular yet purely decorative commercial mural commissions that were

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<sup>174</sup> The Iconoclast, “City Hall Has No Real Murals,” C30.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

commonplace in 1920s. With the population boom of the 1920s, an increase in commercial construction was triggered that would lead to murals being incorporated into publically accessible spaces from the onset. These three buildings were built at the close of the decade and foreshadow the growing importance placed on the integration of murals into commercial spaces one sees in the 1930s. Built by Parkinson & Parkinson in 1928, the Title Insurance and Trust Building housed the Guaranty Building and Loan Association on the ground floor and the Title Insurance and Trust Company occupied the floors above. While the Title Insurance and Trust Company commissioned Hugo Ballin, he created only two works of art for the company. On the exterior, where a bas-relief would normally be, was a lone tile triptych—the only one ever designed by Ballin (fig. 3). Composed of allegorical figures representing Truth, Perfection, and Fidelity, the three four-by-eight polychrome tile murals complemented a colorful tile ceiling in the building’s vestibule.<sup>176</sup> The interior spaces and lobby of the Title Insurance and Trust Building also had little in the way of artistic trimmings and its sole true mural, a map of Los Angeles, also painted by Ballin, was clearly not intended for public consumption, as it was located within the executive boardroom. By contrast, the lobby of the Guaranty Building and Loan Association (the only part of the company that was public as it occupied just a small portion of the ground floor of the building) was lavishly decorated with a series of murals by Einar Petersen on the theme of *Arabian Nights*. The murals had an accompanying brochure that explained the meaning of each panel, its connection to the literary text, and the overall

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<sup>176</sup> The tile’s design was most likely by the building’s interior designer, Herman Sachs.

significance of the commission to the visitor. Arthur Millier reported in 1932 that there were additional murals in this space by Conrad Buff, Millard Sheets, and Maynard Dixon. Because they are now destroyed there is no way to verify this, however, if it is in fact true, by employing four artists to create murals, this would have been a precursor to the most impressive, coordinated mural commission of the decade—that of Bullock’s Wilshire.

When the Parkinson & Parkinson-designed Bullock’s Wilshire opened in late 1929, Olive Gray of the *Los Angeles Times* heralded it, writing, “Like a jewel of jade upon the breast of a Titan goddess, Bullock’s Wilshire gleams against the California sky. Contributing a meaningful sentence to the poem of progress, which is the Los Angeles skyline, this superb structure has a message far beyond commercialism...for this new store is the supreme expression, modern art in architecture.”<sup>177</sup> The art in which she references can be found in both the architecture and the numerous corporate art commissions found throughout the two-story department store. Because of this, it represents the largest corporate art commission to date in the city and acts as a transitory example between the corporate art commissions of the 1920s and those of the 1930s. This is due to the fact that it is the first example of a corporation commissioning numerous significant works of art for inclusion throughout its building. No longer relegated to the lobby, art by thirteen different artists including Herman Sachs, Gjura Stojana, and George Stanley, is found across various departments at Bullock’s Wilshire. Despite the sheer volume of work located at Bullock’s Wilshire, it

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<sup>177</sup> Olive Gray, “Store Weds Art to Beauty,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1929, A3.

still follows the prescription for public art within commercial settings in that it is fundamentally decorative and of little substance. Following the Stock Market Crash of 1929, decorative corporate mural commissions largely disappear and are replaced with those that have far greater meaning and relevance. This shift also signals the fact that corporations began to understand their actions around cultural philanthropy as one that was similar to a museum or private art collector.

Having a corporation take on a role similar to that of a museum by engaging with artists and even publishing educational booklets that explained the significance of the murals increasingly became commonplace as the 1930s began and was the result of problems surrounding the art department of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art. Founded in 1913, the museum was continually criticized for its uninspiring development during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>178</sup> There was a lack of curatorial vision in forging an identity that was coupled with the instability of a high curatorial staff turnover and the absence of a chief curator. With extremely rapid population growth in the first three decades of the century, Los Angeles became, in 1930, the first West Coast city to reach over a million residents. Although it had a population to rival established metropolises, however, Los Angeles was still an emerging city. It trailed far behind other major cities in establishing a respectable art museum, even though it had a vibrant arts culture. The museum's director, William A. Bryan, an ornithologist by training, "treated art as the stepsister of science and history" and tightly controlled

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<sup>178</sup> For a more expansive discussion of the development of Los Angeles's art museum and its relationship to the larger cultural scene in the city, see chapter one, "Boosters, Early Moderns, and the Artful Civic Imaginary," and chapter two, "Modernism in Public Spaces" in Schrank, *Art and the City*, 12–63.

this branch of the museum.<sup>179</sup> Consequently, it is not surprising that this department privileged exhibitions of well-worn, canonical European works of art and established, academically-trained American artists. As a result, the museum rarely ventured into the realm of what was then an emerging avant-garde scene and disregarded opportunities to acquire private collections of modern art, much less works by California artists. Ballin himself noted that this disparity persisted well into the mid-1950s, lamenting that “Los Angeles built its museum too soon. Los Angeles developed with unprecedented rush. It needs a dignified and compelling art museum. The average painting is dead enough and should not be asked to have as its bedfellows the skeletons of prehistorical [sic] bones.”<sup>180</sup> A characteristic quote, it illustrates Ballin’s use of humor and his fraught relationship with the city. Due to his many struggles in both Hollywood and the Los Angeles art world, by the time Ballin was writing this memoir he was disillusioned with the state of the arts in the city and saw the continued lack of dedicated art museum on par with Europe as disheartening. Robert Merrell Gage was also invested in the creation of a respectable art museum. In the mid-1920s as part of the Artland Club organization, he solicited support for a museum and an art collection that featured “only ‘pedigreed’ California art rather than ‘fake old masters’ or the ‘ultra-moderns.’”<sup>181</sup>

As a result of this void left by the local art museum, the cultural community in Los Angeles, as well as corporations, developed its own supporting institutions: salon-

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<sup>179</sup> Moure, “The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum,” 259.

<sup>180</sup> Hugo Ballin, *I’ll Be Damned*, undated and unpublished manuscript, 95. Box 7, folder 3, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>181</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 30.



like spaces and exhibition venues. From 1900 to 1930, over forty art clubs and associations were founded in Los Angeles, thirty-two of which were founded in the 1920s.<sup>182</sup> For example, local collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg were some of the first to open their home and collection of avant-garde art to guests and visiting European intellectuals.<sup>183</sup> Business owners quickly followed suit in the 1920s. Frank Tenney Johnson and Victor Clyde Forsythe opened in downtown the Biltmore Hotel Gallery and Salon in 1923.<sup>184</sup> Outside of downtown, the Ambassador Hotel Gallery, run by Earl Stendahl, opened in 1921 and in 1925, Stendahl partnered for a short time with Dalzell Hatfield. Jake Zeitlin's bookstore in Echo Park opened in 1926 and immediately became a well-known space for artistic and intellectual exchange. While not offering exhibition space, the Otis Art Institute and Chouinard Art Institute (opening in 1918 and 1921, respectively) functioned as centers of art making and education through the classes and lectures it offered to the public of Los Angeles. These schools also gave teaching opportunities to local artists like Barse Miller and Robert Merrell Gage. Finally, art associations, clubs, and private foundations such as the California Art Club (1909) and Barnsdall Park (1927) offered exhibition spaces and arts education to the public—many of which the artists in this dissertation were involved with. In fact, the California Art Club, although more conservative in nature, came to reside in Barnsdall Park in the Hollyhock House designed by Frank Lloyd Wright with Rudolph Schindler.

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<sup>182</sup> For more on the role and history of Los Angeles art clubs see Schrank, *Art and the City*, 12–42. See also California Art Club, “Early Los Angeles: Art Galleries, Clubs, Museums, Art Schools and Teachers,” accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.californiaartclub.org/early-los-angeles/>.

<sup>183</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 19.

<sup>184</sup> It was also known as the Biltmore Galeria Real, the Biltmore Salon, or the Biltmore Gallery.

Upon moving to Southern California in 1925, Barse Miller quickly became part of the local art scene joining both the California Water Color Society, acting as President from 1936–38, and the California Art Club, serving as Vice President in 1932.<sup>185</sup> Hugo Ballin, Conrad Buff, and Robert Merrell Gage were also members of the California Art Club and Miller may have known Gage from their time teaching classes at Chouinard Art Institute. In 1932, Miller met David Alfaro Siqueiros when he taught at Chouinard and joined Siqueiros' Bloc of Mural Painters.<sup>186</sup> This group was taught various mural techniques by Siqueiros and designed portable murals, many with political themes. The Bloc members also assisted Siqueiros in painting *Street Meeting*, his first mural in the city located on an exterior wall of Chouinard. 1932 also was the year of Miller's controversial painting, *Apparition Over Los Angeles*. In it, Miller depicts an angelic Aimee Semple McPherson floating over her iconic church in Echo Park, accompanied by bags of money and her alleged lover. McPherson quickly demanded the work be removed from public view when first shown at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, but the conservative California Art Club, seeing itself as stepping in when the museum would not, proudly displayed it in the Hollyhock House.

Robert Merrell Gage, like Miller, also very quickly immersed himself into the local art world upon moving to Los Angeles in 1923. The year after his arrival, he

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<sup>185</sup> For more on the California Water Color Society, see Janet Blake Dominik, "The California Water Color Society: Genesis of an American Style," in *American Scene Painting: California 1930s and 1940s*, eds. Ruth Westphal and Janet Blake Dominik (Irvine, CA: Westphal Publishing, 1991); and Susan M. Anderson, "Regionalism: The California View," in *Regionalism: The California View, Watercolors, 1923-1945* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1988).

<sup>186</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 47.

became a professor of sculpture at the University of Southern California, where he taught until 1958. He also taught at Chouinard Art Institute for two years, from 1928 to 1930. In addition to this, Gage was an active member of the, albeit conservative, arts community and was involved with the California Art Club (serving as its thirteenth President from 1932–33), the Painters and Sculptors of Los Angeles, and the Laguna Beach Art Association. He also served on the Sculpture Committee for the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles and was spokesman for the Artland Club—“an energetic, short-lived, and conservative organization.”<sup>187</sup> The one group that he was a part of that was decidedly not conservative was Siqueiros’ Bloc of Mural Painters.

Conrad Buff moved to Los Angeles in 1906. He was a member of the California Art Club and Painters and Sculptors of Los Angeles where Gage was also a member. During the 1920s, he increasingly became part of a circle of modernist artists and architects such as Edward Weston, Richard Neutra, and Rudolph Schindler. As John Crosse has argued, the California Art Club functioned as a unifier in the city—brining together those on either end of the modernist (Buff)/traditional (Ballin) spectrum—but also a place in which artists and architects could find potential clients.<sup>188</sup> Buff met Neutra through the Schindlers’ salons held at their Kings Road home and this led to Buff offering Neutra one of his first commissions in Los Angeles,

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<sup>187</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 30.

<sup>188</sup> John Crosse, “Richard Neutra and the California Art Club: Pathways to the Josef von Sternberg and Dudley Murphy Commissions,” *Southern California Architectural History*, 2011, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://socalarchhistory.blogspot.com/2011/05/richard-neutra-and-california-art-club.html>.

that of designing his Eagle Rock studio and garage in 1928.<sup>189</sup> In 1925, Buff joined and exhibited with the Modern Art Workers, a contemporary artists' organization led by Stanton MacDonald-Wright, which may be where he first learned to use saturated areas of color. Both shared "a desire to dispel local opposition to modern art" but Buff cautioned that this need not come at the expense of "dismantling other movements."<sup>190</sup> The respect Buff shows to existing, often conservative, artistic approaches can also be seen in his membership in a wide variety of arts organizations.

Buff's characteristic style was typically described at the time as "well-considered and... monumental [in] quality" and his striking, architectural handling of vast Western landscapes may have been influenced by his friendships with Schindler and Neutra.<sup>191</sup> While Buff's work embraced degrees of modernism in its abstraction, he remained "aloof from art styles and true to a personal vision of the world."<sup>192</sup> This approach was described by *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier as capturing the West not in "the Remington illustrative tradition, but in an architectural, decorative style of his own...[depicting] boldly massed and colored mountains in a style evolved from rapt contemplation of the Sierras and the mountains of Arizona and Utah."<sup>193</sup> In examining the language used to explain Buff's style during the 1930s, one sees the same cordial tone that was applied to the architecture of these corporate headquarters.

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<sup>189</sup> Crosse, "Richard Neutra and the California Art Club."

<sup>190</sup> South, "A Singular Vision," 54.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 52. See also Crosse, "Richard Neutra and the California Art Club."

<sup>192</sup> "Introduction," in *Conrad Buff: Artist*, ix.

<sup>193</sup> Arthur Millier, "Our Artists in Person: No. 7 – Conrad Buff," *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 1930, B20. Due to the dwindling of mural commissions in the mid-1930s, Buff transitioned into printmaking and later found success in writing and illustrating fourteen children's books with his wife, artist and former assistant curator at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, Mary Buff (née Marsh).

Often bordering on the banal, the proliferation of terms like “well-considered” and “monumental” that label Buff’s work hint at the difficulty more conservative reviewers could have had when writing about modernist work they may or may not have supported and, whether intending to or not, their approval reads as obligatory.

### **Success in Los Angeles: The Corporate Growth of Edison and Title Guarantee**

For both Edison and Title Guarantee, companies that had been founded in the mid-1890s, it was vital during the Great Depression to project economic stability and growth as well as to find new ways to attract customers by differentiating themselves from the competition. While over two hundred companies were eventually merged to create the Southern California Edison that exists today, the company’s history officially began in 1896 when the West Side Lighting Company was established to serve the city of Los Angeles.<sup>194</sup> That same year a city ordinance was passed prohibiting the majority of new overhead power lines. The executives at West Side Lighting predicted that Thomas Edison’s patented three-wire conduit technology would best comply with the new regulations. In 1897, securing its future success, it merged with the Los Angeles Edison Electric Company, who owned the regional rights to the Edison name and patents, and formed the Edison Electric Company of Los Angeles. It again changed names in 1902 to the Edison Electric Company before it became the familiar Southern California Edison Company in 1909. When Edison purchased Henry Huntington’s Pacific Light and Power Corporation in 1917, along

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<sup>194</sup> One can trace an even earlier beginning to the company when in 1894 Holt & Knapps and Electric Light Works merged to become the Los Angeles Edison Electric Company.

with two other acquisitions, it effectively doubled its assets and properties, making the power company the fifth largest in the United States, serving 1.25 million customers in over one hundred communities.<sup>195</sup> Over the next fifteen years, Edison invested heavily in establishing new plants to respond to the region's increasing residential and commercial demand for electricity, reaching over three million customers in 1931 and becoming the third largest in the country.<sup>196</sup> Given the rapid growth and financial success of the company during the 1920s, Edison soon overwhelmed its downtown offices in the Million Dollar Theater Building (fig. 4). In April of 1929—six months prior to the Stock Market Crash—it announced plans to build its multi-million dollar corporate headquarters five blocks away on the corner of Fifth Street and Grand Avenue. Remarkably, the financial collapse did little to deter construction and the lavish building designed by Allison & Allison continued as planned.<sup>197</sup> When the building opened, Edison served ninety-nine percent of customers in its territory, remarkable when it was reported that only seventy-two percent of homes and ten percent of farms had electricity.<sup>198</sup> Yet the realities of the Depression were real as its net earnings dropped from \$27.1 million in 1929 to \$18.4 million in 1933.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Myers, *Iron Men and Copper Wires*, 111. The two other companies were the Ventura County Power Company and the Mount Whitney Power and Electric Company. In 1939 Edison negotiated with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to give up service to the city of Los Angeles in order to secure service to all unincorporated areas within the county and all other municipalities (excluding Pasadena, Glendale, and Burbank).

<sup>196</sup> "A New Home for a Home Company," 17.

<sup>197</sup> Allison & Allison was comprised of Pennsylvania natives James Edward Allison (1870-1955) and David Clark Allison (1881-1962). The firm was active from 1910 to 1942. They moved their firm from Pittsburg, PA to Los Angeles in 1910. See Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 212–13.

<sup>198</sup> Huler and Jurewitz, *Edison International*, 49–50.

<sup>199</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 203.

After being voted off the board of its rival, the Title Insurance and Trust Company, Edwin W. Sargent co-founded the Title Guarantee and Trust in 1895. By the late 1920s, his strong leadership as president had created one of the city's foremost title companies.<sup>200</sup> Like Edison, its growth in the 1920s meant that Title Guarantee required more office space than its 1913 location at Fifth Street and Broadway allowed (fig. 5).<sup>201</sup> Astutely aware of the competitiveness within the title insurance industry in the early years of the Great Depression and with just over 50,000 square feet of office space to lease, Title Guarantee executives were shrewd in their own self-promotion. Taking advantage of the publicity around the successful opening of its rival's new headquarters in 1928, Title Guarantee timed its own announcement to construct a new building to follow the opening of the Title Insurance and Trust's building by six months. No doubt intentionally, the selected site of the new Title Guarantee Building would be at Fifth and Hill Streets—only two blocks away from Title Insurance and Trust's. With the same drive as Edison to eclipse their competition through the use of a strategic location, Title Guarantee executives enlisted the identical architects to their rivals, the father-and-son firm of John and Donald B. Parkinson, and commissioned one of the same artists, Hugo Ballin.

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<sup>200</sup> "Title Company in Anniversary," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1930, 15. For a history of the Title Insurance and Trust Company, see Grenier, "Growing Together for a Century," 351–439; and Ernest J. Loebbecke, *Serving the Nation's Needs for Diversified Financial Services: The Story of the TI Corporation (of California)* (New York: The Newcomen Society, 1973).

<sup>201</sup> Built in 1913 by Morgan, Walls & Morgan for \$500,000, the company occupied only two and a half floors of the nine in what was also known as the Title Guarantee Building (today it is the Jewelry Trades Building). "Title Guarantee Building," *The Building Age* 34 (April 1912): 235. When it opened in 1913, it was praised as "magnificent" and "one of the most substantial and attractive of the new downtown improvements." "Title Guarantee & Trust Company Moves," *Insurance and Investment News* 12, no. 9 (October 1913): 317.

### **Pershing Square: The Heart of Downtown Los Angeles**

Both buildings are presently still located on Fifth Street in downtown Los Angeles, with the Title Guarantee Building at the intersection of Fifth and Hill Streets and the Edison Building at the elevated corner of Fifth and Grand Avenue. Being situated directly across from Pershing Square, as is the Title Guarantee Building, or one block north, like the Edison Building, was highly desirable as they were easily accessible locations and represented the financial and cultural center of the city at the time. In the same breath, the intersection of Fifth and Hill Streets, where the Title Guarantee Building was, could be referred to as the “Wall Street of the West” and the city’s own Times Square, given its extremely heavy pedestrian, automobile, and streetcar traffic and concentration of hotels, restaurants, and performing arts venues.<sup>202</sup> It was reported that one hundred thousand pedestrians crossed through the square daily at its peak in the late 1920s.<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, both buildings were close to the Central Public Library and the Biltmore Hotel, with the Edison Building directly across from the library’s large south lawn. These places—Pershing Square and the Library’s lawn—served as attractive amenities where each building’s respective patrons, employees, tenants, and visitors could take breaks or have lunch. *California Arts & Architecture* noted “The new home of the Southern California Edison Company in Los Angeles overlooks the peaceful garden terrace of the Public Library; the white austerity of its massive bulk provides a strikingly effective contrast to the delicate,

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<sup>202</sup> “Title Company Plans Building,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 1928, E3.

<sup>203</sup> Janet Marie Smith, “Memorial Fountains in Pershing Square,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1986, B3.



feathery olive trees, the smooth green lawn.”<sup>204</sup> An air of cultural sophistication was also lent to both buildings given their closeness to the library, the Biltmore Theater, and the Philharmonic Auditorium, with which the Title Guarantee Building shared a block.<sup>205</sup> Likewise, the buildings’ proximity to the Subway Terminal Building offered the ease of commuting for employees, patrons, and tenants.<sup>206</sup> This perceived convenience was of such great importance to visitors and staff of the Title Guarantee Building that, as historian Richard Longstreth has observed, Title Guarantee advertisements included “maps emphasizing its ‘central’ location, set not in the traditional terms of concentrated development and pedestrian circulation, but rather in relation to off-street parking.”<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, the bas-reliefs carved over the entrances to both buildings would have been visible to the bustling pedestrian traffic of commuters, sightseers, protestors, and soapbox orators around Pershing Square. In the case of the Title Guarantee Building, some of the lobby murals could have also been viewed from the street through the glass lobby doors. Thus, the buildings’ amenities, modern design, artistic programs, and prime locations allowed these

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<sup>204</sup> “Office Building for the Southern California Edison Company, Los Angeles,” *California Arts & Architecture* (April 1931): 47.

<sup>205</sup> Opening in 1906 as the Temple Auditorium with a production of *Aida*, the space was leased to Billy Clune in 1914 and became a well-known movie palace. It was alternately called Clune’s Theater Beautiful or Clune’s Auditorium until 1920 when the Los Angeles Philharmonic moved into the space. Claud W. Beelman, the architect of the Eastern Columbia Building (1930), remodeled the building in 1938. The Philharmonic continued to occupy the space until 1964 when it moved into the newly built downtown Music Center. In 1985, the building was demolished to make way for a parking lot.

<sup>206</sup> Built at a cost of \$4 million dollars in 1925 by Schultze & Weaver, the Subway Terminal Building was the terminus of the subway, streetcar and trolley lines that connected downtown with the rest of the city, including the suburban sprawl of the San Fernando Valley. Schultze & Weaver were also responsible for designing the nearby Biltmore Hotel (1922) and the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York (1931).

<sup>207</sup> Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 11.

companies to rival their competition during a time when securing business and a positive public perception was a necessity.

### **Streamlining Corporate Architecture: The Embrace of Moderne**

Just as the carefully selected locations that offered ease of commuting and access to local green spaces were calculated, so, too was the architectural program of both buildings. By rejecting the traditional revival or conservative neoclassical styles often employed throughout downtown, the two Moderne buildings served as beacons of modernity, touting the progressive character of their tenants to patrons. Both structures were praised for their bold embrace of contemporary architecture, publicity that was welcomed as it signaled confidence and set these companies apart from their rivals. Furthermore, in both cases, the overall architecture reassuringly expressed permanence and economic stability. For example, during the groundbreaking ceremony that coincided with its thirty-fourth anniversary, John B. Miller, Edison's chairman of the board and former president, remarked:

In the construction of the building, the first consideration has been given to strength, durability and efficiency. Extra hundreds of tons of concrete and thousands of dollars worth of extra steel have gone into its construction to make it an enduring monument to the stability of the company's financial and economic structure and to the sincerity, dependability and wisdom of its policies. The cornerstone...is not the usual hollow receptacle, but is a solid block of granite—stable, enduring, everlasting.<sup>208</sup>

Miller's speech speaks directly to widespread fears about Edison's own longevity and commercial authority through his repeated references to the stability, durability,

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<sup>208</sup> "New Home of Southern California Edison Company," *Southern California Banker*, March 20, 1931, 26.

endurance, and strength of the company. His use of words like “sincerity” and “dependability” hint at questions related to the ethics of the company, which will be discussed later in this chapter. With the looming possibility of earthquakes on the minds of Edison executives following those in San Francisco (1906), Hemet (1918), and Santa Barbara (1925), the architects and engineers made certain the building was secure. *Southwest Builder and Contractor* ran a heavily illustrated article explaining the many lengths the company went to ensure its soundness, noting the heaviness of the steel frame, the complexity of its welding, and its compliance with the stringencies of Japanese procedures.<sup>209</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* touted the thirteen-story Edison Building as the “largest single steel-frame welding job of its kind in the history of building construction in order to withstand a general conflagration, a major hurricane, or an earthquake of an intensity equal to that of the heaviest shock experienced since man learned to measure such forces.”<sup>210</sup> In many ways, it is clear that the metaphor of Edison’s ability to survive the shocks of an act of God was equated to it surviving the Great Depression. When Miller did speak directly of the Depression it was, as expected, positive and reassuring of Edison’s stability:

In so far as this general economic disturbance affected the Edison company, it but served to again emphasize the fundamental stability and strength of its financial position, earning capacity, operating efficiently, and its peculiar immunity from depression influences...the company’s activities during 1930 served the dual purpose of promoting the normal progress of prosperity of the communities in its territory, and of stabilizing employment in the company’s own organization. The company will

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<sup>209</sup> “Edison Building Designed to Resist Heaviest Coast Earth Shocks: Unusual Structural Features of New Edison Building,” *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, May 22, 1931, 46–48.

<sup>210</sup> “Downtown Construction Hits Rapid Pace,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1929, D1.

continue to build for the future.<sup>211</sup>

In a full-page newspaper advertisement announcing the building's opening to the public, Southern California Edison proclaimed its headquarters were "erected as a symbol of leadership in electrical service and as an evidence of its unswerving confidence in Southern California."<sup>212</sup> Edison's confidence in the region can also be read as confidence in its own ability to withstand both the Great Depression and close governmental scrutiny of private utilities. The successful completion of an extravagantly decorated and technologically innovative building that, at the time, cost \$3.75 million dollars was also a testament to Edison's commitment to challenging the economics of the decade. Edison defended the expense as being equal to what it paid in renting office space and the total construction cost amounted to only one percent of its total assets.<sup>213</sup> Allison & Allison designed the two-hundred-and-twenty-two-foot-tall, set-back building, which was a marked modern departure from their usual Beaux-Arts style. Active since 1910, the architects had designed numerous churches and schools, including twelve buildings at the University of California, Los Angeles, in its more characteristic Romanesque and Italian Renaissance revival style. Faced in Indiana limestone and terra-cotta on the upper stories with a granite base, the building's exterior (as opposed to its opulent interior) was reserved in its use of ornament, with refined decorative details along the crenellated roofline, piers, and windows (fig. 6). The polygonal corner vestibule had a colorful octagonal ceiling, typical of the era and of a similar design to the lobby, and Art Deco zigzag motifs

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<sup>211</sup> "Edison Building," *Western Finance* (April 1931): 6.

<sup>212</sup> "A New Home for a Home Company," 17.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

adorned the main entrance metal doors (fig. 7). Visible proof of the wonders of electricity (as might be expected for the headquarters of a power company), the building was gloriously illuminated at night by three hundred and sixty-five colored floodlights that changed in intensity ten times a night and were to serve as “a guiding beam for aviators and air passengers.”<sup>214</sup> Large letters along the building’s tower spelled out “Edison,” making it visible across downtown considering its elevated location. Clearly, its permanence and stability were effectively captured in its architecture, as newspaper and magazine coverage often noted the modern building’s commanding, imposing presence. For example, *Southern California Banker* described the building as “a striking picture of rugged durability” and the *Los Angeles Examiner* wrote that it was “one of the finest in Los Angeles.”<sup>215</sup> Days after its opening, *California Arts & Architecture* ran a glowing, well-illustrated article on the building, hailing it as “magnificent” and “Power personified in stone and concrete.”<sup>216</sup>

Deemed “one of the most imposing structures on the West Coast” and boasting the second largest amount of dedicated office space after City Hall, the Edison Building had 273,000 square feet of office space for one thousand of its five thousand employees.<sup>217</sup> Given that the building housed an electricity company, Edison saw the

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<sup>214</sup> H. T. Cranes, “Edison Building City’s Bright Spot,” *Busy Buttons Bulletin* (September 1931): n.p. Box 382, folder 9, Southern California Edison Records, The Huntington Library. Cranes was part of the engineering design department.

<sup>215</sup> “New Home of the Southern California Edison Company,” 26; “The New Edison Building,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, June 6, 1930, n.p.

<sup>216</sup> “Office Building for the Southern California Edison Company, Los Angeles,” 47–48. *The Los Angeles Examiner* ran a short article on the opening of the Edison Building but it does not mention the murals: “Edison Stock Owners Hold Celebration,” *The Los Angeles Examiner*, February 24, 1931, Finance Section II 2.

<sup>217</sup> “Corner-Stone Put in Place: Edison Company Celebrates Anniversary,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1930, A1; “Edison Building Advanced,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1930, D10.

opportunity to make it one of the first major all-electrically heated and cooled buildings in the West. This impressive fact was widely celebrated in the press, with statements such this reported in the *Los Angeles Examiner*: “Virtually everything, except the thinking, is done by electricity in the new height-limit building of the Southern California Edison Company.”<sup>218</sup> The reporter went on to list many of the electrically controlled elements of the building including “lighting, exterior flood lighting, heating, cooling, ventilation, circulating ice water system, pneumatic tube system for mail, automatic telephones, time system, and all power purposes including the six elevators (which had a speed of 600 feet per minute).”<sup>219</sup> The seriousness with which the company considered the welfare of its employees was shown through the various amenities the building offered which also included an auditorium, club room, library, and a six-story parking garage. Further illustrating the lengths Edison would go to support the well-being of its employees, it was reported that all the air in the building, which was completely temperature controlled, was changed every ten minutes through an elaborate ventilation system. Office spaces were designed to have maximum natural light. Lessening the exposure to harsh office acoustics was also declared to be of utmost importance. The success of rubber floor tiles and specially developed sound-absorbing wall and ceiling lacquer used throughout caused an employee to remark: “The restfulness of this quiet makes the day seem two hours shorter.”<sup>220</sup> A columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* also made note of this, writing, “At the end of a day these workers are not worn out—they have escaped the nerve strain of

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<sup>218</sup> “All Electric Quarters for Edison Firm,” *The Los Angeles Examiner*, February 24, 1931, 16.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Lee Shippey, “The Lee Side O’L. A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1931, A4.

noise... These workers, who have just moved from an ordinary office building, are blissfully conscious of the change.”<sup>221</sup>

In contrast to its restrained use of ornament on the exterior, the interior of the Edison Building was quite opulent (fig. 8). It featured over twenty different varieties of colorful travertine and marble including Levanto, St. Michel, and Breche d’Escallette, hand-carved designs on the Sienna travertine columns, and a twenty-foot Spanish Renaissance coffered ceiling. *California Arts & Architecture* remarked that the lobby was “splendid and stately” with “a classical atmosphere, although its detail is treated with modern liberality.”<sup>222</sup> The review continued noting, “Greek motives have become modern, as used in metal and marble; their chaste elegance is well suited to these experiments in design... Few if any buildings in the west can compare in the extent and quality of marble used.”<sup>223</sup> For its grand opening, over seven thousand people visited the Edison Building, many going on organized tours. While the reactions of a wider public are unknown, the recounting of an anecdote by a local newspaper columnist could have signaled its favorable response. The columnist, who joked that visitors “didn’t know if they could enter there at all without putting on their long-tailed coats or court breeches” was consoled “for the light bills he has to pay” realizing that “he has contributed something to that monumental structure.”<sup>224</sup> He then went on to explain that a man wandered in to the Edison Building on the pretext of paying his bill and “entered the place with awe,” but the reader comes to find out that,

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<sup>221</sup> Shippey, “The Lee Side O’L. A.,” A4.

<sup>222</sup> “Office Building for the Southern California Edison Company, Los Angeles,” 48.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Shippey, “The Lee Side O’L. A.,” A4.

in reality, he visited only to enjoy the “peace and quiet” of what the man called a “splendid building.”<sup>225</sup>

The magnificence of the Edison Building was not quite matched by the Title Guarantee Building, but considering the contrasting size of the companies, Title Guarantee admirably attempted to create a building that made just as much of a mark on the downtown landscape as Edison’s did. Construction on the \$1.25 million-dollar setback building began in the fall of 1930, almost two years after it had been announced, which was no doubt due in part to the financial uncertainty caused by the 1929 Stock Market Crash.<sup>226</sup> Hoping to embody a sense of prestige that matched the company’s sophisticated reputation and financial success of the 1920s, Title Guarantee president Edwin W. Sargent announced that the daringly Moderne building “was to express dignity and beauty” and act as a “monument to the city of Los Angeles.”<sup>227</sup> In order to find a style befitting such a company, in 1929 the company’s secretary Albert R. Killgore and vice president Arthur F. Morlan planned a tour of Eastern cities to inspect the latest examples of architectural designs for title buildings.<sup>228</sup> While it is unknown if this trip ever took place (much less if it garnered any stylistic inspiration) or if it was solely for publicity, it is clear that Howells & Hood’s 1925 Chicago Tribune Tower was an influence as attested by the similarity of the buildings’ Gothic massing, tower design and use of false buttressing (fig. 9). However, a better point of comparison is found in recently designed buildings by Parkinson & Parkinson, the

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<sup>225</sup> Shippey, “The Lee Side O’L. A.,” A4.

<sup>226</sup> “Title Building Will Open,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1931, F3.

<sup>227</sup> “Title Company Plans Building,” E3.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. Arthur F. Morlan became president after Sargent’s death in 1929. Arthur F. Morlan became president after Sargent’s death in 1929.



Bullock's Wilshire (1929) and the Banks-Huntley Building (1931). This is especially true when comparing the tower designs, decorative flourishes, overall massing, and emphasis on verticality of these buildings to that found on the Title Guarantee Building.

While its competitor, the Title Insurance and Trust, sought a controlled simplicity in its architecture, the Title Guarantee Building opted for the reverse. With its unabashedly modern design, the Title Guarantee Building confidently declared its place within the city and the local title insurance industry. At twelve stories, the Title Guarantee Building respected the city's stipulated height-limit ordinances, yet Parkinson & Parkinson ingeniously increased its overall height and allowed the building to overshadow its surroundings by adding an unoccupied multi-story tower, complete with flying buttresses (fig. 10). Further accentuating its height and verticality, the tower was capped by a sixty-foot flagpole and, like the Edison Building, lit nightly with colored floodlights that served as "a beacon for aviators."<sup>229</sup> The one-hundred-and-fifty-foot-tall building was celebrated as "Extending further skyward than any other commercial structure in the city."<sup>230</sup> Such dramatic illumination further emphasized the stylized Art Deco chevrons and floral motifs that adorned the building's crenellated parapet roofline, spandrels, and tower. Ballin was given domain not just over his murals but also over all the coloring and decoration in the lobby, including the decorative tile design found in its open-air vestibule (fig. 11).<sup>231</sup> This

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<sup>229</sup> "'X' Marks the Spot on Hill," *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1930, A2.

<sup>230</sup> "Title Company Plans Building," E3.

<sup>231</sup> Contract between Hugo Ballin and Parkinson & Parkinson, September 18, 1930. Box 17, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library,

could have also been a subtle gesture to its competitor, as the Title Insurance and Trust Building also had a decorative tile ceiling. Containing roughly the same modern amenities as its competitor, the Title Insurance and Trust Company, the Title Guarantee Building boasted a cafeteria, underground parking garage, four high-speed elevators, rooftop terrace, and on-site clinic—all of which were heavily publicized in newspapers and magazines.<sup>232</sup>

When it opened in June 1931, the building was celebrated as an icon of modern architecture in local and national press alike. The *Los Angeles Times* declared it to have “set the pace for ultra-modern office building construction in America.”<sup>233</sup> In its profile of the building, the magazine *Southwest Builder and Contractor* celebrated it for being “well-proportioned” and having “grace and symmetry.”<sup>234</sup> The anonymous reviewer continued, seeing it as “a splendid example of the trend in modern architectural design,” one that sought “refinement rather than impressive display.”<sup>235</sup> A critic in *California Arts & Architecture* noted the “thrilling beauty” of the structure, remarking that “the fortunate design of its lifting mass gives further evidence that modern architecture need not be ugly.”<sup>236</sup> Even the terra-cotta facing was admired as

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University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>232</sup> The company cafeteria was an increasingly common amenity for large corporate headquarters. As argued by Clark Davis and Sharon Strom, it would keep employees in the building for lunch and by being forced to eat together, it would increase camaraderie and productivity. See Davis, *Company Men*, 137; and Sharon Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900–1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 21–122.

<sup>233</sup> “Title Building Will Open,” F3.

<sup>234</sup> “Graceful Lines and Massing of Effects Characterize Los Angeles’ Newest Office Building,” *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, July 17, 1931, 46.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>236</sup> “Title Guarantee Building, Los Angeles,” *California Arts & Architecture* (September 1931): 40.

adding “a cool and refreshing note to the dignity” of the building.<sup>237</sup> Yet in the use of terms like “splendid,” “impressive,” and “well-proportioned,” one may note, again, a rather obligatory tone to the praise that is offered. This may hint at yet another way business and art were (and still are) intertwined. A reviewer’s true opinion, especially if it was unenthusiastic, needed to be tempered as to keep positive relations between these publications and the corporate powers they were profiling. In a city as small as Los Angeles, and during the early years of the Great Depression, one needed to protect future business prospects at all costs.

### **Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Art Commissions of Edison and Title Guarantee**

Early on in the planning phase, both corporations intended to set aside large amounts of highly visible space in their lobbies for murals, showing that their inclusion was not an afterthought. Coupled with the bas-reliefs, these artworks would have been the first thing people saw upon entering, a further testament to their importance. Each also widely publicized the commission in local newspapers and magazines. Edison opted to do this after its building opened, but Title Guarantee announced its commissioned artists in February 1931, four months prior to its building’s grand opening. The article in the *Los Angeles Times* noted that two local artists had received commissions to create artwork for its building—Eugene Maier-Krieg (1897–1986) would create a Greco-Roman inspired bas-relief over the entrance and Hugo Ballin (1879–1956) would paint a six-panel mural cycle on the history of

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<sup>237</sup> Gladding, McBean & Co. advertisement, *California Arts & Architecture* (September 1931): 12.

the region for the elevator lobby.<sup>238</sup> Tracing the history of electricity and hydroelectric power in the region, the Edison Building boasted a mural by Ballin in the main lobby and murals in the elevator lobby by Barse Miller (1904–1973) and Conrad Buff (1886–1975). Its classical, three-panel bas-relief was sculpted by Robert Merrell Gage (1892–1981).

Though the inclusion of some architectural sculpture would have been expected for buildings associated with business, murals with such substantive content would not have been, and one can only speculate as to the true motivations behind such patronage. There is little evidence to support the naïve explanation that murals were included simply because the corporation's executives enjoyed such an art form. Large artistic commissions like these (especially Edison's, which marked one of the largest private commissions of the 1930s in the city) would have been prompted by a combination of motives.

The same tactical awareness that informed the building's location and design was given to its art commissions, especially in regard to the employment of Hugo Ballin. It can be assumed that Ballin, an accomplished artist and muralist, had a positive reputation as evidenced by the impressive number of both public and private commissions he received once he returned to painting after a number of years working in Hollywood. In May of 1931, a correspondent for *The Art Digest* remarked that Ballin was "probably the busiest mural painter in America. In the last 31 months he

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<sup>238</sup> "Building Artists Chosen," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1931, D3. Eugene Maier-Krieg's last name is spelled incorrectly as Meyer-Krieg in the article (a very unfortunate, yet common, occurrence in the newspaper).

has painted 32 murals.”<sup>239</sup> Ballin preferred to paint in his home studio that was specially designed for murals with a twenty-three-foot ceiling and fifty-foot-long walls.

In addition to a fastidious work ethic, Ballin’s characteristic Beaux-Arts style was corporate-friendly and accessible to a wide audience. Ballin felt strongly that his artwork should be easily understood, declaring, “When art requires an explanation something has gone awry.”<sup>240</sup> This aesthetic legibility was coupled with Ballin’s emphasis on beauty, what he called balance, and color which he felt was “to a mural what harmony [was] to sound.”<sup>241</sup> These characteristics all help to shape a style I call corporate realism—a style that was favored among corporate clients and one in which Ballin was well suited to execute given his keen understanding of the decorum needed for such corporate commissions. This is hinted at when asked to articulate the purpose of mural painting:

[It was] to enhance the architecture and to give a harmonious unity to the room in which it is placed. A building is better for a good mural and a mural is better for a well-designed building. The painter should take into consideration a design that best fits the requirements. Scale is vital. ...The question of light and color are equally important and a painter who knows mural painting gives these things paramount consideration.<sup>242</sup>

Ballin’s attention to the site-specificity of a location as well as his awareness of color, scale, and light show his mindfulness of fulfilling the needs of his patrons. It goes without saying that these elements would then act as complements to the actual subject

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<sup>239</sup> “Title Guarantee Building,” *The Art Digest*, May 1, 1931, 12.

<sup>240</sup> Ballin, *I’ll Be Damned*, 27.

<sup>241</sup> Hugo Ballin, description of *The Winds* murals for the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco, c. 1939. Box 25, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>242</sup> William M. Kramer, “Hugo Ballin: Artist and Director,” in *A Crown for a King: Studies in Jewish Art, History and Archeology in Memory of Stephen S. Kayser*, eds. Shaolm Sabar, Steven Fine, and William M. Kramer (Jerusalem, Israel: Gefen Publishing House, 2000), 168.

matter of the mural, something that also would have been carefully selected based on the parameters of the commission. Ballin's popularity with public and private patrons is also a testament to his mastery of Gombrich's principal of intersection and yet, the abrupt disappearance for Ballin of awarded commissions after the late-1930s hints at a possible violation of this implied and unspoken need for decorum.

In interviews and in his writings, Ballin often praised the work of European artists like Michelangelo, Jan van Eyck, Raphael, Giotto, Titian, Rembrandt, and Fra Filippo Lippi while criticizing modern art as "doodlings...primitive and devoid of anything worthwhile."<sup>243</sup> Ballin reiterated this sentiment in another public lecture when he stated, "The modernist screams so hard for recognition that he struggles for ugliness and in many cases the most hideous results are the recipients of the higher awards."<sup>244</sup> In a 1950 interview he remarked, "They're all a little mad, I fear. Picasso, for instance runs around his studio with little more than a scarf tied around his middle, his head adorned with a live dove."<sup>245</sup> Others were not immune to his condemnations: "Modigliani missed a lot of fun if he saw humans as he painted them. ...Nobody can convince me that Matisse has a sensitive color sense. He visualizes like a child that makes chalkings on the sidewalk. As yet I am too insensitive to see his great gift."<sup>246</sup> Ballin's affinity for the canonical over the modern in his practice is clear and his

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<sup>243</sup> Hugo Ballin, "Why So Long," Letter to the Editor, *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 1950, A4.

<sup>244</sup> Hugo Ballin, *About Color*, transcript of public lecture, 6. Box 7, folder 1, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>245</sup> Jacqueline Weaver, "Hugo Ballin Interview," *Pacific Palisades Post*, February 9, 1950, n.p. Box 22, folder 5, scrapbook, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>246</sup> Ballin, *I'll Be Damned*, 32, 34.

rejection of a modernist approach is an additional indicator of his attractiveness to corporate clients who desired works that broadly appealed to the masses. Yet, it does seem odd, then, that Ballin's strong aversion to avant-garde tendencies in art was not vocalized when it came to architecture as the Edison and Title Guarantee Buildings were by their very nature, modern. The answer, understood in this dissertation, lays in Ballin's pragmatism and the necessity to secure commissions, regardless of personal conviction.

At the time of the Title Guarantee commission, Ballin had already completed two murals for the Title Guarantee's rival, a title mural triptych over the entrance to the Title Insurance and Trust Building and a mural for their executive boardroom. In 1929, following his Title Insurance and Trust commission, Ballin completed a lunette entitled *California* for the First National Bank of La Jolla and was highly praised for his murals at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple that consisted of a three-hundred-and-twenty-foot-long mural frieze and three lunettes. This fact, no doubt, played a role in the hiring of Ballin for the Title Guarantee Building, as it was an opportunity to outshine the competition with an even larger commission. Given the amount of publicity that had already taken place around the construction of the buildings, executives at both corporations would have understood the profile-raising opportunities afforded by the commissions and the ability they offered to accumulate cultural capital with employees, customers, tenants, and the larger public. Likewise, given the economic competitiveness of the time, these companies needed to project the appearance of being thriving businesses—ones that would not succumb to the ills of

the Great Depression but instead would continue to prosper, along with the city itself. Therefore, it would seem that only a company that was effortlessly weathering the Great Depression could dedicate sizeable budgets to artistic projects such as these—taking into consideration, for example, Ballin’s sizable fee of sixteen thousand dollars for his six Title Guarantee murals.<sup>247</sup> Publicizing the commissions allowed Edison and Title Guarantee to present themselves as confident and solvent companies to patrons and tenants alike.<sup>248</sup>

As was often the case with corporate commissions during this period, it was the architects who advocated for and procured the artists for commissions, not the board of directors or executives. Parkinson & Parkinson, architects for the Title Guarantee Building, may have recommended such a large commission, as their Bullock’s Wilshire project was widely praised for its plentiful integrated artworks. They had also worked fairly recently with both Eugene Maier-Krieg and Hugo Ballin. In 1929, Maier-Krieg was commissioned by Parkinson & Parkinson to create a series of bas-reliefs, entitled *The Hunt*, for the Saddle Shop at Bullock’s Wilshire. His talent was obviously well regarded by the architects, as he had, around this same time, sculpted a portrait bust of Grace Parkinson, wife of the elder Parkinson. Ballin, likewise, had worked with the firm in 1928 when he created pieces for the Title

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<sup>247</sup> Contract between Hugo Ballin and Parkinson & Parkinson, September 18, 1930. Box 17, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. The amount Maier-Krieg received for his commission is unknown.

<sup>248</sup> Conversely, looking back at the context of the Great Depression from the twenty-first century, a point to reflect on is that the money spent on such commissions may actually have been less than what may have been spent on expensive materials for the lobby and the use of opulent decor may have been interpreted as a frivolous waste of money during this time.



Insurance and Trust Building. Their respect for Ballin was confirmed when they declared him “to be the outstanding mural painter in America today.”<sup>249</sup> Ballin himself, in his memoirs written in the early 1950s, writes, “Most commissions are awarded through an architect or a friend of the painter.”<sup>250</sup> Later in the text, he thanks his benefactors, appreciating “that the architect has no easy task convincing a client as to the type of building best suited to his needs; I, therefore, am doubly conscious of the difficulty assuring hard-fisted businessmen that wall paintings reel [sic] a beneficent return.”<sup>251</sup> Similarly, the architects of the Edison Building, Allison & Allison, had worked with Ballin when he was painting the Warner Murals for the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in 1929, where they served as consultants, so it is possible that they recommended him for the commission. It is thought that through this connection, along with Ballin’s established broad corporate appeal at the time, he was able to secure the commission for an impressive six thousand dollars.<sup>252</sup> Barse Miller and Conrad Buff were brought in after Ballin began work, so it is unknown if his was the only mural originally planned for the interior. Research suggests, however, that it is almost certain that Allison & Allison had a hand in supporting the inclusion of these murals as the *Los Angeles Times* thanked the architects:

One cannot mention these achievements [the lobby murals] without a word of gratitude to the architects...for putting painters to work who could contribute something beyond the too-customary academic type of

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<sup>249</sup> “Building Artists Chosen,” D3.

<sup>250</sup> Ballin, *I’ll Be Damned*, 31.

<sup>251</sup> Hugo Ballin, *The First Fifty Years are the Hardest: I’ll Be Damned*, undated and unpublished manuscript, 282. Box 9, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Ballin’s use of the word “reel” is indicative of his clever and frequent wordplay.

<sup>252</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 138.

decorations. Great buildings deserve serious decoration which both interpret their purpose and plays a part in their structure...[the murals] should prove forerunners of further opportunities for the painter to a well-rounded business architecture.<sup>253</sup>

Buff confirmed the role architects played in securing mural commissions and his difficulty with such solicitation, unlike Ballin:

In order to get the big decorations and public buildings where the real money is, you have to really put a lot of time on salesmanship, trying to get next to architects and convincing them that you are able to do these things, which I could never do. I could never go into an architect's office and ask for a job. I just took the jobs that the architects brought to me.<sup>254</sup>

Buff reluctance to promote himself may explain why he received no commissions for murals after the mid-1930s and why Ballin, by contrast, continued painting them until his death in 1956.

Coinciding with the opening of their buildings, both Edison and Title Guarantee published small booklets about the murals for public consumption that were often based on descriptions by the artists. This allowed the companies to construct their own historical perspectives through a calculated explanation of the significance of each panel. Foregrounding the official view of regional history, Title Guarantee positioned the commission as a contribution to the local art scene. The panels were cited as enriching the community through their presentation of “the picturesque and vital phases of Southern California’s history” depicted “in vigorous, colorful and adequate manner” that formed “a unity of rich, rhythmic color, with bold figures and

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<sup>253</sup> “Edison Art Distinctive,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1931, 28.

<sup>254</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 158.

splendid themes.’’<sup>255</sup> Symbolizing the importance of public learning and adding to the cultural prestige of the company itself by describing the lobby space as “an exhibition” that “should prove of permanent historical and esthetic interest” makes it clear that the company saw the artwork as functioning beyond the purely decorative.<sup>256</sup> Instead, the murals transformed the lobby into a gallery or museum-like space that was for the altruistic benefit not only of its clientele and employees, but of the city as a whole.<sup>257</sup>

This pedagogical moment of confronting art was framed as an opportunity for all those who passed through the lobby to learn about their own local history. It served to emphasize the notion that the company itself, founded in 1895, had a parallel and similarly rich history despite the current economic climate. Similarly, it reinforced the dominant civic narrative surrounding the romantic golden age of the Spanish period which will be discussed shortly.

Title Guarantee positioned its mural commission as a lasting cultural contribution to the city, and Edison also echoed this sentiment. News of the Edison Building and its commission was subsequently so central to the development of city morale that it was featured in a 1930 booster article in which the *Los Angeles Times* noted:

Developments during the last year in various public and private enterprises

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<sup>255</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building* (Los Angeles: Title Guarantee and Trust Company, 1931), 1.

<sup>256</sup> “Title Building Will Open,” F3; *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 1.

<sup>257</sup> Title Guarantee’s continued involvement with local history is further evidenced by the company’s publication of a series of small educational booklets on the history of cities in Los Angeles County during the 1930s. These booklets were researched in-house by historian W. W. Robinson and included the cities of Long Beach, Santa Monica, Pasadena, Whittier, Glendale, Monrovia and Pomona. See for example *Pomona: A Calendar of Events in the Making of a City* (Los Angeles: Title Guarantee and Trust Company, 1936).

that contribute to the well-being of Los Angeles were such as to make this center a white spot in the nation. ...Amid the imperious demands of utility, the fine arts have not been forgotten. The tendency of business institutions to adorn their new edifices with sculpture and mural painting—a tendency that has been growing for several years—has received new impetus during 1930. ...In a word, the practice of fine decoration is now assured for all important new buildings.<sup>258</sup>

By housing numerous significant works of art for the alleged benefit of its customers and employees, the inclusion of public art in the Edison Building positioned its commission as a way to transform what might have been an extremely private space of a powerful company into a more accessible cultural and educational space for the community. This emphasized Edison's message of public ownership that they claimed and its role as a benevolent servant of the public good, lessening the impact of existing allegations of corporate corruption and excess.

### **The Persistence of the Classical: The Bas-Reliefs of Eugene Maier-Krieg and Robert Merrell Gage**

Often overlooked as being purely decorative, the bas-reliefs carved on each building's façade worked in tandem with the murals and signified permanence, stability, and longevity through their respective depictions of archetypal Greco-Roman males. The works would have greeted all visitors, as they were placed directly above main entrances. The choice of such conservative subject matter and reliance on familiar classicism for the bas-reliefs could be evidence of their mass appeal and high visibility as opposed to the murals which were, by contrast, more contemporary, yet

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<sup>258</sup> "Los Angeles Achieves Impressive Progress," *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 1930, A1.

seen by only those who entered the buildings. Beginning with the Title Guarantee Building, the exterior bas-relief was touted as “a distinct contribution to the cultural development of Los Angeles” by Eugene Maier-Krieg, who was “recognized as an outstanding figure” by Title Guarantee executive vice president Albert R. Killgore.<sup>259</sup>

Born in 1897 in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, Maier-Krieg received his training as a sculptor first with Karl Deibele (1869–1953) and then more formally with Ludwig Habich (1872–1949) at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart. Following his time in Stuttgart, he worked with a number of other influential German sculptors including Adolf von Hildebrand (1847–1921), Ulfert Janssen (1878–1956), and Bernhard Hoetger (1874–1949) all of whom contributed to Maier-Krieg’s characteristically reserved, classical style. In 1924, Maier-Krieg settled in Los Angeles after a brief time in New York and found work with a number of Hollywood studios including Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, for which he created the colossal statues for the chariot scene in *Ben Hur*.<sup>260</sup> Through the Bullock’s Wilshire commission of 1929 (and no doubt partly due to shared German heritage), Maier-Krieg met designer and architect Kem Weber, who hired him to design reliefs similar to those in Bullock’s Wilshire for the Sommer & Kaufmann Shoe Store in San Francisco.<sup>261</sup> By 1931, Maier-Krieg would have been well-known in Los Angeles through the promotional efforts of both *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier and Merle Armitage, a local

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<sup>259</sup> “Building Artists Chosen,” D3.

<sup>260</sup> *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* was considered to be the most expensive silent film ever made in 1925 at a cost of four million dollars. The famed cinematography of the chariot race was achieved through the use of forty-two cameras and over 200,000 feet of film (yet the final edit only used 750 feet). Filmed in Los Angeles after soaring costs in Italy, a track was constructed at the intersection of La Cienega and San Vicente and the scene was filmed in one day, reportedly costing \$300,000.

<sup>261</sup> Consequentially Barse Miller was also commissioned to create frescos for the store.

art collector, author, and publisher.<sup>262</sup> Just a few days before the opening of the Title Guarantee Building, Millier featured Maier-Krieg as the thirty-first artist in his column dedicated to local artists, *Our Artists in Person*. Armitage was a personal collector of Maier-Krieg's work; in 1932, he published a number of well-illustrated books dedicated to single artists that included Maier-Krieg along with Rockwell Kent, Warren Newcombe, Edward Weston, and Richard Day. Most likely through his acquaintance with Armitage, who was the regional director of the Public Works of Art Project from 1933–34, Maier-Krieg was commissioned to create a twelve-foot-high statue of Helena Modjeska for the city of Anaheim, California.<sup>263</sup> Maier-Krieg returned to Germany at an unknown point in time and passed away there in 1986.<sup>264</sup>

Much like the historicizing theme found in the murals inside the building, the classicizing spirit of Maier-Krieg's sculptures heightens the sense of gravitas and

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<sup>262</sup> For more on Maier-Krieg, see Armitage, *The Work of Maier-Krieg*, and Armitage, "The Sculptures of Eugene Maier-Krieg," 28–29. Merle Armitage was not only a collector and patron of the arts but a well-respected avant-garde book designer. For more on Armitage, see Ramiel McGehee, *23 Books Designed by Merle Armitage* (New York: E. Weyhe Publisher, 1938); Roy R. Behrens, "On Merle Armitage: The Impresario of Book Design," in *Graphic Design History*, eds. Steven Heller and Georgette Balance (New York: Allworth Press, 2001), 81–88; and Phil McPharlin, "Early Armitage: Advertising Pieces of an Impresario," *Print: A Quarterly Journal of the Graphic Arts* 4, no. 4 (1945–46), 23. For a full list of the books Armitage published, see <http://www.daileyrarebooks.com/armitage.htm>.

<sup>263</sup> Modjeska immigrated to the US in 1876 from Poland, lived in Anaheim from 1888–1906 and was a successful Shakespearean actress. Unveiled to the public on September 15, 1935 in Pearson Park, the statue was funded by the PWAP with contributions from the State Emergency Relief Administration, the Anaheim Rotary Club, and the City of Anaheim. It features Modjeska in her favorite role as Mary Queen of Scots. On the opposite side of the statue are two couples, thought to be vineyard laborers who represent the agricultural ties of the region. Stephen J. Faessel in *Early Anaheim* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006) notes that the statue cost \$15,000 and is considered to be the oldest example of Public Works art in the city. For more see Charles Epting, *The New Deal in Orange County, California* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2014), 81–83.

<sup>264</sup> This may be due to the fact that his last name is frequently misspelled Meyer-Krieg or Mayer-Krieg. His first name is often spelled as Eugen, which further adds to the inconsistencies in the recording of his name. The exact date of his return to Germany is unknown, as are much of his artistic career after the 1930s. For more on Maier-Krieg, see Peter C. Merrill, *German Immigrant Artists in America: A Biographical Dictionary* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997), 170; and Milton Hughes, *Artists in California, 1786-1940: L-Z* (San Francisco: Hughes Publishing, Co., 1986).

permanence that the building and company were hoping to project by featuring an ensemble of classical male figures clothed in flowing drapery (fig. 12). The central figure sits in a throne and holds an open book in one hand. With the other, he points to an inscription in the book that notes the building's location and years of construction: "Los Angeles Ano [sic] Domini 1930 1931." The two kneeling figures on either side are shown in profile, looking towards the main figure, and each grasps a large roundel. On the right is Mercury, with his winged cap and sandals, holding a medallion with a bird in flight, a reference to the swiftness of the Title Guarantee's communication and its interconnectivity with the region. The left figure holds a sickle, and his roundel bears stylized depictions of wheat and water, a reference to the region's agricultural prosperity. While not the purview of the company, the agricultural imagery may be an allusion to the various types of businesses that could lease space within the building. An earlier, undated mock-up of the bas-relief had a clearer reference to the machine of commerce, with the figure's arm passing through a cog.<sup>265</sup> By referring to the dates of the building's erection, as well as drawing on Greco-Roman associations of authority, this bas-relief projects a sense of stability and fortitude that Title Guarantee hoped would attract patrons and tenants, as well as easing fears over the dire economic circumstances engendered by the Depression.

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<sup>265</sup> See plate 8 in Armitage, *The Work of Maier-Krieg*, n.p. Note the incorrect spelling of Title Guarantee in the caption: "Entrance Title Guaranty [sic] Building." When comparing an early clay version of the bas-relief by Maier-Krieg, many changes can be found (See plate 20 in Armitage, *The Work of Maier-Krieg*, n.p.). The medallions in the finished version were not originally included; instead, the two kneeling figures' arms rest on their legs. Additionally, the central figure was Mercury, standing with a great deal of movement and motions, not the static and seated figure on the right in the final work. Lastly, all three figures wear significantly less, showing much more of their idealized, classical bodies.

Like Maier-Krieg at the Title Guarantee, Robert Merrell Gage channeled the gravitas of antiquity in his work at the Edison Building.<sup>266</sup> His three limestone carvings on the façade of the Edison Building are titled *Hydroelectric Energy*, *Light*, and *Power*.<sup>267</sup> Born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1892, Gage moved to New York in 1911 where he attended the Art Students League, the Robert Henri School, and the Beaux Arts Institute of Design. From 1914–16 and again from 1921–23, he was an assistant to Gutzon Borglum, artist of the Mount Rushmore busts, who described him as a “steady-eyed young sculptor.”<sup>268</sup> After returning to Topeka in 1916, Gage received his first public commission, a statue of Abraham Lincoln for the Kansas State Capital. He captured Lincoln’s likeness with such accuracy that he quickly became well known for such portraits. Gage later starred in a short film in which he sculpted the changes in Lincoln’s face as he aged, which won an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film in 1956.<sup>269</sup> In 1923 he moved to Los Angeles and assisted Burt Johnson with the architectural sculpture for the Fine Arts Building (1927, Walker & Eisen) on Seventh Street.

Gage’s public commissions were plentiful during the 1920s and 1930s and include bas-reliefs for the South Pasadena Library (1928), the California State Building (1931), the University of California, Los Angeles’s Doheny Memorial Library (1932), the *Los Angeles Times* building (1935), the Hollywood High School

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<sup>266</sup> Unfortunately, scholarship around Gage, like Maier-Krieg, has suffered due to inconsistencies around the misspelling of his name. Records, articles, and interviews can be found under the numerous variations of R. Merrell Gage, Merrell Gage, or Merrill Gage.

<sup>267</sup> An alternate title is *Generation, Distribution, and Utilization*.

<sup>268</sup> “Robert Merrell Gage,” Kansas Historical Foundation, January 2013, accessed May 7, 2014, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/robert-merrell-gage/12061>.

<sup>269</sup> *The Face of Lincoln* (1955) was produced by Wilber T. Blume.



Science Building (1936), and a fountain for the Lincoln Memorial Shrine in Redlands (1937). While working on the Edison commission, Gage was simultaneously sculpting a frieze, *History of California*, and sculpture of a kneeling Gabrielino-Tongva tribe member for the Electric Fountain in Beverly Hills.<sup>270</sup> Unveiled on June 12, 1931, the multiple figures in this frieze, especially a Helios-like male, resemble those in his Edison bas-reliefs.

In a 1930 profile by *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier, Gage's work was described as notable "for its freedom from academic convention, its basis in the study of nature and its architectural quality," all of which can be seen in the Edison triptych.<sup>271</sup> Measuring six by nine feet, these panels offer a successful and modern treatment of past and present—the classically modeled figures, twentieth-century Prometheuses, are merged with 1930s technology, exemplifying what Millier cited as Gage's "difference in attitude and treatment that marks it off from the academic, giving it a peculiar American quality."<sup>272</sup> Clearly visible from the street, the first panel to the left, *Energy*, takes as its theme the hydroelectric generation of power. It features a kneeling monumental figure that effortlessly pours water from large amphora hoisted on his right shoulder (fig. 13). With only a cloth draped over one thigh, the bare-chested, classical figure looks out over his outstretched and ridged left arm as liquid from the vessel cascades over the water wheel positioned in the lower left of the panel.

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<sup>270</sup> The Electric Fountain was executed in collaboration with architect Ralph Carlin Flewelling. For more see the Beverly Gardens Park City Landmark Assessment Report and Evaluation, October 2013, accessed May 15, 2014, [http://www.beverlyhills.org/cbhfiles/storage/files/1562109144443152657/Bev\\_Gardens\\_Park\\_Lndmrk\\_AssmntReport\\_OCT2013Finalx.pdf](http://www.beverlyhills.org/cbhfiles/storage/files/1562109144443152657/Bev_Gardens_Park_Lndmrk_AssmntReport_OCT2013Finalx.pdf).

<sup>271</sup> Millier, "Our Artists in Person," B10.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

This is a clear reference to Edison's own hydroelectric plants and the technology's lineage from such early forms of power production. The figure in the far right panel, *Power*, utilizes the energy generated by his counterpart and echoes him in both stance and determination (fig. 14). Kneeling with a similarly positioned cloth on his leg, this robust figure represents the future of such early power-generating technology. In place of the water wheel, the figure is in front of a large, abstracted turbine generator, similar to those used in Edison's powerhouses and dams. Fully engaged with the machinery, Gage's protagonist grasps the handle of unseen equipment with an outstretched left hand, poised to activate that which lies out of view. Gage captures the intense effort needed for this action through rigid arms, a clenched right fist, and twisted torso. *Light*, the middle panel, is the distributor of the electricity generated by those who flank him. Lunging to the left, the figure's drapery flows up and around his extended right arm while his other arm reaches up behind him as if he moved to shield his eyes from the light. Yet his head is turned to the left as he stares intensely at the modern-day torch he holds in his right hand. This torch is topped not with a flame but a brilliantly glowing light bulb with luminous rays that beam out from it. Of the three, this panel is most directly positioned over the entrance and may best symbolize the Edison corporation itself, charged with harnessing and dispensing its power throughout Southern California.

The bas-reliefs of Eugene Maier-Krieg and Robert Merrell Gage invoke the permanence and gravitas of classical antiquity. Highly visible from the street and to all who entered, these figures assured viewers that these corporations were resilient and

would endure for decades. The conservative nature of the Greco-Roman motifs and stylized male figures of this exterior architectural sculpture was purposeful. While not a departure from what was traditionally expected to grace the façades of corporate buildings it also appealed to a mass audience. Further, the bas-reliefs worked in tandem with the more modern treatment of subject matter found within the lobby mural commissions of both buildings.

### **Water Power: The Edison Murals**

During the 1920s, Edison dealt with a number of critical blows to its reputation that it desperately needed to counter. Edison's mural commission served to not only address general economic concerns about the company at the time but also to assuage the growing suspicion with which the public viewed private utilities companies as mismanaged and power hungry. This criticism was coupled in the public's mind with the collapse of Chicago mogul Samuel Insull's utility empire, which many saw as a foreshadowing for Edison.<sup>273</sup> In the 1920s, Insull, who was once employed as Thomas Edison's secretary, became a powerful broker for private electrical utilities through the creation of holding companies that, at their peak, served over four million customers across thirty-two states. When the stock market crashed in 1929, Insull's private empire collapsed and six hundred thousand shareholders went bankrupt. This scandal followed a series of natural disasters that caused unprecedented energy shortages, which were blamed on Edison. From 1921 to 1924, a severe drought and below-

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<sup>273</sup> For more on Insull, see John F. Wasik, *The Merchant of Power: Sam Insull, Thomas Edison, and the Creation of the Modern Metropolis* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); and Forrest McDonald, *Insull: The Rise and Fall of a Billionaire Utility Tycoon* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

average snowfall in the Sierra Nevada Mountains caused a drop in hydroelectric power production, in turn creating record power outages for Los Angeles. As a result, customers were asked to cut their usage by twenty-five percent. There was highly criticized citywide rationing of electricity for commercial signage (including the Hollywoodland sign), streetlights, and streetcars—all of which Edison powered. The following summer, an earthquake in Santa Barbara caused extensive regional power outages as substations were destroyed. Two years later, in February of 1927, two snow slides stuck Edison camps in the Sierras, killing thirteen people and injuring over twenty. Most tragic of all, however, was the Saint Francis Dam disaster. On March 12, 1928, the dam collapsed, killing over six hundred and fifty people and demolishing large portions of the cities in the flood's path. Though Saint Francis was not an Edison dam, the ensuing floodwaters swept through an Edison company camp, killing eighty-four employees. This widely publicized disaster was a vivid reminder of the very real danger of mismanagement that may be lurking within private utility companies.

Additionally, Edison's powerful monopoly on electricity in Southern California was partially liable for the era's high energy prices. At this time, there was also a growing movement to have a government seizure of private utilities, especially of hydroelectric power, which was Edison's main source of energy. In 1911, California voters created the Railroad Commission to block monopolies in utilities and railroads (in 1946, the name was changed to California Public Utilities Commission) and in 1917, voters forced Edison to relinquish services within city limits, preferring their own city-run company, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The

amendment foreshadowed federal regulation that came in 1935 as a result of the Federal Power Act and the Public Utility Holding Company Act. Edison vehemently opposed any kind of regulation and aggressively marketed itself as an altruistic customer- and employee-owned corporation, framing itself as a public enterprise with few private interests outside of its customers' wellbeing. As historian Clark Davis has argued, the political turmoil of the 1910s and 1920s around regulatory politics caused Edison to politicize its employees.<sup>274</sup> Edison routinely educated its white-collar workers through internal publications and employee handbooks that outlined the threat of public-owned services, warned of government regulation, and praised policies that would be beneficial to the corporation. A common tactic was to link the advocacy for public ownership to that of socialism, as seen in an Edison pamphlet written in 1931 by George L. Hoxie, Edison Economist and Research Engineer:

One of the most widespread and powerful propaganda machines now operating in the United States is directed by those whose primary object is the socialization of all basic industry. ...Opponents of electric utility companies constantly circulate slanderous and untrue statements regarding those utilities; such slanders are put forth in order to facilitate the spread of the false doctrine of SOCIALISM.<sup>275</sup>

Edison also attempted to influence how its employees voted when it came to utility-related measures, urging them to educate their friends and family as well as holding “employee’s banquets” that were in fact political rallies.<sup>276</sup>

During the 1920s, the “tone of [Edison’s] organizational culture stood in sharp contrast to its early formal and authoritarian style” that resulted in a more “cooperative

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<sup>274</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 56–57.

<sup>275</sup> George L. Hoxie, *Propaganda* (Los Angeles: Southern California Edison Company, 1931), 3–4. Box 384, folder 9, Southern California Edison Records, The Huntington Library.

<sup>276</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 57.

style and a kinder tone in internal communications.”<sup>277</sup> Clark Davis argues that this shift arose from the need to counteract unions and the mounting evidence of the correlation between employee satisfaction and profits and productivity.<sup>278</sup> In addition to praising the commitment of its employees and their role in the Edison “family,” in the late 1920s, Edison began sending flowers along with a company representative to visit sick employees and even hired a chaplain to offer support during times of crisis.<sup>279</sup> These programs boosted morale and showed Edison was interested in the welfare of its employees. Stock ownership was another benefit offered to employees that helped to create equal investment in the financial success of the corporation but also raised funds for construction projects during the 1920s. The success of stock options was clear, as by 1924, almost all of its permanent employees owned a share of the company.<sup>280</sup> The inclusion, then, in 1931 of artistic programs such as the lobby of its headquarters represented a continuation and expansion of the company’s paternalistic, morale-boosting measures and offered a benefit to not only the general public but also employees.

The same importance placed on cooperation and altruism for its employees was extended to Edison’s public face in order to cultivate a more human corporation. At every opportunity, its motto of “Good Service, Square Dealing, Courteous Treatment” was mentioned to reinforce its honest approach to business. Characteristic of Edison’s attempt to make itself more relatable, in 1925, the corporation introduced

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<sup>277</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 102.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–3.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

the endearing figure of Busy Buttons, a cartoon bellboy who personified the spirit of Edison service and electricity with a pillbox hat that mimicked early twentieth-century light switches (fig. 15). Indicative of this inclusive corporate culture, Busy Buttons represented an early example of how Edison used art to appear more accessible and foreshadowed its use of a sombrero and *serape* wearing-Ready Kilowatt during the 1940s and 1950s (fig. 16). From 1928 to 1932, Edison's internal employee newsletter was titled *Busy Buttons' Bulletin*. In 1925, Edison even had a staff writer put together a book told from Busy Button's point of view, *The Story of Busy Buttons*. In it, Busy Buttons outlined Edison's commitment to its consumers, stockholders, and employees and tells the reader that employees don't just work *for* the company, they work *with* it, stressing the cooperative.<sup>281</sup> He went on to explain to readers how they too could be a part of this family through the purchasing of company stock, which was, as expected, framed as a sound investment.<sup>282</sup> As a mascot for an electric company, Busy Buttons was often featured in advertisements pointing to a list detailing how long different appliances could run for the cost of a penny, always encouraging consumers with his slogan, "Electricity is cheap, use more of it!"<sup>283</sup> In its new building, Edison further attempted to persuade customers with an inviting display area of electric products including a kitchen filled with all-electric appliances that were demonstrated by a friendly female representative.

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<sup>281</sup> *The Story of Busy Buttons* (Los Angeles: Mayer Company, 1925), 5. Box 382, folder 9, Southern California Edison Records, The Huntington Library.

<sup>282</sup> "What Busy Buttons Will Do for One Cent," *Torrance Herald*, January 24, 1929, n.p.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

Other advertising campaigns of the period similarly positioned Edison as a friendly and accessible company, self-termed as a Home Company, consisting of egalitarian stockholders that formed a “great community...[of] your friends and neighbors...[who] come from every walk of life.”<sup>284</sup> It also distanced itself from other private utilities, clearly stating that it was independently owned and operated, with no connections to other companies.<sup>285</sup> This principle—that a massive company, like Edison, could in fact be made up of typical citizens—was expanded to the building itself. During its groundbreaking ceremony in 1930, chairman of the board John B. Miller declared “Like the company it represents, this building is not the work of any one man, but all those men and women who have given it their best thought and service.”<sup>286</sup> Following the end of providing electricity to the city of Los Angeles in 1917 and the unknown economic climate of the 1930s as well as fighting public ownership, Edison used every possible outlet to attract customers and create the public perception that it was an honest and prosperous corporation. This façade, however, lasted only through the terms of chairman of the board, John B. Miller, and president Russell H. Ballard. After they both died in 1932, Ballard’s successor, Harry Bauer, enacted swift changes to curtail expenses, including cutting the typical six-day work week to five, suspending all construction, consolidating departments, refinancing bonds, and modernizing outdated equipment. Furthermore, between 1929 and 1933, Edison reduced its workforce by 1,400 employees.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> “A New Home for a Home Company,” 17.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> “Corner-Stone Put in Place,” A1.

<sup>287</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 204.



Turning now to the murals inside the lobby of the Edison Building, the theme of electricity and the role the company played in energy's still unfolding narrative are found throughout the marble-clad lobby (fig. 17). Edison's investment in hydroelectric power was in large part due to its cost effectiveness in comparison to steam. Electricity produced from steam plants cost four cents a kilowatt-hour while hydroelectric power was generated for under one-tenth of one cent per kilowatt-hour.<sup>288</sup> With a clear economic benefit, Edison heavily expanded into hydroelectric power in the 1910s and 1920s, the success of which was proudly displayed throughout its lobby murals. Ballin's nine- by fifteen-foot mural *Power* is the focal point of the main lobby space and immediately visible as one enters.<sup>289</sup> Initially titled, *The Forces of Water*, it effectively highlights the history of energy in a way that fuses critical moments of discovery with Edison's own corporate history.<sup>290</sup> It is not known who may have suggested the general theme but Ballin understood the delicate nature of commissions. In his memoirs he pragmatically wrote "there are but four things a patron should furnish; the space, the money, the nature of the subject and the artist. ... Men have a better chance remaining great when they create what is required of them."<sup>291</sup>

The inclusion of two significant figures in this history continues Ballin's characteristically appropriate treatment of historical subjects (fig. 18). In the lower right, Dr. William Gilbert, the seventeenth-century father of electric and magnetic

<sup>288</sup> Myers, *Iron Men and Copper Wires*, 61.

<sup>289</sup> The title of Ballin's mural is often erroneously cited as *Apotheosis of Power*. This misattribution has persisted and unfortunately, given its pervasiveness, will continue.

<sup>290</sup> This title was noted on an early sketch of the mural found in box 26, Hugo Ballin Papers.

<sup>291</sup> Ballin, *The First Fifty Years are the Hardest*, 262, 265.

science, looks out to the viewer from behind Benjamin Franklin, recognizable in the act of performing his kite experiment from 1750. Hidden from view are Franklin's hands which hold the kite's string, joining it in the uppermost left hand corner of the mural. The vibrating green flame behind the pair is a reference to the mercury-vapor lamps widely used in the 1930s for streetlights and which gave off an intense blue-green hue when first turned on. Extending beyond the kite is a landscape described as "the hills and drainage that supply Los Angeles with the water that has been culled to generate electrical energy."<sup>292</sup> Rays of light shine through a cloud to cross a gushing arc of water that cascades from the opposite corner of the mural. Symbolic of opportunity, labor, and power, Ballin included a large hand that reaches out from the waterfall and directs the viewer's gaze down to the center of the mural.<sup>293</sup> Here, a monumental figure looks down as he rests from his labor "prodding the earth's stratifications" with the thin rod he holds as he "endeavors to mitigate the travails of humanity."<sup>294</sup> This figure could be a symbol for Edison's own "endeavors" to bring electricity to its customers through the development of new equipment to increase transmission line capacity. It could simultaneously reference the completion of the first large-scale hydroelectric project in the United States, Big Creek, as well as the construction of the Hoover Dam, which began the same year the building opened. Construction on the second phase of Big Creek took place from 1917 to 1929, resulting in five powerhouses with thirteen generators that produced 360 megawatts of

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<sup>292</sup> Hugo Ballin, "Murals on West Wall of Main Lobby," *The Edison Building, Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Southern California Edison Company, 1931), 13.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* In the final publication the hand is said to be symbolizing opportunity, but Ballin notes in an early sketch that the hand symbolizes labor and power.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

power, over half of Edison's entire capacity. The lower half of the mural contains the three allegorical figures described by Ballin as a workman "bowed under labor" with a Faraday Wheel to his left, the earth's fertility personified as a woman, and a nude "awakening youth."<sup>295</sup> Reinforcing the effort undertaken by the monumental figure above (and symbolically extended to Edison) these figures form "a trinity of constant and evolutionary representations in progress and development."<sup>296</sup> The trio is joined by a "little man with a pick" working at the mouth of a tunnel. This tiny man is symbolic of humankind's individual minuteness but also suggests that when combined with others "the great forces are harnessed."<sup>297</sup> This sentiment echoes Edison's proclamations around its family of stockholders, customers, and employees, which contribute to Edison's success only as an aggregate.

In this mural, Ballin's three powerfully-built, allegorical males—the youth and two laborers—represent a shift towards what art historian Bailey Van Hook has termed, "the dynamo." Van Hook argues that the dynamo represented "more 'virile' aspects of the national culture" and was "the masculine face of modern industry, dynamic in its force."<sup>298</sup> These "heroic, muscular, intensely physical workmen" replaced the plethora of virginal goddesses that populated earlier Beaux-Arts murals in

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<sup>295</sup> Ballin frequently took photographs of himself modeling the various poses, often with props, needed in his murals. Art critics have suggested that many of the women in Ballin's murals bear a resemblance to his wife, the silent film actress Mabel Ballin (née Croft, 1887-1958): "Wife's Beauty Adds Charm to Artist's Pictures," *New York Herald*, n.d., n.p. Box 29, folder 2, scrapbook, Hugo Ballin Papers (Collection 407). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Given Ballin's preference to use himself instead of hire models, it is probable he also used his wife as a model on more than one occasion.

<sup>296</sup> Ballin, "Murals on West Wall of Main Lobby," 14.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Van Hook, *The Virgin & The Dynamo*, 150.

America.<sup>299</sup> Van Hook also speculates that the popularity of dynamo figures point to the loss of physical labor in the lives of modern men as they transitioned from blue- to white-collar, managerial jobs.<sup>300</sup> In Los Angeles the division between physical and mental labor was extremely pronounced by 1930. Well below the national average for the time and surpassing New York, Chicago and San Francisco, close to one half of the male labor force in Los Angeles was employed in non-manual jobs.<sup>301</sup> Modernity personified, the monumental men embodied the power of industry as “the idealized message of labor’s nobility.”<sup>302</sup> The symbolic power these dynamos represented is matched only by the literal power produced by a dynamo—an electric generator that created direct, not alternating, current through electromagnetism. In use throughout Edison’s plants, the dynamo here serves as a double symbol pointing to the machinery and mechanisms that produce power and the figurative power that is harnessed by such monumental figures. While Ballin’s mural only hints at this double meaning, Barse Miller and Conrad Buff, as discussed later in this dissertation, call upon it explicitly and go so far as to channel the Machine Cult of the Italian Futurists.

A preparatory sketch by Ballin for this mural reveals that his monumental dynamo was once a virgin, complete with delicate drapery. Instead of laboring in the earth, she held a glowing orb to the outstretched hand in the sky. What ultimately prompted the replacement of the figure is unknown; but Ballin’s dynamo clearly emphasized the physicality of brute, masculine strength over the gracefulness of

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<sup>299</sup> Van Hook, *The Virgin & The Dynamo*, 168.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. See also Melissa Dabakis, *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture: Monuments, Manliness, and the Work Ethic, 1880-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>301</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 77.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 166.

delicate femininity, conceivably signifying the success of Edison while exalting its industrial labor force. In comparing the two versions, another change is noticeable. The bucolic landscape of the finished mural was originally more threatening with bolts of lightning striking a jagged, mountainous landscape. Possibly prompted by executives at Edison, or by Ballin himself, the tranquility found in the later version may have been more appealing to the mural's envisioned audience.

Reception of Ballin's murals was unquestionably positive. *California Arts & Architecture* described it as "A masterly conception of the Apotheosis of Power."<sup>303</sup> The reviewer went on to praise the mural, noting "its grandeur of scale, its sumptuousness of color, provide exactly the requisite elements to complete the design [of the lobby] as a whole."<sup>304</sup> This praise of Ballin's understanding of fit or appropriateness, in a way, is an acknowledgment of his mastery of decorum. In another review, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter noted how the murals by Ballin and others, when taken together, "dignify the art of the building and do credit to the artists" and, referencing the divide between purely decorative murals and those with aesthetic merit, went on to explain that "the decorations point [to] the fact that no amount of meaningless decoration can take the place of the direct arts of painting and sculpture."<sup>305</sup> Continuing, the reviewer cited Ballin's treatment of the mural that "celebrated the general theme of 'Power' in a panel as lively as a moment on the

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<sup>303</sup> "Office Building for the Southern California Edison Company, Los Angeles," 48.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> "Edison Art Distinctive," 28.

screen.”<sup>306</sup> What the reviewer sees as cinematic is indeed present and a result of Ballin’s own career within Hollywood.

Ballin had moved permanently to Los Angeles in 1917 at the behest of Samuel Goldwyn after he was hired by Goldwyn directly to serve as one of Hollywood’s first art directors—a job he negotiated after insinuating the staging and backgrounds in Goldwyn Pictures’ films left much to be desired and he, as an artist, could do much to improve it. Prior to his move Ballin was a successful easel and mural painter in New York, having just in 1916 received a prestigious commission to paint a series of murals for the Executive Chamber of the Wisconsin State Capitol. The fact Ballin left behind an already-established career as an artist to work for Goldwyn is a testament to how intrigued Ballin was by the new medium of film and the ways in which he saw he could apply his artistic sensibilities to it. However, Ballin found great difficulty in working with Goldwyn and they had a falling out after Ballin founded his own film production company, Hugo Ballin Productions, in 1920.<sup>307</sup>

Ballin’s damaged reputation after leaving Goldwyn and the lack of commercial success that led to the closing of his production company in 1925, drove him to return to painting. Through his connections in Hollywood and the local Jewish community, Ballin quickly received two private mural commissions for homes in Beverly Hills. Yet, the years spent designing, producing, and directing films made an indelible mark on Ballin and would influence his later murals. Ballin’s cinematic eye has been examined by MacKenzie Stevens in which she argues that its earliest expression can

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<sup>306</sup> “Edison Art Distinctive,” 28.

<sup>307</sup> At the same time, Ballin also wrote a number of novels, the most infamous of which was *Dolce Far Niente* which was published in 1933 and loosely based off the escapades of Santa Barbara’s elite.

be found in the Warner Murals of 1929 painted for the Wilshire Boulevard Temple.<sup>308</sup>

As evidence of Ballin's filmic aesthetics, Stevens points to Ballin's sweeping panorama as well as his layering of objects, figures, and vignettes that mimic film stills. In many ways, Ballin's Edison mural shows similar treatment as can be seen in his handling of the overall composition and his episodic groupings of figures that are dispersed throughout the canvas at various depths. These elements create a sense of movement and motion, similar to that of a camera panning over a scene, and produce the feeling of an unfolding Hollywood epic for viewers in the lobby of the Edison Building.

As one continues into the elevator lobby, the mural series by Conrad Buff and Barse Miller includes simplified, abstracted figures and backgrounds, echoing tendencies in avant-garde art of the 1930s while still suggesting key landscapes and machinery relevant to the financial pursuits of Edison (fig. 19). Born in Speicher, Switzerland in 1886, Buff emigrated to Los Angeles when he was twenty years old. He first studied embroidery and lace design at the School for Arts and Crafts in St. Gallen, Switzerland from 1900–03 and then painting at a private art school in Munich, Germany. Once in California, he attended the Arts Students League of Los Angeles from 1910 to 1913. Serving as one of his first introductions to mural painting, in 1917, he assisted Edgar Payne on an 11,000-square-foot mural series for the Congress Hotel in Chicago. As he developed as a mural painter, Buff believed murals should be an integral part of a room, needing "to be in harmony...[and] not be too obvious...never

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<sup>308</sup> MacKenzie Stevens, "Picturing Jewish History in 1920s Hollywood: The Murals in the Wilshire Boulevard Temple" (paper presented at the 101<sup>st</sup> College Art Conference, New York, New York, February 15, 2013).

let [them] run away with the show.”<sup>309</sup> In 1924, Buff painted murals for three banks, the First National Bank of Covina, the Eagle Rock State Bank in Los Angeles, and the First National Bank of Chino. Other murals include those for the William Penn Hotel in Whittier (1926), the Glenn Inn in Glendale (1927), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Huntington Park (1928), and the Guarantee Building and Loan in Pasadena (1929). Later examples included a PWAP mural for Santa Monica High School (1934) and a Section mural for the Manteca Post Office (date unknown). His obvious success in this realm led him to be regarded as an “outstanding creative artist in mural and decorative work in Southern California” by the architectural firm Travers and Kingsbury.<sup>310</sup>

In 1930, Buff approached the architects of the Edison Building directly about a possible commission. He described the process in an oral history given in 1968:

I heard that the Edison Company was putting up a big building downtown. ...So I got to thinking, wouldn't it be wonderful, since the Edison Company got most of its power from the High Sierra, if they could use murals depicting the source of the power in the Sierras, since I was always interested in painting the Sierras.<sup>311</sup>

Buff had assumed correctly and was rewarded with the commission of six panels in the elevator lobby. Unbeknownst to him, a fellow artist, Barse Miller, had also inquired about a commission and submitted sketches. Miller was a recent transplant to Los Angeles from New York and was a friend of Buff's through the California Art Club. Neither knew the other had presented drawings, but it was Buff who was officially chosen for the commission, no doubt also due to his recent regional success

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<sup>309</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 276, 278.

<sup>310</sup> South, “A Singular Vision,” 54.

<sup>311</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 136.



that affirmed his mastery of mural painting. Sympathetic to Miller's disappointment at being rejected and facing a tight deadline, Buff offered to split the commission with Miller, provided that the panels were harmonious in color and theme.<sup>312</sup> Whereas Ballin received six thousand dollars for a single mural, Buff and Miller split five thousand dollars for the six panels in the elevator lobby.<sup>313</sup> Upon learning how much more Ballin had been paid, Buff noted that he and Miller "learned not to underestimate our price."<sup>314</sup>

Buff's murals for the Edison Building are collectively titled *White Coal* (fig. 20). Coined by the French engineer Aristide Bergès at the Exposition Universelle de Paris in 1889, white coal was a commonly referred to name for hydroelectric power.<sup>315</sup> In the booklet that was published by Edison about the murals, Buff explained that he had two chief goals with this commission: "First, to put on canvas as dramatically and simply as possible the idea of White Coal, and second, to make the murals both in design and color, one with the architecture."<sup>316</sup> The second point was of particular importance to Buff as he believed an artist should "not just paste a picture on the wall, but [have it] conform to the architectural scheme."<sup>317</sup> Painted in muted tones, Buff's handling of color does not compete with the surrounding marble and coffered ceiling.

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<sup>312</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 136–38.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>315</sup> Marc Landry, "Water as White Coal," *RCC Perspectives* 2 (2012): 7.

<sup>316</sup> Conrad Buff, "Murals on the East Wall of Elevator Lobby," *The Edison Building, Los Angeles* (Los Angeles, CA: Southern California Edison Company, 1931), 17.

<sup>317</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 155.

For Buff, color “should express something...[and] has two characteristics: one is the emotional and the other is the functional.”<sup>318</sup>

Buff’s three panels are united by a landscape of pristine white snow, the source of Edison’s power, and “the severe and primitive High Sierras of gray blue granite,” rendered in a cool purples.<sup>319</sup> Below, giving a sense of scale, are minute triangular pines that rise from the ground. While not as dominating as Ballin’s dynamos, Buff’s pair of monumental giants, Power and Light, still signify the force of modern American industry. To the left, a nude Power sits languidly among multi-story buildings, reminiscent of powerhouses at Edison’s Big Creek (fig. 21). Power rests his head on his left hand with his arm propped on a transmission line tower. With the other hand, he effortlessly begins to turn a large cogwheel that feeds the scene to the right. In that panel, Light, nude except for a bit of drapery across his lap, leans back as he moves to shield “his eyes from the too great brilliance coming from an unseen source” held in his left hand (fig. 22).<sup>320</sup> Like Power, Light is coupled with a water wheel that radiates out bands that were described by Buff as “symbolizing that this wheel is the key machine of hydro-electric power.”<sup>321</sup> The third smaller panel is an extension of the landscape found in the other two and contains part of a transmission line tower, complete with tiered insulators.

Directly across the elevator lobby are Miller’s murals. Entitled *Transmission* and *Distribution*, they are a study in the balance of human and mechanical forms (fig.

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<sup>318</sup> Buff, *Conrad Buff: Artist*, 278.

<sup>319</sup> Buff, “Murals on the East Wall of Elevator Lobby,” 17.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

23). While Miller executed a small number of murals, including at least three post office commissions awarded by the Section, it was his work with watercolors that was exceptional: *American Art* called him “one of the most accomplished watercolorists in America.”<sup>322</sup> Born in New York in 1904, Miller took classes at the National Academy of Design with Henry B. Snell (1858–1943). Sometime later, he attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and studied with Hugh H. Breckenridge (1870–1937) and Arthur B. Carles (1882–1952). It is possible that Miller and Maier-Krieg crossed paths when they were both working on the Sommer & Kaufman Shoe Store in San Francisco as Miller was hired by Weber to paint two frescos. In 1947 Miller became a National Academician with the National Academy in New York and during World War II served as an Army Major as part of the Combat Art Section. Miller’s work became well known through his post as an artist-correspondent for *Life* magazine. After the war, Miller settled back in New York where taught at the Art Students League (1947–73) and Queens College (1947–53).

Loosely following Buff’s overall color palette, Miller’s landscape is devoid of snow. His highly modeled and nude “heroic figures” are “wrought of copper and so colored, with attributes of electrical machinery.”<sup>323</sup> In the first panel, representing the story of the transformer and the motor, Distribution sits surrounded by a transformer station, the coils of which are clearly visible to his right (fig. 24). The colossal figure conducts electricity from his left hand, placed on a large wheel in front of him, to the

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<sup>322</sup> Barse Miller, interview with Ernest W. Watson, “Barse Miller: Painter at the Crossroads,” *American Art* (June 1946): 21.

<sup>323</sup> Barse Miller, “Murals on the East Wall of Elevator Lobby,” *The Edison Building, Los Angeles* (Los Angeles, CA: Southern California Edison Company, 1931), 15.

telephone he gazes down at in the lower right, a symbol of communication.<sup>324</sup> Unlike Buff, Miller linked his two panels with a rotary converter that extends through the space of each. To the left, the figure of Transmission kneels before a high-voltage tower, flanked by insulators (fig. 25). Held in his hand is what Miller described as “the circular nebula of electricity...surrounded by a corona of Light and...a tongue of Flame” with a raincloud collecting around it.<sup>325</sup> This link to rain illustrates not only its connection to hydroelectric power but also Edison’s relationship with its agricultural clients, further emphasized through the presence of familiar farming attributes such a barn, tractor, power saw, and irrigation pump.<sup>326</sup> Like Buff’s, Miller’s third panel is devoid of figures, consisting of a landscape with a converter and bus rod.

Miller had similar reservations as Buff about having his mural blend within the space of Edison’s lobby, noting “the artistic problems of making oil paint on canvas appear precious against marble.”<sup>327</sup> Possibly due to his lack of experience in executing murals, Miller also was concerned with creating an “interesting” work and having it “maintain a harmonic balance” with Buff’s panels.<sup>328</sup>

Miller’s fears may not have all been unfounded. Buff’s murals were better received than Miller’s in much of the press coverage of the Edison interior, even though they both took pains to make sure they were similar in style, coloring, and subject matter. For example, the *California Arts & Architecture* proclaimed Buff’s *White Coal* to be impressive and “developed both dramatically and simply,” yet

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<sup>324</sup> Miller, “Murals on the East Wall of Elevator Lobby,” 16.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

Miller's was not perceived as favorably, serving only "architecturally to ornament" the spaces above the elevators.<sup>329</sup> David Allison of Allison & Allison, architects of the Edison Building, praised Buff's murals as "highly satisfactory to everyone concerned and are, we believe, much appreciated by the public."<sup>330</sup> Another reviewer simply noted Miller's "intelligent grasp of the proper relationship of painting to architectural decoration."<sup>331</sup> The *Los Angeles Times*' coverage of the commission featured a reproduction of one of Gage's bas-reliefs alongside a panel by Buff, but nothing by Ballin or Miller. The article went on to compare the two elevator lobby murals in order to articulate the subtle difference in achievement:

Conrad Buff and Barse Miller were given the exceedingly difficult problem of designing murals to fit in narrow strips supporting the ceiling above the elevators. ...the heavily recessed and decorated ceiling, the rich colors of the surrounding marble, presented an acute problem which the painters overcame by the use of large, simple forms and carefully grayed color. The Buff panels... form an exceedingly impressive frieze—one which may not give up its quality at first sight, but grows richer with repeated seeing.... All this material is treated with style and dramatic force and a thorough understanding of the architectural problem involved, and Buff emerges through this difficult and none-too-gratefully placed frieze, a mural of real distinction. No less remarkable is Barse Miller's successful handling of his frieze. Not as simple nor as compellingly monumental as Buff's, Miller's frieze nonetheless attains great dignity and he is particularly successful in his treatment of the geometric forms of electric machinery. It was necessary for him to conform pretty closely to the Buff scheme and so there was not much left for him to do but vary on that theme. But his treatment throughout is impeccable in massing and drawing.<sup>332</sup>

Criticisms of Miller's murals may be due to the fact that Buff possibly had more creative control over the commission as he secured it first, or may imply that

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<sup>329</sup> "Office Building for the Southern California Edison Company, Los Angeles," 49.

<sup>330</sup> South, "A Singular Vision," 54.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> "Edison Art Distinctive," 28.

Miller was, simply, not a muralist and more accomplished in watercolor. While both artists evidenced varying degrees of successfully being able to accurately anticipate a client's needs and desires through moderating their own modernist tendencies, it was Buff who understood the theory of decorum far better than Miller. Subsequent murals by Miller had a similarly weak reception, many noting his excessively theatrical subject matter. Arthur Millier remarked that Miller's 1935 mural design for the Beverly Hills post office was "far too dramatic for this subtly designed building."<sup>333</sup> Miller's 1938 Section post office mural in Goose Creek, Texas was described as "impossible to ignore" as "it takes an act of will to stand in the lobby without profound embarrassment" at the inappropriately nude deity that dominates the composition.<sup>334</sup> Miller perhaps took such criticism to heart following World War II as he did not attempt to paint any more murals.

In Millier's review of the murals, he is sensitive to how Miller "is particularly successful in his treatment of the geometric forms of electric machinery."<sup>335</sup> Miller's desire to harmoniously intertwine man and machine in his murals was one that stemmed from his admiration of the aesthetics of modern machinery:

[There were] contrasts afforded in the association of human forms with the almost geometric design of machinery, as opposed to the irregular organization of nature. Man and nature in design are malleable. Machinery is not. Because the functional design of machinery is most often a thing of beauty in itself, it does not follow that it can be incorporated into design verbatim. The art in this conception lay in interlocking the parts, with the least amount of elimination and distortion, into a coordinated whole.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Arthur Millier, "Post Office Murals Seen," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1935, A8.

<sup>334</sup> Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America*, 138–39.

<sup>335</sup> "Edison Art Distinctive," 28.

<sup>336</sup> Miller, "Murals on the East Wall of Elevator Lobby," 15.

This privileging of the mechanisms of modernity was to be found not only in the murals of Miller but also Buff and points to connections to the Italian Futurists. Founder Filippo Tommaso Marinetti saw the art of the Futurists as being “the enthusiastic emulation of electricity and machines; an essential conciseness and compactness; the sweet precision of machinery and of well-oiled thought; the harmony of energies converging in one victorious path.”<sup>337</sup> The dynamo—both a figurative and literal embodiments of power—appears throughout the writings of the Futurists and is an expression of the optimism felt at the prospect of fusing man and machine, what is largely described as the Cult of the Machine. Futurist poet Enrico Cavacchioli described this new man-machine found in the Cult of the Machine and its connection to the dynamo using terms closely aligned with the production of electricity: “If you want to live, you must create a beautiful mechanical heart, open the red-hot outflow of the furnace, and electrify yourself with millions of volts like a dynamo! You have to turn life into an automated dream.”<sup>338</sup> Furthermore, the power plant itself, like Edison’s, was also an intriguing symbol of the Futurists’ Cult of the Machine and held the potential of not only power but the future, an example of which is Umberto Boccioni’s 1910 painting *The City Rises* where the unbridled potential of power is personified as a horse.

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<sup>337</sup> F. T. Marinetti, 1913, quoted in Günter Berghaus, “Futurism and the Technological Imagination Poised between Machine Culture and Machine Angst,” in *Futurism and the Technological Imagination*, ed. Günter Berghaus (New York: Rodopi, 2009), 23. See also Martin Meisel, *Chaos Imagined: Literature, Art, Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 371.

<sup>338</sup> Enrico Cavacchioli, 1912, quoted in footnote 19, Berghaus, “Futurism and the Technological Imagination,” 26. See also Judy Davies, “Mechanical Millennium: Sant’Elia and the Poetry of Futurism,” in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, eds. Edward Timms and David Kelley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985): 65–79.

With these artworks, Edison countered public attacks on abuses of power and championed, instead, the viewer's role in the progress of the company, which it argued was owned by the public and existed unselfishly only to bring electricity to the people for the betterment of their lives. The reciprocal relationship offered to its customers by Edison can be articulated this way: the greater amount of electricity used, the larger the company could expand and the more workers it could employ, thus ultimately benefiting not only the individual consumer but also the larger economy of Southern California during a time of great instability.

### **The Corporate Whitewashing of Los Angeles's History: The Title Guarantee Murals**

While Title Guarantee did not have a negative public image to counter with its commission like Edison, the necessity to draw clientele and tenants as well as its rivalry with the Title Insurance and Trust Company, could have been incentive enough for artistic innovation in the new building. As noted earlier, the Title Insurance and Trust Building offered its public only a simple tile triptych by Ballin on the exterior of the building. Executives at Title Guarantee were thus seen to offer a remedy to their rival's cultural failings through their own mural commission. Following this line of thinking, the company did, in fact, position the commission as a way "to align itself with that modern tendency which seeks to bring contemporary art to the immediate enjoyment of the public...offering stimulation to the imagination."<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 1.



Upon casual inspection, Ballin's six panels in the elevator lobby seem to offer a simple account of regional history. But closer study suggests that these multi-layered murals illustrate an interpretation of local history that is corporate-centric and directly informed by the context of the Great Depression (fig. 26). Given the uncertain future of the real estate market in 1931, Title Guarantee needed to secure its place in the economy while simultaneously attracting what little business there was at the time, as well as finding tenants to fill the other half of its building. If Maier-Krieg's staunchly Greco-Roman bas-relief evoked a sense of reverence and wisdom that stemmed from highlighting Title Guarantee's many decades of business experience, Ballin, too, was careful to choose moments in his mural cycle that highlighted two distinct and relevant themes for his patron (and thus was decorous as it satisfied the parameters of the commission by engaging with seemingly appropriate subject matter).<sup>340</sup> One was the civic narrative popularized by boosters that traced the region's transition from a supposedly inert, unproductive pueblo to a bustling, modern metropolis and praised the city's Spanish period by almost entirely erasing the role of Mexicans and Native Americans. Ballin's contrasting sets of images capture this dichotomy. The other was the highly contested and often racially motivated history of sanctioned land acquisitions that alluded to the early shaping of property rights in Los Angeles. Both themes were directly related to the title company's own dealings as the Title

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<sup>340</sup> The exact parameters of the commission, aside from price, are unknown at this time but archival documents of Ballin's show that a mural cycle on local history was mutually agreed upon by both the title company and the artist. Furthermore, Ballin often talks of his fondness for illustrating historical scenes, his quest for accuracy, and the enjoyment he found in researching the details of historical characters. Elements in the Hugo Ballin Papers at the University of California, Los Angeles show that he collected a number of supporting documents and illustrations that helped him to correctly portray historical figures.

Guarantee held an archive of historical records that covered every lot in the county since the California joined the Union in 1850.<sup>341</sup> Exploring these complicated associations necessitates dedicating space in order to fully understand the cultural context of these murals.

To begin unraveling Ballin's murals, one must look to the ethnically problematic reading of Los Angeles's history that had been aggressively promoted through a Spanish Fantasy Past by local booster organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, and a group defined by historian William Deverell as "elite, city-building whites."<sup>342</sup> By erasing much of the city's racial and ethnic realities, these groups were able to create a romanticized version of California's past prior to American control that was not only nonthreatening but easily instrumentalized to support the boosters' goals of economic growth. This was achieved through the promotion of a constructed history that foregrounded an idealized and romanticized Spanish period of governance that spanned from 1781 to 1821 over the Mexican period of 1821 to 1848. Seen by the city's boosters and civic leaders as uncivilized and devastatingly fruitless in its development of the region, making Los Angeles "a poor and dusty backwater with little charm," the Mexican period ended in the violent clashes of the Mexican-American War.<sup>343</sup> By contrast, the idyllic Spanish period was celebrated as a time of "romance, leisure, and simplicity as refreshing as a morning of spring," and was complemented by the industrious nature of the American period that brought

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<sup>341</sup> "Downtown Skyscraper Completed," *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1931, D2. In the article, the company was declared to be "the most complete and modern title plant in the world" a statement that was repeated a great deal in the press.

<sup>342</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 7.

<sup>343</sup> Kropp, *California Vieja*, 5.

expansive urban development, industrialization, and productivity, thus negating any contributions made during the Mexican period.<sup>344</sup>

Praise of California's Spanish past led to, what Charles Fletcher Lummis called Hispanophilia, a growing interest in all things that could be vaguely considered Spanish, which paradoxically included many elements that were actually of Mexican or Latin American origin—music, food, dances—yet were successfully marketed under the general banner of “Spanish.”<sup>345</sup> Hollywood also capitalized on this trend with Mary Pickford in *Ramona* (1910), Douglas Fairbanks as Zorro in the eponymous film (1920), and Rudolph Valentino as the “Latin Lover” following his roles in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) and *The Sheik* (1921). Historian Phoebe S. Kropp argues that this nostalgia was further marketed through the formalizing of the El Camino Real highway in the first two decades of the twentieth century, linking Northern and Southern California missions for motoring tourists, the Panama-California Exposition held in San Diego in 1915, and the popularity of Spanish-colonial architecture in wealthy enclaves such as Rancho Santa Fe.<sup>346</sup> These events were coupled with the 1908 opening of the Mission Inn in Riverside and the staging of two theatrical productions, *The Mission Play* (1912), based on John S. McGroarty's 1911 book about the history of the California missions, and *The Ramona Pageant*, an adaption of *Ramona*, which is still held annually in Hemet ever since it debuted in

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<sup>344</sup> Marion Parks, *Doors to Yesterday: A Guide to Old Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: La Fiesta Association, 1932), as quoted in Jennifer Beatriz Gonzalez, “Los Fiesteros of Olvera Street: Constructing an Imagined Spanish Heritage for Los Angeles,” *Perspectives: A Journal of Historical Inquiry* 39 (2012): 84.

<sup>345</sup> See Charles Fletcher Lummis, *The Spanish Pioneers* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1914) 113; Estrada, “Old Plaza and Olvera Street,” 112. Estrada defines Spanish as non-Mexican.

<sup>346</sup> See Kropp, *California Vieja*.

1923. The early years of the 1930s would mark the city's embrace of the Latin American and Spanish in a very public way. First was the opening of Olvera Street in 1930, an open-air strip of shops, restaurants, and museums in downtown Los Angeles that offered visitors the experience of a greatly idealized Mexican village that presented its inhabitants as docile, friendly, and content to live a life of near poverty. Second was the 1931 revival of La Fiesta de Los Angeles, a multi-day carnival organized around the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the city that celebrated its Spanish heritage at the cost of nearly erasing its Mexican roots.

### **Señoritas, Siestas, and Sombreros: Olvera Street**

The expansion of the United States economy during the 1920s gave rise to a wave of 500,000 Mexican immigrants, who settled mostly in Texas and California, and represented some eleven percent of the total recorded immigration for the decade.<sup>347</sup> In the Southwest, Los Angeles received the largest number of Mexican immigrants and by 1930, Los Angeles was the second largest racially diverse city in the United States after Baltimore.<sup>348</sup> Their increased presence in the 1920s amplified the propagation of a Spanish Fantasy Past that began at the turn of the century and fueled the intense craze for all things Latin. Within this context, Olvera Street, originally called Paseo de Los Angeles, opened in 1930 as “A Mexican Street of Yesterday in a City of Today” and featured a 500-foot-long street of shops, museums, and restaurants that satisfied a yearning to recapture an imagined “old Mexico” that

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<sup>347</sup> Estrada, “Old Plaza and Olvera Street,” 111.

<sup>348</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 14.

was equated with a constructed nostalgia for a romanticized Spanish past.<sup>349</sup> Christine Sterling, the “Mother of Olvera Street,” undertook the crusade to save and renovate the strip, which included the oldest existing home in the city, the Avila Adobe, into the tourist destination it is today. Sterling campaigned for the Olvera Street project from 1926 to 1930 and enlisted the help of both the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and Harry Chandler of the *Los Angeles Times*. Chandler, “a sentimentalist as well as a pragmatic businessman,” was intrigued by the proposal, not only because he was personally interested in Mexican culture, but because it played into his desire for the development of Union Station adjacent to the street.<sup>350</sup> With Chandler’s backing, Sterling ran articles in the *Los Angeles Times* and, coupled with publicity stunts and aggressive fundraising, drummed up the necessary support for the redevelopment project. After four years, Olvera Street opened with great fanfare on Easter Sunday 1930 and Sterling reigned supreme over the festivities. Ever since, it has continued to be a popular tourist destination—albeit one that it a complete illusion.

In many ways, Olvera Street’s touristic and commercial success came from how it “provided Angelenos with an ‘illusion’ of Mexico, free from all the abominations of rural Mexican village life, its folk culture, abject poverty and dirt.”<sup>351</sup> It supported the romanticizing of all things Spanish and perpetuated negative stereotypes about this marginalized ethnic group as they were “deemed as dirty, ill equipped to learn English and lazy.”<sup>352</sup> As historians William Deverell and Natalia

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<sup>349</sup> Estrada, “Old Plaza and Olvera Street,” 115. See also Kropp, *California Vieja*, 207–60.

<sup>350</sup> Gonzalez, “Los Fiesteros of Olvera Street,” 113.

<sup>351</sup> Estrada, “Old Plaza and Olvera Street,” 116.

<sup>352</sup> Gonzalez, “Los Fiesteros of Olvera Street,” 83.

Molina have argued, there was a stigma around Mexican-Americans and recent immigrants from Mexico. They were depicted as being unsanitary and harborers of communicable diseases, especially following the 1924 pneumonic plague in Los Angeles that killed forty people (ninety percent of whom were of Mexican descent).<sup>353</sup> Furthermore, the misconception of a poor work ethic was immortalized by the wildly popular image of what William Estrada describes as a “Mexican *campesino* reclining against a giant *saguaro* cactus with his knees drawn up to his chest and his sombrero tilted over his face while he takes a siesta,” found then (and today) on everything from ceramic plates to salt and pepper shakers to postcards.<sup>354</sup> What visitors would have encountered on Olvera Street, as Kropp argues, were Mexican character types—sultry señoritas, quaint craftsmen, and docile peons—that comprised “a harmonious, quiescent labor force that remained content in picturesque poverty, singing instead of striking.”<sup>355</sup>

Yet in the early years of the Great Depression, this constructed past and Los Angeles’s much-touted prosperity were beginning to be at odds with its present reality. Olvera Street and its adjoining plaza became an increasingly political site for protests and gatherings, as well as aggressive immigration raids. On March 6, 1930, the Communist Party and the Trade Union Unity League held a rally with over 10,000 people to bring awareness to the crisis of the unemployed. The rally was met with

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<sup>353</sup> Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 129; and Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 182, 172–206.

<sup>354</sup> Daniel D. Arreola and James R. Curtis, *The Mexican Border Cities: Landscape Anatomy and Place Personality* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 90, as cited in Estrada, “Old Plaza and Olvera Street,” 116.

<sup>355</sup> Kropp, *California Vieja*, 239.

police brutality in the plaza.<sup>356</sup> Almost a year later, an immigration raid was held on Olvera Street as part of California's repatriation program in order to deport United States citizens of Mexican descent. The officers closed the two entrances to the street and asked some four hundred people to line up with their immigration papers. If none could be provided, then officers threatened deportation.<sup>357</sup> These two examples serve to illustrate the realities that were present just below the quaint façade of Olvera Street. Thus the contested space of Olvera Street was created by boosters as a destination where locals and tourists could be transported to a picturesque Mexican village, free to interact with a sanitized, submissive culture.

### **A Fiesta for Los Angeles: Commemorating Old California**

Building on the momentum of Olvera Street, La Fiesta de Los Angeles was resurrected in 1931 to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's founding in 1781. The ten-day celebration aimed to recapture "the gaiety and romance of Old Californian days and nights of yore," and was firmly grounded in celebrating the region's Spanish past (fig. 27).<sup>358</sup> The celebration had originally taken place annually from 1894 to 1914; it was sponsored by various booster organizations, including the Merchants' Association, Chamber of Commerce, and Board of Trade. Typically featuring a mix of "frivolity and frolic" in the form of parades, balls, and carnivals, the

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<sup>356</sup> Gonzalez, "Los Fiesteros of Olvera Street," 80.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid. For more on this raid, see Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza* 165; Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 75; and Kropp, *California Vieja*, 231.

<sup>358</sup> *La Fiesta de Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: La Fiesta Association, Ltd., 1931), 2.

original intent of the Fiestas was to rival New Orleans' Mardi Gras.<sup>359</sup> These urban carnivals, as William Deverell has argued:

offered the opportunity to further—in highly public fashion—the racial and ethnic distinctions Anglos wished to make between themselves and others. ...La Fiesta offered elitist Anglos in Los Angeles the ideal vehicle by which to forget—whitewash—both the unpleasantness of recent decades [the Mexican American War] as well as the entire bloody history of the Southwest throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>360</sup>

Historian Jennifer Beatriz Gonzalez contends that a powerful organization, Los Fiesteros, capitalized on these pervasive stereotypes in the 1920s in order to characterize Los Angeles during the Mexican period as “marked by passivity and fruitlessness,” reinforcing a civic narrative that celebrated Los Angeles’s Spanish past.<sup>361</sup> Los Fiesteros (officially known as La Fiesta Association) was a group of twenty-five members of Los Angeles business and social elites, including Harry Chandler, who first came together to restore Olvera Street with Christine Sterling and served as the organizing committee for the 1931 La Fiesta de Los Angeles. Gonzalez argues that Los Fiesteros used the “nostalgia of quaint, simple, and romantic Spanish days...to establish an idealized and harmonious image of early Los Angeles” in order to offer “a story of progress that inherently glorified an idyllic past and excluded the Mexican American community to promote a modern future.”<sup>362</sup> Much as Olvera Street offered visitors a fabricated Mexico, the organizers of La Fiesta were shrewdly aware of the construction they were promoting—one that honored the Spanish days of Old

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<sup>359</sup> Ellen Leech, “La Fiesta de Los Angeles: A Celebration of Moment, Marking the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the City,” *California Arts & Architecture* (August 1931): 17–18, 47.

<sup>360</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 59.

<sup>361</sup> Gonzalez, “Los Fiesteros of Olvera Street,” 83.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 79.



California and exploited stereotypes of Mexicans as being more concerned with siestas than with being productive members of society.

For its 1931 iteration, the grand festivities were intended to “embody all that the word Fiesta ever implied, a series of gay, pleasing festivals.”<sup>363</sup> A brochure printed by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce excitedly proclaimed, “Lights, color, flowers, beauty, romance, action—will blend artistically and enjoyably in Los Angeles....A week of fiesta! Days and night of pageantry depicting all the splendor of the days of the dons in Southern California! Re-enacting the founding of the early missions!”<sup>364</sup> Some were skeptical that the true meaning of the Fiesta—the real predicates on which it was founded—would be overshadowed by Hollywood artifice and glamor, as evidenced by *California Arts & Architecture* writer Ellen Leech, who warned:

But there is danger that in trying to be very modern, Los Angeles may substitute noise and clamor for a real welcome to her guests. Steam whistles do not constitute a graceful greeting and should not take the place of the meaningful, though soft-spoken salutations of other days. Sirens can never be mistaken for the wish embodied in *Vaya con Dios*.<sup>365</sup>

Despite such reservations the event was an overwhelming success and, even though the city was in the midst of the Great Depression, almost six hundred thousand people were thought to have attended ticketed events, while an equal number came to free events.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Leech, “La Fiesta de Los Angeles,” 47.

<sup>364</sup> Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce brochure, “La Fiesta de Los Angeles California 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday, September 4-13, 1931,” had events listed each month from May 1931 to Jan 1932 from as far north as Fresno and Bakersfield to San Diego and Upland.

<sup>365</sup> Leech, “La Fiesta de Los Angeles,” 47.

<sup>366</sup> Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 204.

Given the lack of a strong, unified museum presence in the city during the time of the event, the Artists' Council of the Los Angeles Civic Bureau of Museum and Art took on the responsibility of organizing a California Artists' Fiesta in conjunction with La Fiesta de Los Angeles. The Artists' Council was comprised of "artist club groups" who desired, as *California Arts & Architecture* surmised, to "stage some sort of demonstration which would tend to make their fellow citizens a trifle more art conscious—to distract them, perhaps, from the economic and political vexations of their day."<sup>367</sup> The jury, described only as a "capable group of artists," selected five hundred and seventy-three works from the nine hundred submissions to be exhibited throughout downtown during the Fiesta. The council partnered not with the County Museum but with local hotels, shops, and art clubs, such as the California Art Club, which hosted the opening night at Barnsdall Park. Local businesses "provided exhibition space in their galleries and store windows, [which] defrayed costs of printing announcements, catalogs and posters, and contributed the valuable time of executives and their staffs" to help support the events.<sup>368</sup> While it was hoped La Fiesta de Los Angeles and the California Artists' Fiesta would continue to be an annual event, the economic pressures of the Great Depression took hold and neither were staged again after 1931.

Together these two events early in the 1930s, the celebration around the La Fiesta de Los Angeles and the opening of Olvera Street, helped to fuel the rewriting of the city's history—one that revered its Spanish roots while rejecting its Mexican ties,

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<sup>367</sup> "California Artists' First," *California Arts & Architecture* (September 1931): 7.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

both past and present and adds a layer of complexity to the reading of Ballin's mural commission for the Title Guarantee Building.

### **Historicizing Los Angeles: Hugo Ballin's Mural Cycle**

It was within the context of Olvera Street and La Fiesta de Los Angeles that the murals were unveiled. On one level, Ballin's mural cycle contributed to the cultural capital of not only the building, but also its tenants (prospective and actual) and the Title Guarantee company as a whole. In addition, the murals reinforced the company's history of land acquisition and rights in the region and supported the popular civic narrative that romanticized the Spanish golden age of California. Throughout the panels, a dichotomy of power is present which corresponds to this narrative. Those of European descent—what at the time was termed as simply “Anglo,” meaning “not Mexican,” to borrow Phoebe S. Kropp's usage of the word—are contrasted with those from the Americas who are depicted as lacking autonomy and authority.<sup>369</sup> Native Americans and those of Mexican ethnicity, are, in particular, rendered passive observers, silently watching the changing land and times in which they are helpless to intervene. This passivity is likened by boosters to the Spanish Fantasy Past ideology that recast the period of California's Mexican governance as a time of decline and regression, with Native Americans grouped together as unresisting bystanders to the impending progress spreading across America.

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<sup>369</sup> “The term neither referenced individual ethnicity nor implied the lack of one; it simply signaled *not Mexican*.” Kropp, *California Vieja*, 9.

As visitors enters the elevator lobby, the first panel they would have encountered featured the figure and map of Lieutenant Ord (fig. 28). In the year following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded Mexican lands to the United States, Ord was responsible for conducting the first survey of Los Angeles in 1849, which arguably ushered in the era of formalized land claims with his mapping of city lots.<sup>370</sup> Here an impeccably dressed Ord, in a pose likely adapted by Ballin from a Mathew Brady photograph of Ord, authoritatively gazes out at the viewer and stands with one hand on his hip while the other holds a large brimmed hat. Dominating the center of the mural is a faithful replica of Ord's map with its title, "Plan de la ciudad de Los Angeles," written in Ord's hand. Behind Ord's right arm stands a figure (probably Ord's local aide) almost in full profile dressed in a poncho and wide-brimmed sombrero—who would have been understood as Mexican. Looking passively towards Ord, not towards the viewer, he holds a box emblazoned with the initials U.S.A. that contains Ord's surveying transit. In the background, behind the pair in the bottom left, is a small scene of the sleepy life in the pueblo in 1849 as the artist imagined it: a couple stands close to a hacienda as a pig and her piglets meander by. To the bottom right are two older Mexican women with heads and bodies wrapped in shawls. Tending to baskets of fruits and vegetables under palm trees, one woman sits in full profile while the other faces the viewer yet is completely absorbed in her task.

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<sup>370</sup> Title Insurance and Trust Company had a copy of one of the original maps by Ord. For more on Ord and his survey, see J. Gregg Layne, "Edward Otho Cresap Ord: Solider and Surveyor," *Quarterly Publication (Historical Society of Southern California)* 17, no. 4 (1935): 139–42; and W. W. Robinson, "Story of Ord's Survey: As Disclosed by the Los Angeles Archives," *The Quarterly: Historical Society of Southern California* 19, no. 3 (1937): 121–31.

Rising above them to frame the right side of the panel is lush and colorful tropical foliage.

It is no coincidence that this is the first panel one encounters, as it is directly related to the company's own activities and historical archive of records and maps. Declared to be "the most complete and modern title plant in the world," Title Guarantee held over one million records covering the complete history of lots in Los Angeles County since the 1850s (although its rival, the Title Insurance and Trust, held an early version of Ord's actual survey).<sup>371</sup> Furthermore, this first panel reinforces the company's relationship with historical regional land acquisition and supports the dominant framing emphasizing the prosperity that followed the end of the Mexican period of California's history. Surrounding and contrasting the commanding representation of Ord are both the pueblo scene and the women who reinforce the conception that the city under Mexican control was provincial and content to continue in its languid state. Accepted within this civic narrative is the fact that this time of passivity ended only with the introduction of American control and the suggestion that it was Ord's arrival that ushered in Los Angeles's subsequent era of dynamic growth.

As a visitor turned to call one of the elevators, she would see a pair of murals that continued to highlight the history of the region and reinforced the Spanish origins of the city. The panel to the left features a romanticized *mise-en-scène* glorifying the Spanish period (fig. 29). To its right is the January 13, 1847, signing of the Treaty of Cahuenga, also known as the Capitulation of Cahuenga (fig. 30). This event signaled

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<sup>371</sup> "Downtown Skyscraper Completed," D2.

an end to the Mexican-American War in the region and foreshadowed the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded Mexican lands to the United States. The mural is set on the veranda of the Campo de Cahuenga, near the Cahuenga Pass. In it, Lieutenant John C. Frémont actively directs a seated and resigned General Andres Pico to sign the treaty. This act could, as historian Caroline Luce argues, symbolize “that American leaders had to teach the Mexicans how to conduct orderly, civilized diplomacy.”<sup>372</sup> Behind Pico are a group of Mexicans in various states of engagement as the Californian landscape sprawls into the background. These figures are a point of origin around stereotypes stemming from the Mexican American War. Luce also contends that Ballin’s representation of Pico’s forces subtly reinforces that they—and their ethnic group—are “an ad-hoc group of ‘rough-and-ready’ fighters, rather than a disciplined army of professional soldiers, suggesting the inevitability of their defeat.”<sup>373</sup> Notably absent from Ballin’s version is Bernarda Ruiz de Rodriguez, the only female witness to the signing, who also had played a significant role in the drafting of the articles.<sup>374</sup> The importance of this historic moment, and its relation to California’s statehood in 1848, is commemorated by Ballin with the heraldic imagery of a decorative shield indicating the event and date in the upper right. This visual device may also support the concept of a Spanish Fantasy Past by proudly proclaiming the end of what was construed as an unproductive period under disorderly Mexican

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<sup>372</sup> Caroline Luce, “Title Guarantee and Trust Building – The Treaty of Cahuenga: Cinematic Influences,” Hugo Ballin’s Los Angeles, September 2014, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/hugo-ballins-los-angeles/title-guarantee-and-trust-building-the-treaty-of-cahuenga-1847?path=title-guarantee-and-trust-building-gallery-path>.

<sup>373</sup> Luce, “Title Guarantee and Trust Building.”

<sup>374</sup> Cecilia Rasmussen, “Woman Helped Bring a Peaceful End to Mexican-American War,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2002, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/may/05/local/me-then5>.

rule and welcoming, by contrast, the stability and civility that came with the governance of the United States. The panel's description points to the celebration of exactly this, "With the war over, the American flag was to float over Los Angeles, bands were to march and play, and the rank and file were again to be happy."<sup>375</sup>

Ballin's nostalgia for the Spanish period is further evidenced by his contemporary account in which he wrote that "life flowered at its best on the great ranches of Southern California."<sup>376</sup> Symbols of this Spanish California lifestyle are found in the left mural (aptly titled *Spanish Period* by Ballin), which features a central figure evoking Antonio Maria Lugo (1775–1860) standing in the foreground. Head of one of the oldest and most prominent families of the time, Lugo was the owner of the 30,000-acre Rancho San Antonio, granted to him in 1810, and mayor of the pueblo from 1816–19. In Ballin's panel, Lugo stands in full regalia, complete with a *gilet* and spurs, and rests his body up against a large bull that symbolizes the ranchos while turning his head to gaze at a woman to his left. Dressed in a traditional Spanish *trajes de faralaes*, *mantilla*, and *peineta*, and holding a fan to her face, we may infer she is Lugo's wife, Delores Ruiz de Lugo. To her right, an elderly woman stands with a cane to frame the scene. While this woman's ethnicity is unknown, both her hunched stance and complexion, which is notably darker and similar to those of the pueblo women in Ballin's Ord panel, make a stark juxtaposition with her female counterpart. The Lugos are further framed by a large wood lintel that recalls the porches of haciendas, complete with a dried chili pepper *reistra* hanging from a beam. Behind these figures

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<sup>375</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 6.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

is a ranchero on horseback whose large, muscular body is poised to throw a lasso into a herd of cattle seen behind the bull. The ranchero is framed in the center of the background of the panel as rolling green hills extend into the vista. Rising in the background above the hills are the tongues of fire, what Ballin describes as “the peril of the land.”<sup>377</sup> The presence of the Californios—California-born Spanish speakers—on the right is sharply contrasted with that of a Native American couple on the left. The muscular male stands in profile, holding in one hand a long staff that extends the height of the mural and in the other a handful of arrows, “ready for the hunt.”<sup>378</sup> To his left is a woman whose head is turned to the right, the same direction as Lugo, while she holds a nursing baby in her arms. Framing the couple and separating them from the scene to their right is a large disk painted to look woven “containing characteristic Indian symbols.”<sup>379</sup> Along the border are stylized animals and patterns from Native American pottery, while the center is filled with a mixture of human figures and animals that resemble those depicted in cave paintings. This mélange of indigenous imagery is apparently devoid of meaning and functions only to evoke a cultural contrast. Conjuring the days of sprawling pastoral ranches and great pageantry, this panel was considered so evocative that it was reproduced as the key image in the souvenir booklet for La Fiesta de Los Angeles, which was held in September of the same year the building opened (fig. 31). As in the other panels, Ballin glorifies a civilized Spanish California while relegating the region’s other ethnic groups, here the Native Americans and Mexicans, as passive observers.

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<sup>377</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 4.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.



Opposite the elevators are panels that represent the development of Los Angeles as measured by industrial and technological progress. As they are visible upon leaving the elevators, they confidently remind visitors as they leave of Los Angeles's—and Title Guarantee's—continued potential for growth and prosperity. Curiously enough, within this mural cycle these two panels contain Ballin's greatest degree of cinematic treatment. Both have sweeping panoramas that offer a sense of time unfolding across them. The multiple stories that unfold in each are a marked departure from the frieze-like companion panels that offer a static view of a single moment in time, such as in the Treaty of Cahuenga panel.

To the left, Ballin contrasts a view of the city in 1853 with that of September 5, 1876 (fig. 32). Marking the arrival of the transcontinental railroad to Los Angeles, this moment was for Ballin the “incident that ended the isolation of the pueblo and made possible the metropolis.”<sup>380</sup> Supporting the dominant civic framing praising the end of the Mexican period, Ballin includes a brass band to welcome the railroad, not an uncommon sight in late nineteenth-century Los Angeles. Further emphasizing the transformation of the city, Ballin has included a contrasting view of Los Angeles from 1853, the year of the first railroad expeditionary party to the region, through the mission-style archway on the left. Modeling his image after a similar view found in an early drawing of the city and supporting his claim about the superiority of the lush and fruitful Spanish period, Ballin wrote that the “adobe houses, like crumbs, lie in the

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<sup>380</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 10.

empty valley.”<sup>381</sup> As sharp Joshua Tree spines jut into the scene, Ballin has included an American couple standing on the hill overlooking the sleepy town in the lower left. Foregrounding the scene is a seated nude Native American with a small child cowering behind him and looking to the oncoming train rushing towards them. The once dominant figure is now symbolically stripped of power as he bows his head to the coming change signified by the railroad. Ballin’s positioning of the figures and the railroad creates the sense that the future is charging forward without any regard or concern about what may lay in its path. As in the Spanish Period panel, Ballin has filled the scene with a pastiche of Native American or Pre-Columbian objects—skull, mask, and basket. The Native American figure holds a Hopi Hemis kachina doll with its characteristic feathered, stepped tableta. This kachina ensures bountiful harvests and appears at the Niman, the Home-Going Ceremony, in July that marks the return of the spirits to their ethereal realm. It is not known if Ballin was aware of this history or included the doll based on its formal qualities, but its connection to one’s home makes the scene even more tragically poignant. Together, these objects evoke overly generalized indigenous traditions, ones that, ironically, were quickly disappearing as America expanded westward. The placement of this panel is directly across from the signing of the Treaty of Cahuenga; these two panels represent, on one level, events that ushered in the American period of California’s history, but on another, capture moments of great loss and change for non-Anglo members of the region.

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<sup>381</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 10.

The panel to its right directly supports the civic narrative of the progress that came with the American period and holds great significance as it responds directly to the context of the Depression through depictions of labor (fig. 33). As Erika Doss argues, “Because work was celebrated as the single most important factor in reviving the American economy, many 1930s artists turned to representations of the body of labor, albeit often on conflicted and contradictory terms that wavered between alienating victimization and hero worship.”<sup>382</sup> Illustrating Doss’ contradictions is the panel of Los Angeles envisioned as “a city rising to power...surrounded by manifestations of modern achievement.”<sup>383</sup> Here, Ballin has replaced the inert Native American figure in the previous panels with a robust dynamo, Power. This Titan-like figure symbolizes the raw energy of physical force and “man’s strength to achieve.”<sup>384</sup> His body echoes the vigor seen in the ranchero of the Spanish panel hanging directly across the lobby.<sup>385</sup> In Ballin’s mural, Power presses on a staff that extends to the full height of the panel. Employing the same visual device as in his Edison mural, the rod complicates the composition and activates the body of his dynamo through an engaging pose. It also allows for the limbs of each giant to engage in a variety of angular poses, offering an opportunity for Ballin to articulate the musculature of each monumental man. Furthermore, the phallic nature of the rod reinforces Ballin’s emphasis on masculinity. At the dynamo’s side is a small child who reaches up to the figure and

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<sup>382</sup> Doss, “Looking at Labor,” 241. See also Doss, “Toward an Iconography of American Labor,” 53–66; and Melosh, *Engendering Culture*.

<sup>383</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 12.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> The pose of Ballin’s Power is comparable to that of Hercules in Perham Wilhelm Nahl’s 1915 poster for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

symbolizes, for the artist, the younger generation that will benefit from the progress found in the mural.<sup>386</sup> To the left, Ballin features the greatest civil engineering project of his era, the Los Angeles aqueduct of 1913, modeled after popular images that circulated at the time, such as that published in the *Herald-Examiner* on December 13, 1926. Paired with the masculinity embodied in the rod, the feminine can be seen in how the length of the aqueduct's pipe resembles that of an umbilical cord.<sup>387</sup>

To the right, rising behind construction meant to signify "the evidence of man's success in producing wealth from the earth and by means of the tolls of invention," is the Title Guarantee Building, abstracted enough to stand as a symbol of economic development and prosperity for both the city and the company, complete with the head of an eagle, conceivably symbolizing all that is American.<sup>388</sup> But in 1931, public and private building projects in Los Angeles were not nearly as widespread as they had been in the 1920s, and as such, depictions of laborers on steel frames, similar to those seen in the lower right-hand corner, no longer had the same connotations as they had in the 1920s. Ballin's laborers do not inspire the viewer, as the two figures are not actively engaged in any kind of heroic work. Instead they huddle together, crouching over something unseen, creating a tight unit and almost sheltering each other. In this small detail, Ballin breaks, perhaps, with the propagandistic nature of the other panels by not heroicizing the two men, but instead illustrating the contested nature of masculinity and identity of which Doss writes. One

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<sup>386</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 12.

<sup>387</sup> I thank Grant Kester for pointing out this connection.

<sup>388</sup> *Mural Paintings in the Title Guarantee Building*, 12.

is left to wonder whether this is Ballin's personal vision for the future of Los Angeles and whether viewers at the time would notice this inconsistency.

The image of a future Los Angeles is sharply in contrast with the panel visible upon exiting the building, which portrays a life-and-death battle between a saber-toothed cat and an imperial elephant set within the iconic La Brea Tar Pits (fig. 34). Discovered in 1906, excavated fossils and bones were displayed downtown at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art beginning in 1913. They captured the public's imagination by representing the prehistoric saga of the region. The scene in Ballin's mural may have been influenced by the work of New York artist Charles R. Knight, who, in 1925, was commissioned by the museum to paint a fifty- by ten-foot mural for its La Brea Hall of fossils pulled from the tar pits.<sup>389</sup> Knight's mural depicts two saber-toothed cats pursuing not Ballin's elephant, but three giant ground sloths, one of which is already half-submerged in the tar. As historian Caroline Luce has suggested, the clashing animals may also be an allegory for the hyper-competitive nature of many of Los Angeles's industries—the visual and performing arts included.<sup>390</sup> Ballin's mural brings the cycle full circle as viewers leave with a weighty sense of the history of place, one that conveys a past unique to the region, a past that was hundreds of thousands of years old. Curiously, this final panel is free of people; it

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<sup>389</sup> "Pleistocene Site of City is Depicted in Painting," *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 1925, A1. Today this area of the museum is called Hancock Hall. A number of sculptures of extinct animals, like giant ground sloths and saber-toothed cats that appeared around the tar pits, were created by sculptor J. L. Roop beginning in 1929. Following Roop's death in 1932, the museum's resident taxidermist, Herman Beck, took over.

<sup>390</sup> Caroline Luce, "Title Guarantee and Trust Building: Allegory and History," Hugo Ballin's Los Angeles, September 2014, accessed June 9, 2015, <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/hugo-ballins-los-angeles/title-guarantee-and-trust-building-la-brea-tar-pits?path=title-guarantee-and-trust-building-gallery-path>.

is thus also free of the contested human histories of Los Angeles. Placed in a non-linear order that collapsed the natural, civic, and corporate, the murals of the Title Guarantee Building ensured that the role of the title company was intertwined with every phase of California's past and future.

Although it is difficult to judge the success of the title company's overall strategy at the time, the murals were positively reviewed and considered to be noteworthy contributions to the city's public art.<sup>391</sup> *California Arts & Architecture* described the work of "admirable artist, Hugo Ballin" as "extremely interesting, well proportioned and fitted to the architectural treatment, and harmonious in color to their marble background."<sup>392</sup> In its "News of the Art World" column, the *Los Angeles Times* stated that the murals "form an exceptionally interesting scheme of decoration...and constitute in our opinion Ballin's most distinguished mural contribution."<sup>393</sup> The magazine *Southwest Builder and Contractor* noted that Hugo Ballin was "the distinguished artist" behind the murals and the "treatment of the entrance and elevator lobby is one of the most interesting features of the building."<sup>394</sup> Despite such praise for his work, Ballin's stereotypical depictions of Mexicans and Native Americans in the Title Guarantee panels is problematic for the modern viewer. It is difficult to say with certainty what Ballin's relationship was to this kind of political content, as it is

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<sup>391</sup> *The Los Angeles Examiner* ran a short article covering the opening but it does not mention the murals, see "Title Company Opens Building," Finance Section II 8.

<sup>392</sup> "Murals by Hugo Ballin, Title Guarantee Building, Los Angeles," *California Arts & Architecture* (September 1931): 40–41.

<sup>393</sup> "News of the Art World: New Murals by Ballin," *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1931, 21.

<sup>394</sup> "Graceful Lines and Massing of Effects Characterize Los Angeles' Newest Office Building," 46–47.

unknown if these sentiments about the Fantasy Spanish Past were held by Title Guarantee executives, by Ballin, or both.

What exists in Ballin's memoirs speaks very little to the racial and ethnic politics of the time. Even Ballin's Jewish heritage was not a significant part of his life and informed his work to a small degree. To this point, he wrote that one did not need to be of the faith to produce work for that faith—the sheer range of works that he produced with both Jewish and Christian subject matter is further evidence of this.<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, Ballin's previous work has little trace of representations of non-white or marginalized subjects. He had a diverse circle of colleagues, which included a close friendship with the Mexican muralist Alfredo Ramos Martínez.<sup>396</sup> Moreover, Ballin's Jewish heritage may have, in a way, caused him to be sympathetic to marginalized ethnic groups. Ballin was blacklisted in Hollywood when he started his own production company after falling out with Samuel Goldwyn in the mid-1920s (which in many ways led to his return to painting). Most likely, Ballin was keenly aware of the importance of satisfying his patrons, even if their views were at odds with his own personal views—a skill he honed early in his artistic career in New York and then working within the small world of 1920s Hollywood. Clearly, Ballin reentered the art world in search of commissions at the exact moment such patronage was waning, and thus pleasing his private and public clients would have been of vital importance. As Ballin noted in his memoirs, "Painting always is and will be a precarious livelihood. ...It is more difficult to make a living in art than any other profession...[the artist's]

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<sup>395</sup> Ballin, *I'll be Damned*, 366.

<sup>396</sup> Nieto, "Mexican Art and Los Angeles," 131.

constant hope is that around the corner there is another commission.”<sup>397</sup> But his dedicated work ethic and savvy navigation of the city’s network of potential patrons, both private and public, was evidenced by the impressive speed with which he worked to deliver commissions on time and within budget. Furthermore, the large number of commissions he received in a relatively short period of time—the Title Guarantee project being his seventh large-scale commission in six years—proves that his accessible style and historically grounded handling of subject matter was attractive to clients, especially to his corporate patrons. Thus, his clichéd depictions of Mexicans and Native Americans at the Title Guarantee Building may not have been informed by personal conviction but arose instead from the necessity of satisfying his client and of working with the larger trends around the region’s promotion of a Spanish Fantasy Past.

## Conclusion

The two examples of cultural philanthropy discussed here reveal how commissioned works of art were strategically used by corporations in Los Angeles during the early years of the Great Depression. As corporate patrons, Edison and Title Guarantee demonstrate that companies of all sizes understood the many benefits that would be reaped from the investment of precious resources at a time when profits were scarce. The resulting commissions were positioned as cultural gifts to the city of Los Angeles, donated by altruistic corporations, which gained considerable positive

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<sup>397</sup> Ballin, *The First Fifty Years are the Hardest*, 267, 271; Ballin, *I’ll be Damned*, 40.



publicity and cultural prestige. The murals were promoted as attractive amenities and set the corporations apart from competitors. Hugo Ballin, Conrad Buff, Barse Miller, Robert Merrell Gage, and Eugene Maier-Krieg connected their work with local and regional history to speak strategically to economic fears about the resilience of their respective patrons. Furthermore, the murals offered viewers an educational and instructive experience of art within an everyday setting, as they would learn about the history of the region and each corporation's role within that narrative.

Many in Los Angeles optimistically hoped that the economy would recover quickly from the economic downturn, perhaps in time for the 1932 Summer Olympics. But in reality, the Great Depression was just beginning to take hold in California as shown by a survey of 1,500 businesses taken in the summer of 1931. Workers reported that a third of those employed two years prior had been dismissed and, of those still employed, all had either their salaries cut or their time reduced, but in many cases it was both.<sup>398</sup> By 1933, per capita wages fell by one half and roughly half of California's unemployed lived in Los Angeles.<sup>399</sup> The following chapter will explore two case studies of corporate commissions from 1935 and 1936, those for the Times and Sunkist Buildings. Together they exemplify the ways in which large corporations continued the tactical use of the arts to shape public opinion and respond to on-going struggles with labor movements within their ranks.

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<sup>398</sup> Davis, *Company Men*, 198.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid. It is estimated this number reached 344,000 people.

Chapter two, in part, contains material that was previously published in “The Apotheosis of Power: Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles during the 1930s.” *Public Art Dialogue* 4 (2014): 42–70.

### Chapter 3: Labor in Los Angeles: The Times and Sunkist Buildings

*Stand Fast, Stand Firm, Stand Sure, Stand True.*<sup>400</sup>  
—Personal Motto of General Harrison Gray  
Otis and the *Los Angeles Times*

Within the span of six months, between July 1935 and January 1936, the corporate headquarters for both the *Los Angeles Times*, and the citrus cooperative, California Fruit Growers Exchange (Sunkist), opened in downtown Los Angeles, a city that was much changed from the one that witnessed the opening of the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings in 1931 (figs. 35 and 36). On the surface, the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings of 1931 and the Times and Sunkist Buildings of 1935–36 appear to have more similarities than differences. Both pairs of buildings were built by well-known architects in a Moderne style; both strategically used advertising to tout the benefits of their building's location and amenities to tenants, customers, employees, and visitors. Finally, both featured commissioned architectural sculpture and lobby murals that drew heavily on historical imagery to present idealized versions of regional history which projected a self-assured, economically-sound corporation to its viewers. Yet in the four short years between openings, Los

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<sup>400</sup> Eliza Ann Wetherby may have first thought of this motto; see Irwin, *Deadly Times*, 23.

Angeles experienced moments of great optimism and instability as it weathered the depths of the Great Depression. These two polarities came together in 1932, a year when the city both hosted the Summer Olympics and David Alfaro Siqueiros unveiled his now-whitewashed mural, *América Tropical*, on Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles. In these contexts, the Times and Sunkist Buildings represent a shift towards greater conservatism in corporate architecture and art commissions that took place in Los Angeles during the mid-1930s. On one level, this shift was the result of economic concerns that were just as persistent in 1935 as they were in 1931. But, given the long, embattled relationship with organized labor that both the *Los Angeles Times* and Sunkist were experiencing, their commissions could also be said to be responding to the growing tensions between these groups brought on by the challenging social and economic effects of the Great Depression.

Much like other corporations in Los Angeles during the 1930s, the *Los Angeles Times* and Sunkist had to appeal to the public through their corporate commissions. 1935 saw the *Los Angeles Times* approaching a moment of transition as well as suffering public criticism over the many backroom real estate dealings of its publisher, Harry Chandler, including those associated with the construction of the downtown Civic Center. This instability was coupled with the newspaper's aggressive fight to protect its subscriber-base from moving to one of its rivals—such as the *Examiner*, *Herald*, or *Hollywood Citizen News*—due to its failure to cover relevant news and its own reporting biases as seen in its coverage of Courtney Chauncey Julian's Ponzi

scheme in the late 1920s.<sup>401</sup> Furthermore, the widespread public scrutiny directed at powerful corporations in Los Angeles during the first years of the decade was still rampant in 1935. The *Los Angeles Times*—along with what was seen as the Otis-Chandler “dynasty” comprised of its founder, General Harrison Gray Otis, and his son-in-law and successor, Harry Chandler—had already weathered numerous controversies turning on their inappropriate influence on local politics and suspicions about the political leanings of the newspaper itself. Through its new building and art commissions, the *Los Angeles Times* was able to recuperate its image. It presented itself as a newspaper that was dedicated first and foremost to the public it served in Los Angeles through the truthful reporting of the news and second to its loyal, open-shop employees (those not obliged to join a union as a condition of employment). The newspaper’s massive building, designed by Gordon B. Kaufmann, and its exterior bas-reliefs by Robert Merrell Gage projected confidence and stability throughout the Great Depression years. Coupled with this confidence, the building’s architecture and its murals also embodied an aggressive, symbolically weighted stance against unions, which the Otis-Chandler family dynasty blamed for the bombing of the second Times Building in 1910. However, Hugo Ballin’s murals in the Globe Lobby signify a curious mediation between the *Los Angeles Times*’ open-shop policies and the reality of its antipathy towards unions (fig. 37). On one hand, the murals are a perfect propagandistic embodiment of the corporation’s official platform of “liberty under the law” and “true industrial freedom”—present as slogans carved into the façade of its

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<sup>401</sup> For more on this, see McDougal, *Privileged Son*, 131–34.

building—yet when understood within the context of the *Los Angeles Times*' aggressive open-shop stance and the 1910 bombing, they can be seen to undermine or even challenge the official policy in ways that may have contributed to the end of Ballin's career as a corporate muralist (fig. 38).<sup>402</sup>

The motivations behind Sunkist's new building and art commissions echoed those of the *Los Angeles Times*. Sunkist was not unlike its numerous competitors who were struggling through the years of the Great Depression in the mid-1930s to continue their robust regional and national sales they enjoyed in the 1920s. In order to achieve, and maintain, financial success in relation to its rivals, Sunkist had to radically increase production and drive down costs; in doing so, it moved away from the small, family-owned and -operated farms on which it was founded on. Large commercial growers were courted instead, as these farms were able to maximize efficiency and output. Such success was owed in large part to employing inexpensive and plentiful immigrant labor, typically from Mexico, to work in packinghouses and citrus groves. Thus, Sunkist's new headquarters in downtown Los Angeles needed to stress permanence, stability, and optimism for its future when it opened its doors in January 1936. The building's exterior bas-reliefs by Harold F. Wilson (1877–1959) and two sets of commissioned pendant murals by Frank Bowers (1905–1964) and Arthur Prunier (1905–1973) depict complementary idyllic views of historical and

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<sup>402</sup> Longtime symbols of the newspaper, two eagles are carved onto the pillars that flank the main entrance to the Times Building. The eagles are perched in front of a shield, similar to that featured in the Great Seal of the United States. Text frames each eagle, and on the left, Truth is written above the bird, while Liberty Under the Law runs below it. On the right, Equal Rights is featured above the second eagle and True Industrial Freedom below it (fig. 38). While the sculptor of these is unknown, *California Arts & Architecture* reported it to be Robert Merrell Gage. "The Los Angeles Times Building," *California Arts & Architecture* (October 1935): 22.

present-day citrus growing and harvesting by family farmers, furthering Sunkist's nostalgic public image and their core ideals of production, cooperation, and distribution. Yet the murals—two flanking the lobby and two positioned across from each other in building's auditorium where weekly grower meetings were held—ignore the growing discontent experienced by Sunkist's largely immigrant labor force that resulted in the most violent citrus worker strike to date in Orange County just six months after the opening of its headquarters. Sunkist's commissions, as well as those for the Times Building, can be read as yet further examples of how private companies strategically employed art as a way to shape public opinion and erase the inconveniently troubling histories of the laborers who played important roles within the very same companies.

### **Los Angeles in the early 1930s: Communism, EPIC, and the Beginning of the Great Depression**

Since it was not as heavily industrialized as other states, Los Angeles experienced the impact of the Great Depression a few years after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The prosperity of the 1920s, therefore, lingered into 1930 and 1931 as agriculture, oil, and the region's film industry were outwardly sheltered from the worst and most immediate depredations of the Great Depression. This optimism can be seen in an editorial cartoon published in the *Los Angeles Times* on January 9, 1931, for the opening of the new Los Angeles Stock Exchange building.<sup>403</sup> In it, Miss Los Angeles,

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<sup>403</sup> "The Opening Quotation!," *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1931, 1.

personified as a señorita, holds up ticker tape streaming out of the building that reads: “Los Angeles is one of the fastest-growing centers of the world!” 1932 was a turning point, as it was a year of triumph with the hosting of the Summer Olympics and the arrival to the city of acclaimed Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros. Several ominous signs revealed troubling challenges to the utopia-tinged propaganda of the city’s boosters: protests over the cost of the Olympics; the forthright critique of the United States found in Siqueiros’ mural on Olvera Street; the possible closure of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art closing due to lack of funds; and the burden of supporting a steadily increasing number of unemployed residents. By 1933, the Great Depression had finally reached the Golden State, and in June of 1934, almost twenty percent of the state’s residents were receiving some kind of public welfare.<sup>404</sup> The early years of the 1930s also solidified the close working relationship of *Los Angeles Times* publisher, Harry Chandler, and Sunkist President, Charles C. Teague. Both served on the Xth Olympiade Committee in 1932 and were members of United For California, an organization that actively campaigned to defeat Upton Sinclair’s Democratic gubernatorial bid of 1934.

Like those who flocked to California during the 1920s, causing the population to increase sixty percent in one decade, settlers in California during the early 1930s were largely migrants from across the United States who had heard of the continued prosperity of a state seemingly immune to the Depression.<sup>405</sup> California historian, Kevin Starr, noted that in 1931 alone, 876,194 cars had entered the state and between

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<sup>404</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 227.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 223. Starr notes, on page 223, that the population of California grew from 3,426,861 in 1920 to 5,677,251 in 1930 and that of this, 1.8 million people were from other states.



1930 and 1934, over three hundred thousand people arrived in California, the majority from Dust Bowl states.<sup>406</sup> Los Angeles, in particular, was the destination for a large number of unemployed, single men. By 1931, it was estimated that ten thousand of these men arrived to Los Angeles County each month, and the Southern Pacific Railroad reported that during one month in 1932, it evicted eighty thousand boxcar “transients.”<sup>407</sup> In 1934, nearly forty percent of those receiving welfare in the state resided in Los Angeles County.<sup>408</sup> This sudden influx of people strained local economies as housing, health care, and educational services were overburdened. As a result, people searched for alternatives to the current welfare system, which many saw as failing, and a growing number turned to the principles of Communism and Socialism.

The appeal of Communism in the United States had been growing for some time prior to the Great Depression, yet during the early 1930s in California it found its strongest iteration in the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU). Established in 1930 and active till 1935 when its membership joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), CAWIU was founded in the Imperial Valley by William Zabulan Foster, a two-time Communist Party candidate for President. The national Communist Party USA supported CAWIU, and the organization was active in mobilizing and supporting agricultural workers’ strikes through the state. For example, in 1933 alone, CAWIU had a leading role in twenty-

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<sup>406</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 223–24.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 227.

four of the thirty-seven strikes that took place.<sup>409</sup> The legacy of strikes that gained momentum with the CAWIU in 1933 continued through 1939 as some 170 strikes of 90,000 canning and agricultural workers across the state were affected during these years with varying degrees of success.<sup>410</sup> California itself was the epicenter of these worker-organized protests during the mid- to late 1930s and, according to Starr, it “accounted for at least a third and frequently all of the agricultural strikes” that occurred in the United States at that time.<sup>411</sup>

In addition to upheavals in the agricultural sector during the early 1930s that were tied to Communist principals, Upton Sinclair’s campaign for Governor of California brought a proposal to end the economic woes of the state that was grounded in Socialist ideals. At the center of Sinclair’s campaign was a twelve-point plan entitled End Poverty in California (EPIC).<sup>412</sup> With Socialist and utopian roots, elements of EPIC were directed at for-profit companies and sought to realign production and demand in the state through redirecting surplus agriculture to those in need. An ardent Republican, Sunkist’s President, Charles C. Teague, was one of many prominent capitalists in Los Angeles who vehemently opposed Sinclair’s plan. Teague’s involvement against EPIC turned on his service as a founding member and chairman of United for California League (UFC), and his enlistment of a former

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<sup>409</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 69.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> For more on EPIC and Upton Sinclair’s campaign, see Donald L. Singer, “Upton Sinclair and the California Gubernatorial Campaign of 1934,” *Southern California Quarterly* 56 (Winter 1974): 375–406; Greg Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century: Upton Sinclair’s Race for Governor of California and the Birth of Media Politics* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1992); and John Kirch “Upton Sinclair and the Los Angeles Times: A Content Analysis” (paper presented at the AEJMC National Conference [History Division], Chicago, IL, 2008).

Sunkist advertising manager to create its anti-union publicity.<sup>413</sup> Membership in UFC (which necessitated a \$50,000 contribution) included prominent attorneys and C-level businessmen such as those from the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, Pacific Mutual Life Insurance, Southern California Edison, California Bank, the Los Angeles Street Railway Company, and Bullock's Wilshire Department Store.<sup>414</sup> A key member was *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler, whose newspaper published relentless attacks directed at Sinclair including the daily printing of misleading, out-of-context quotes by Sinclair on its front page.<sup>415</sup> Furthermore, *Los Angeles Times* columnist, Harry Carr, vilified Sinclair as a real estate speculator by pointing to evidence of the impressive profits Sinclair made from the sale of his Long Beach property, coupled with Sinclair's move from the more working-class city of South Pasadena to Beverly Hills just before the election.<sup>416</sup> In a few short months, UFC was thought to be responsible for erecting two thousand billboards and mailing over six million pamphlets with out-of-context and "carefully edited and convincingly attributed" quotes from Sinclair.<sup>417</sup> While Sinclair lost to the Republican candidate, Frank Merriam, twenty-six EPIC-aligned candidates were elected to the State Assembly, including Culbert Olson, who would go on to serve as Governor in 1938. The high-ranking businessmen—Teague and Chandler among them—that opposed Sinclair's EPIC plan serve to illustrate how active corporate leaders were in shaping

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<sup>413</sup> Sackman, *Orange Empire* 182.

<sup>414</sup> Richard G. Lillard, "Agricultural Statesman: Charles C. Teague of Santa Paula," *California History* 65, no. 1 (March 1986): 15.

<sup>415</sup> For more on Chandler's role, see Gottlieb and Wolt, *Thinking Big* 11, 202–212.

<sup>416</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 144–45.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 145, and Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century*, 201.

the economics of Los Angeles during the 1930s and how far they would go to stop a perceived threat.

### **The Arts at Odds: The Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art and the Los Angeles Art Association**

The arts in Los Angeles were a realm that also suffered during the early years of the 1930s. The Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art experienced great internal upheaval and saw the departure of key patrons during the decade. While the art department was able to finally hire Harry Muir Kurtzworth as its sole curator of art in 1931 (after not having an official curator for almost fifteen years), he held the position for only eighteen months, from January 13, 1931 to June 30, 1932.

Kurtzworth's tenure ended one month prior to the opening of the Olympic Arts Competition exhibition and was part of larger museum budget cuts that came as a result of the Great Depression. These cuts included not only absorbing Kurtzworth's position but also four other staff positions within the art department and mandated five furlough days a month for all museum employees.<sup>418</sup> Public outcry within the Los Angeles art community over what was perceived to be Kurtzworth's firing caused the museum's director, William A. Bryan, to announce that the museum would bring on Dr. Ernest Tross as an honorary (i.e. unpaid) curator in August of 1932. While the hiring of Tross never materialized, financial problems still plagued the museum and lead to a proposed four-month closure in March of 1934. When the announcement of

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<sup>418</sup> Moure, "The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum," 262, 264.

the museum's shuttering was made public, Samuel H. Kress, a New York-based collector who had a number of Italian Old Master paintings on loan to the museum at the time, donated the funds to keep the institution open for two weeks, which gave Bryan time to raise the additional funds needed to stay open.<sup>419</sup>

Yet financial backing came too late. Many crucial supporters of the museum saw its lack of leadership and economic problems as irreparable. In 1933, this caused a number of prominent benefactors in the Museum Patron Association to leave and found their own independent organization, the Los Angeles Art Association (LAAA).<sup>420</sup> The LAAA quickly attracted high-profile civic leaders, businessmen, and art patrons such as Harry Chandler, William May Garland, Edward Dickson, Willets J. Hole, Ernest C. Moore, and Harvey S. Mudd.<sup>421</sup> Within one year, the LAAA, with Kurtzworth as its director, acquired sixty-three works for its permanent collection, developed its membership to over 2,500, and held the wildly popular "All-California Art Exhibition" at the Biltmore Hotel, featuring the work of 1,500 California artists.<sup>422</sup> In 1938, the LAAA moved its headquarters downtown to the Earle Mansion, neighboring the Otis Art Institute in MacArthur Park, where it resided until 1957. So as not to be in direct competition with the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, LAAA shifted its focus in the early 1940s to the promotion of local, emerging

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<sup>419</sup> Moure, "The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum," 268. See also Schrank, *Art and the City*, 53.

<sup>420</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 55–56. For more on this split and the LAAA, see Moure, "The Struggle for a Los Angeles Art Museum," 266–68, and "History," Los Angeles Art Association, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.laaa.org/about/mission.html>.

<sup>421</sup> Harry Chandler became Vice President of LAAA in 1941. "Timeline," Los Angeles Art Association.

<sup>422</sup> Other exhibitions in the 1930s included that of Rembrandt etchings in 1934 and in 1937 a modern art exhibition drawn from local collectors that included works by Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, and Salvador Dali. Los Angeles Art Association, "Timeline."

artists, a mission to which it is still dedicated to today. In 1935, as in 1931, corporations—and those who headed them—vied for a role in shaping and contributing to civic culture through their commissions, as there was no clear entity leading the arts in Los Angeles.

### **Los Angeles Welcomes the 1932 Summer Olympics**

Just as Kurtzworth was ending his tenure at the museum, the opening ceremony of the Games of the Tenth Olympiad, was held at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in July 30, 1932.<sup>423</sup> A crowd of over 105,000 spectators attended each of the opening and closing ceremonies. Marking the largest attendance to an opening ceremony in Olympic history, these numbers were almost unfathomable at the time given the high costs of traveling to Los Angeles during the Great Depression.<sup>424</sup> The President of the Xth Olympiad Committee of the Games of Los Angeles, William May Garland, was a prominent businessman with a successful real estate business and a member of LAAA, as well as president of the California Chamber of Commerce. Garland first proposed the city host the Games in 1920 and promised, as has become a refrain in Olympic bids, that a new stadium would be built. Both came to fruition three years later when the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum was completed and the city was

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<sup>423</sup> See the Organizing Committee of the Games of the Xth Olympiad, Gwynne Wilson, and F. G. Browne, *The Games of the Xth Olympiad Los Angeles 1932 Official Report* (Los Angeles, The Xth Olympiad Committee of the Games of Los Angeles, U.S.A. Ltd., 1932), accessed March 10, 2016, <http://olympic-museum.de/o-reports/olympic-games-official-report-1932.htm>.

<sup>424</sup> Robert K. Barney, "Resistance, Persistence, Providence: The 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games in Perspective," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 67, no. 2 (1996): 148.

awarded the 1932 Games.<sup>425</sup> With little under a decade to plan, Garland quickly mobilized fellow civic and business leaders to join the Organizing Committee, enlisting the help of Chandler, with whom he worked with at the LAAA, along with Sunkist President Charles C. Teague, MGM co-founder Louis B. Mayer, Los Angeles Mayor John C. Porter, *The Los Angeles Evening Express* editor E. A. Dickson, and California National Bank President Fredrick Kiesel. As with their participation in local arts organizations such as LAAA, these business leaders understood the necessity of supporting and participating in cultural events that contributed both to the cultural capital of the city and its national profile.

Almost immediately, the Organizing Committee had to deal with mounting criticism over the cost of the Games, which were being called “Garland’s Folly.”<sup>426</sup> In 1928, a one-million-dollar bond measure was passed with a million-vote majority in order to finance Olympic construction, though in 1931, citizens called for its repeal in order to put the funds towards relief efforts.<sup>427</sup> Although the Olympics were promoted as creating jobs for thousands and bringing six million dollars into the local economy, the perceived commercial excess led some to vandalize shops that hung Olympic pennants and protestors to march on the state capitol with signs that read “Groceries Not Games! Olympics Are Outrageous!”<sup>428</sup> These acts of disapproval may have been

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<sup>425</sup> Garland spearheaded the raising of funds for the Coliseum’s construction in 1921 with the help of the Community Development Association where Chandler was a member along with G. Harold Powell, General Manager at Sunkist and Charles C. Teague’s predecessor.

<sup>426</sup> Ellen Galford, *X Olympiad: Los Angeles, Garmish-Partenkirchen 1936*, in *The Olympic Century: The Complete History of the Modern Olympic Movement*, vol. 10 (Toronto: Warwick Press, Inc., 1996), 119.

<sup>427</sup> Barney, “Resistance, Persistence, Providence,” 153

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

the motivation behind President Herbert Hoover announcing he would neither attend nor, as was the official custom, open the Games. Hoover formally cited “pressing duties” as a way to avoid further criticism of his participation, sending Vice President Charles Curtis in his place; yet in private, Hoover is to have remarked that holding the Games in the midst of the Depression was “a crazy thing. And it takes some gall to expect me to be part of it.”<sup>429</sup>

The city of Los Angeles was dealing with its own problems over budgetary issues as a result of financing relief programs and loss of tax revenue, which led the Mayor to call for a five-million-dollar reduction in the 1932–33 budget.<sup>430</sup> The Organizing Committee contemplated canceling the Games as sponsors threatened to back out when, just five months prior to the opening, no country had officially accepted the invitation to attend. Yet Garland and the Organizing Committee negotiated reduced prices for cross-country train travel that worked in tandem with special pricing on cross-Atlantic ocean liners.<sup>431</sup> Criticism over housing costs once athletes were in Los Angeles was answered with the first Olympic Village, the brainchild of Organizing Committee General Secretary Zach J. Farmer, where accommodations were only two dollars a night versus hotels, which charged an average of seven dollars a night.<sup>432</sup> The buildings were sold following the close of the Games on August 14 in order to recover some of the construction costs.

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<sup>429</sup> Barney, “Resistance, Persistence, Providence,” 156.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 155. European-Atlantic travel was reduced to just under \$200 and round trip travel from New York to Los Angeles on the train only cost \$130.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.* Women were housed at the Chapman Park Hotel.



Yet despite fears over a lack of participation from both athletes and spectators, the Games were a success and shaped many elements that are still a part of the Olympics today, including the use of photo-finish cameras, the two-week formula, the victory podium, and the media press box.<sup>433</sup> In addition, it was the first Olympics to make a profit, a testament to the effectiveness of Garland and the Organizing Committee.<sup>434</sup> Despite these successes, it was one of the last times that sport and the arts were linked through an Olympic art exhibition.

Olympic Art Competitions had begun in 1912 at the Stockholm Summer Games with only thirty-five entries. The 1932 Olympic Art Competition was the fifth iteration of seven, the last taking place in London in 1948.<sup>435</sup> 1,100 works of art represented thirty-one nations in four categories: painting, sculpture, architecture, and the graphic arts. Music and literature were additional areas for which work could be entered. The submissions were exhibited for one month, from July 30 to August 31, at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, where they were reportedly seen by over 384,000 visitors.<sup>436</sup> This enormous number of visitors signaled the continuing appeal of art exhibitions at a time when the museum's art curator had just been dismissed. Stipulations for entries included works being created with subject matter relating directly to sports by a living artist between January 1, 1928, and May

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<sup>433</sup> Barney, "Resistance, Persistence, Providence," 157.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>435</sup> For more on Olympic Art Competitions, see Richard Stanton, *The Forgotten Olympic Art Competitions* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2002); Bernhard Kramer, "In Search of the Lost Champions of the Olympic Art Contents," *Journal of Olympic History* 12 (May 2004): 29–34; and The Olympic Museum, "The Olympic Museum: Art Competitions 1912–1948," 2016, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://olympic-museum.de/art/artcompetition.htm>.

<sup>436</sup> Organizing Committee of the Games of the Xth Olympiad, *1932 Official Report*, 763.

1932. Medals were given in the four categories; the United States won three first prizes, four second prizes, one third prize, and four honorable mentions. Both Hugo Ballin and Robert Merrell Gage entered artworks, Ballin in painting and Gage in sculpture, although neither placed.

Ballin had another role in the Olympics. He served alongside the Title Guarantee Building architects Donald B. Parkinson and John Parkinson on the eight-person Advisory Committee for Preparations responsible for the architecture, engineering, organization, and decorating of the games. By virtue of this position, Ballin may have secured the commission to design the Olympic Medallion that hung from the Coliseum's peristyle (fig. 39). Seventeen feet in diameter, the medallion featured a seated Pallas Athena holding a scroll with the motto of the Olympics—*Citius, Altius, Fortius*—in front of a shield bearing the American flag. Behind her are the five Olympic rings, united by a laurel branch. This very public piece of art would have further cemented Ballin's reputation as a well-regarded artist and possibly made him even more attractive to potential corporate patrons who wished to capitalize on his prestige.

Each Olympic Art Competition category had an International Jury of Award which included well-known representatives from each field, including Eliel Saarinen and Myron Hunt in architecture, Haig Patigan and Carl Milles in sculpture, and Eugene Savage and Benjamin Brown in painting. Interestingly, David Alfaro Siqueiros was a member of the jury, judging painting, a detail rarely noted in contemporary scholarship. This mission may be due to the fact that Olympic Art

Competitions are still not widely acknowledged within the history of art and Siqueiros' name was repeatedly misspelled as "Sigueiros" in the Organizing Committee's Official Report.<sup>437</sup> In many ways, Siqueiros, described as a "famed Mexican artist" of "world-wide acclaim" in the local press, was an ideal juror as he was an easily-accessible international artist of great distinction who had been in Los Angeles since May.<sup>438</sup> The visit of an international artist who enjoyed such high critical acclaim signaled to the larger art world that Los Angeles, in many ways, was a city worthy of attention. Siqueiros came to Los Angeles eager to continue his explorations of the medium of the mural, yet his politically-minded murals quickly proved to be too radical.

### ***América Tropical: David Alfaro Siqueiros in Los Angeles***

Once David Alfaro Siqueiros was in Los Angeles, most likely at the behest of Nelbert Chouinard, who met him in Taxco, "newspapers celebrated the presence of such a heavyweight intellectual and covered his meetings...as they would a visiting dignitary."<sup>439</sup> With this immediate welcoming into the Los Angeles art world, Siqueiros' schedule quickly filled with exhibitions of his work and guest lectures at local arts institutions. Shortly after, Siqueiros began teaching a class on fresco painting,

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<sup>437</sup> There is no mistaking that it is indeed the Mexican muralist in photographs included in the Official Report; see, for example, Organizing Committee of the Games of the Xth Olympiad, *1932 Official Report*, 755, 756. First prize in painting went to David Wallin of Sweden and second prize went to Ruth Miller of the United States.

<sup>438</sup> "Great Work of Art to be Unveiled: Ceremony for Siqueiros's Fresco Scheduled for Tonight," *Los Angeles Times*, October 9, 1932, 11.

<sup>439</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 45. For more on Siqueiros' visit to Los Angeles, see Schrank, *Art and the City*, 44–52.

advertised in local newspapers, at the Chouinard Art Institute.<sup>440</sup> Siqueiros' efforts were heralded by the *Los Angeles Times* as ushering in a new era of mural painting for the city: "Fresco painting will be revived in all its ancient glory if a group of Los Angeles artists have their way about it, and the day may come when every concrete wall in the city will bear testimony to their efforts and enthusiasms."<sup>441</sup> His Chouinard students, whom he called collectively the "Bloc of Mural Painters," experimented with mobile murals made out of plaster and chicken wire. Robert Merrell Gage and Barse Miller, who both worked on the Edison Building, were among those who were enrolled in his class and assisted Siqueiros with his murals. On July 7, Siqueiros unveiled the mural, *Worker's Meeting*, on an exterior wall of an outdoor courtyard at Chouinard that was partially visible from the street. Depicting a scene of workers pausing on scaffolding, attentively listening to an orator with a raised fist, it is unclear if it was the mural's subject matter that led to it being painted over within a year or the fact that the experimental medium quickly began to disintegrate.<sup>442</sup>

Less than a month later, Siqueiros had the opportunity to paint what would be his most contentious mural in the city, *América Tropical*. F. K. Ferenz, head of the Plaza Art Center, offered Siqueiros a sixteen- by eighty-foot wall on the second-story of the Italian Hall on Olvera Street. Early discussions about the subject matter centered around stereotypical tropes of Latin America that would blend with the constructed romantic nostalgia of Olvera Street, what Siqueiros described as "a

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<sup>440</sup> See "Study Art at Chouinard," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1932, B6.

<sup>441</sup> "Fresco Painting Resurrected: Art, Centuries Dormant, Revived by Mexican Genius," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1932, A2. Other students included Millard Sheets, Tom Beggs, Paul Starette Sample, Lee Blair, and Donald Graham.

<sup>442</sup> See Schrank, *Art and the City*, 48.

continent of happy men, surrounded by palms and parrots where fruit voluntarily detached itself to fall into the mouths of the happy mortals.”<sup>443</sup> Yet the imagery in the mural was far from what was initially expected, as Siqueiros instead offered a jungle panorama, thick with twisted roots, pre-Columbian objects, and a looming Mayan temple in which an indigenous man is crucified on a double cross with an eagle perched above, a clear reference to the United States. Although not an impulsive addition, the crucified man was reportedly not added by Siqueiros until the night before the unveiling, possibly because he anticipated how contentious it might be.<sup>444</sup> To the right of this scene, and most visible from the street below, are two snipers, a Mexican *campesino* and “an anachronistic generalized representation of a Maya warrior,” which would later be the first portion of the mural to be whitewashed.<sup>445</sup> The mural’s pointed imagery was amplified given that it hovered over the faux Mexican village of Olvera Street, so popular with tourists, and Olvera Street’s very real Latin Americans trapped playing weary stereotypes to visitors.

When the mural was unveiled on October 9, 1932, the incendiary subject matter was not at first acknowledged; instead it was described simply: “a tropical scene with a Mayan temple in ruins and overgrown with jungle growth” and a depiction of “Nature’s combat with man’s creation is shown by huge roots of the trees

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<sup>443</sup> As quoted in Goldman, “Siqueiros and Three Early Murals,” 324.

<sup>444</sup> “Great Work of Art to be Unveiled,” 11.

<sup>445</sup> Anna Indych-López, “Mexican Muralism in the United States: Controversies, Paradoxes, and Public,” in *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History*, eds. Alejandro Anreun, Robin Adèle Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 216.

which have partially demolished the temple.”<sup>446</sup> Dean Cornwell, a local artist who had been working for the past five years on a multi-panel mural cycle at the Los Angeles Public Library, acted as lead assistant on the project and spoke at the mural’s dedication. Cornwell said that mural paintings like *América Tropical* “awaken a new appreciation for the decoration of blank walls.”<sup>447</sup> While he made no mention of the numerous corporate murals that existed in the city in 1932, Cornwell called for additional murals throughout the city, noting, “Whether this form of art shows in the decoration of the walls of theaters, libraries, the sides of building or even on billboards, it will be a good thing, for then we shall have something beautiful in place of something blank.”<sup>448</sup> *América Tropical*’s seemingly ordinary reception in no way foreshadowed its radical recasting and whitewashing in less than two years.

While frustrations over the mural’s imagery may have been felt at the unveiling by the likes of Olvera Street boosters Christine Sterling and Harry Chandler, as Sarah Schrank has argued, it was not until 1934 that the mural’s content was overtly recast as Communist.<sup>449</sup> In August 1934, following the destruction of Diego Rivera’s mural at Rockefeller Center, *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier warned of the threat of supposed Communist imagery, fulminating that “the Communist party is enlisting more artists to drive home its subversive aims through painted wall

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<sup>446</sup> “Siqueiros Plaza Art Dedicated,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1932, A2; “Great Work of Art to be Unveiled,” 11.

<sup>447</sup> “Siqueiros Plaza Art Dedicated,” A2.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Schrank, *Art and the City*, 48.

pictures.”<sup>450</sup> Just two years earlier, Millier had been an enthusiastic supporter of Siqueiros’ work, yet in this article he writes that the artist “also gave impetus to the painting of Communist propaganda,” citing *América Tropical* as including “a Red conception of the effect of foreign investment in Mexican industries.”<sup>451</sup> The “Red conception” Millier refers to would have been difficult to view at the time of the article’s printing. This is because the portion of *América Tropical* that was visible from the street, specifically the two snipers on the far right, had been whitewashed that same year and, although the exact date is unknown, the whole mural was completely covered-over by the late 1930s.<sup>452</sup>

Siqueiros’ mural was not the only one to be whitewashed; others included Leo Katz’s mural at the Frank Wiggins Trade School, removed in late 1935, and Myer Shaffer’s 1937 mural, *The Elder in Relation to Society*, at the Mount Sinai Home for Chronic Invalids, whitewashed in 1938. Shaffer’s was the most publicly accessible and its pointed critique of American entanglements in Latin American became an easy “red” target.<sup>453</sup> Furthermore, it stands as a symbol that captures the sensitivity of business and civic leaders in Los Angeles to issues around labor, race, and commerce and foreshadows the reception of the *Los Angeles Times* and Sunkist mural commissions.

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<sup>450</sup> Arthur Millier, “Communists Incited to Stir Up Trouble Through Artists’ Propaganda-Painting,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 1934, A1.

<sup>451</sup> Millier, “Communists Incited to Stir Up Trouble Through Artists’ Propaganda-Painting,” A1.

<sup>452</sup> Goldman notes that Sterling would not renew the lease on a second story bar in the building until the mural was completely covered. Goldman, “Siqueiros and Three Early Murals in Los Angeles,” 325. *América Tropical* was not properly restored until 2012 when the Getty Conservation Institute and the City of Los Angeles undertook the project.

<sup>453</sup> See Schrank, “Public Art at the Global Crossroads,” 435–57; and Schrank, *Art and the City*, 57–60.

This set of events shaped the cultural landscape of 1935 and 1936, the years the Times and Sunkist Buildings opened, respectively. In the public eye, battles ensued over the exaggerated Communist threats found in Sinclair's EPIC plan and Siqueiros' public murals. The financial anxieties of the Great Depression permeated everyday life as the city's museum threatened to close due to a lack of funds, and criticisms around the cost of the Summer Olympics caused the President to abstain from involvement. This lack of institutional and community support for the arts during the mid-1930s opened up a space for corporations to bolster their public image through their role as key cultural philanthropists. Through the art and architecture of newly built corporate headquarters, corporations like the *Los Angeles Times* and Sunkist offered a space in which to experience the arts at a time when those opportunities were dwindling and strategically framed their patronage so that it reinforced their public image.

### **Bombings and Battlements: The *Los Angeles Times*' Battle Against an Open Shop**

When the *Los Angeles Times* moved to its fourth home in 1935, it was already well established as a successful daily newspaper. First published on December 4, 1881, the *Los Angeles Times*, then called the *Los Angeles Daily Times*, was housed in a two-story brick building at the corner of Temple and New High Streets.<sup>454</sup> Ohio-born General Harrison Gray Otis became its editor in July of 1882 at the age of forty-five.

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<sup>454</sup> By 1882, the newspaper was absorbed by the Mirror Printing Office and Book Bindery, its printer due to financial problems. Within two years later, General Otis was able to turn the newspaper around and by 1886, he purchased the company and incorporated the printer and newspaper into the Times-Mirror Company.



Two years later, with Colonel H. H. Boyce, General Otis purchased the Mirror Printing and Binding House, the commercial press printing the *Los Angeles Daily Times*. In doing so they established the Times-Mirror Company, which is still the parent company of the *Los Angeles Times* today. Due to the newspaper's success under the leadership of General Otis, the *Los Angeles Times* built a three-story brick and granite building on the corner of Broadway and First Street for \$50,000 in 1886 and "Daily" was removed from its name. It was this building, the second home of the *Los Angeles Times*, that was destroyed by a bomb on October 1, 1910, planted allegedly in retaliation for the newspaper's unyielding commitment to an anti-union open shop. The newspaper forever memorialized this event in its slogans, symbols, and buildings, and the Otis-Chandler family dynasty never let the public forget what they saw as a direct attack on their right to industrial freedom.

General Otis had been a vocal opponent of closed shops as early as 1890 when he fired staff that joined the International Typographical Union Local 174. He and many members of the anti-union booster organization Merchants and Manufacturers Association were proponents of the "myth of labor contentment" in the city.<sup>455</sup> These businessmen claimed that, among many other things, open shops kept labor costs low, attracting more businesses to the region, which would in turn grow the economy and bring prosperity to all.<sup>456</sup> Furthermore, they argued that because Los Angeles was largely open shop it better fostered "employee initiative" and allowed employers to

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<sup>455</sup> Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, 24.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

freely hire (and fire) at will.<sup>457</sup> Employee testimony supporting these sentiments was widely celebrated even though it was clear that its enthusiasts had been highly coached to deliver such carefully crafted statements.<sup>458</sup> These sentiments continued well into the twentieth century, as evidenced by a promotional *Los Angeles Times* pamphlet from the 1940s that extolled the benefits of an open shop: “Not merely has it freed [employees] from the constant drain of dues, ‘benefits’ and loss of time from strikes, but their actual, average wage is higher than in comparable communities under union domination.”<sup>459</sup>

By 1901, with mounting grievances against the newspaper, the Printing Trades Council tried to unionize the *Los Angeles Times* by distributing ten thousand buttons that read: “I don’t read the *Times*,” displaying effigies of General Otis in the streets, and boycotting the businesses that advertised in the newspaper.<sup>460</sup> The efforts of the Printing Trades Council were not successful and General Otis rallied local business leaders in 1904 to further strengthen anti-picketing laws, deny strike leaders jobs, and blacklist union members.<sup>461</sup> General Otis’s resistance to the American Federation of Labor’s efforts to “subjugate” the *Los Angeles Times* continued through to 1910, which contributed directly to the mounting tensions between national labor organizations active in Los Angeles and the newspaper, leading to the bombing of its physical manifestation, the Times Building, in late 1910.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, 14; see also chapter one of *Sunshine Was Never Enough*.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>459</sup> “History of the Times,” pamphlet, *Los Angeles Times*, n.d., 2.

<sup>460</sup> Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, 27.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>462</sup> “History of the Times,” 2.

On the eve of the bombing, during the midst of the “most violent and extensive labor organizing campaign” to date in Los Angeles, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an editorial cartoon that captured its views of unions.<sup>463</sup> Titled *Catching On*, it depicts a “deceived worker,” who has stopped in the middle of sawing a board to grab the hand of a “labor union grafter” who is reaching into his pocket, seemingly to steal money.<sup>464</sup> The worker turns while still bent to yell, “No more!” to the union representative, who is affluently dressed in a three-piece suit complete with a sparkling jewel pinned to his shirt, two pocket watch chains, a bowler hat, and a fat cigar hanging from his mouth.

At 1:07 am on the night this cartoon ran, a dynamite explosion destroyed the Times Building on the corner of First and Broadway. Detonated in the alley next to the newspaper, the explosion caused an exterior wall to collapse. Massive linotype machines fell through the second floor, crushing the natural gas lines in the basement, which, in turn, ignited barrels of flammable ink. The resulting fire destroyed what was left of the building. Once the rubble had been cleared, twenty-one employees were dead and many more were seriously injured.

A highly-publicized witch hunt followed for the alleged “union terrorists”<sup>465</sup> responsible for what the media quickly titled “The Crime of the Century.”<sup>466</sup> Editorial cartoons continued to be a platform for the *Los Angeles Times*, as seen in the October

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<sup>463</sup> Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, 39. See also the narrative history novelization by Howard Blum, *American Lightning: Terror, Mystery, and the Birth of Hollywood* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2009).

<sup>464</sup> “Catching On,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1910, II4.

<sup>465</sup> Ed Ainsworth, “History of the Los Angeles Times,” *History of the Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles: *Los Angeles Times*, n.d.), 25.

<sup>466</sup> Gottlieb and Wolt, *Thinking Big*, 85.

4 *No Mistake* cartoon, where the hand of “Public Opinion” points to a frightened “Unionite Dynamiter” with blood dripping from his fingers.<sup>467</sup> Two cartoons published soon afterwards further reinforced the connection between an open shop and the *Los Angeles Times*’ motto of “true industrial freedom.” The day after the bombing, with the *Los Angeles Times* being printed in the *Herald* offices, the cartoon *Inextinguishable* featured the *Los Angeles Times* as the Statue of Liberty, holding aloft a torch that reads “industrial liberty.”<sup>468</sup> The following day, on October 3, the *Los Angeles Times* took a much stronger stance with *The Cause Must Win*.<sup>469</sup> Here, the newspaper is personified as Justitia with furrowed brows and pursed lips. To show that justice is on the side of the *Los Angeles Times*, Justitia’s blindfold has been pushed back, and she brandishes a sword that bears the words “For Industrial Freedom” on it, again connecting the phrase with the open shop.

The McNamara brothers, James and John, were arrested for the bombing in April. On December 1, they pleaded guilty, bolstering the ongoing Otis-Chandler family campaign for an open-shop Los Angeles as the brothers were (conveniently) members of the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers Union. James McNamara took responsibility for the bombing and his brother confessed to bombing the local Llewellyn Iron Works the year before. Their lawyer, Clarence Darrow, was hired by the American Federation of Labor and caught allegedly trying to bribe a juror, which

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<sup>467</sup> “No Mistake,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1910, I6.

<sup>468</sup> “Inextinguishable,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1910, I6.

<sup>469</sup> “The Cause Must Win,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1910, I6.

did little to help their case or public perception around unions.<sup>470</sup> Through an agreed-upon plea bargain, the brothers were spared the death penalty; James received a life sentence and John fifteen years. As a result of this bombing, the *Los Angeles Times*' stance against unions and a closed shop solidified. The newspaper stayed open shop for almost a century, and going forth, commemoration of the event was ever-present in the *Los Angeles Times*' own conception of itself.

Marking the two-year anniversary of the bombing in 1913, the third Times Building opened in the same location as the previous one. The building's distinctive clock tower and aggressive crenellation gave the strong impression of a fortified castle. Given that the bombing—or “the holocaust of 1910” as it was called in *Los Angeles Times* promotional literature—was understood as a direct attack against the newspaper, its leadership, and its anti-union policies, the building was a symbolic fortress protecting all those inside who were ready to wage war against its opposition.<sup>471</sup> Commemorating the bombing, twenty-five years later to the day, the fourth home of the *Los Angeles Times* opened officially to the public. The newspaper's antagonistic relationship with unions continued throughout the twentieth century. It was not until 2007 that the newspaper voted to unionize.

General Otis's successor and son-in-law, Harry Chandler, first started at the *Los Angeles Times* in 1885 as a clerk in the circulation department. Chandler continued to work his way up through the company and married General Otis's daughter, Marian Otis, in 1894. When General Otis died in 1917, Chandler became the

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<sup>470</sup> Ira B. Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1935), 283.

<sup>471</sup> Ainsworth, “History of the Los Angeles Times,” 2.

*Los Angeles Times*' publisher and ensured the continuation of a conservative, Republican newspaper. By the mid-1930s, Chandler was preparing his son, Norman Chandler, to succeed him, which he did when Chandler passed away in 1944. While not as extreme in his tactics, the junior Chandler was still committed to the *Los Angeles Times* continuing to operate as an open shop.<sup>472</sup> A test of this came four days after the soft opening of the Times Building on July 5, 1935, when President Roosevelt signed into law the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) that improved the poorly-enforced Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act, guaranteeing workers the right of collective bargaining. This Act established an independent National Labor Relations Board and outlawed "company unions" that were offered as alternatives to true unions as well as presented many tactics to discourage unfair labor practices. In Los Angeles, the *Los Angeles Times*, along with the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, vehemently opposed the Act, declaring it unconstitutional, challenging it in court, and openly defying it.<sup>473</sup> While there was growth for organized labor in the city that was gained through strikes, in the end, the National Labor Relations Board exercised little real power as it was populated with open-shop supporters and even shared a building with the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>474</sup>

Chandler's decision in the early 1930s to build new headquarters was not accidental and, to critics of the *Los Angeles Times*, further evidence of the secret

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<sup>472</sup> For example, Dennis McDougal wrote of a potential sale of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1935 to the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Daily*, both closed shops, that was rejected when Harry Chandler's wife felt that it would force the *Los Angeles Times* to unionize. McDougal, *Privileged Son*, 151.

<sup>473</sup> Gottlieb and Wolt, *Thinking Big*, 213.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

dealings Chandler made with city officials at the time.<sup>475</sup> Critics first cited the high cost of the building as frivolous in the midst of the Depression, given the *Los Angeles Times* recently laid off ten percent of its workers.<sup>476</sup> Chandler empathized, explaining the long-term investment found in a built-to-suit property and the building's adjacent lot that allowed for future expansion such as this: "We did not want to spend as much money as we did but wanted a plant adequate to our needs in everyway; one that will serve us for years to come. This structure is built to last fifty years or more."<sup>477</sup>

While publically the motivations were framed as responding to growth and a need for an earthquake-resistant space, the move was highly calculated and profitable in more than one way. Much like his role in the development of Olvera Street, Chandler had been intimately involved with the construction of a new Union Station as early as the mid-1920s, steering conversations about location to downtown given the massive amount of real estate he and Otis owned there. Coupled with these plans was a new Civic Center, the location of which was determined in 1929 to be First and Broadway, exactly where the Times Building stood. Through negotiations with city officials, Chandler accepted a \$1.8 million dollar offer in 1932 for the land of its current building based on the recommendation of the Board of Supervisors' appraiser. Seemingly, Chandler anticipated the move by acquiring land a block away for the new Times Building well in advance of the offer. Opponents criticized the inflated payout and felt it was a clear example of collusion between the city and the *Los Angeles*

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<sup>475</sup> See McDougal, *Privileged Son*, 128–29; and Gottlieb and Wolt, *Thinking Big*, 152–55.

<sup>476</sup> They tried to shorten the workweek in the early 1930s as a way to save money but eventually had to lay off 10%. McDougal, *Privileged Son*, 127.

<sup>477</sup> "Los Angeles Times New \$4,000,000 Home Combines Beauty and Efficiency," *Editor & Publisher* 68, no. 13, August 10, 1935, 2. Huntington Archives, box 594, folder 8.

*Times*. Chandler continued to maintain the altruistic motivations of moving, explaining in his welcome speech given on opening day of the new Times Building, “We did not want to move from our traditional location at First and Broadway but our old site has been included in the Civic Center area and we were happy to recognize the greater good of the community.”<sup>478</sup> Under pressure from the public the city lowered the amount to \$600,000 in 1933. Chandler challenged this, taking his case to the California Supreme Court where he reduced his asking price to \$1.62 million, during which the *Los Angeles Times* attacked its opponents in its pages as “reds” and “radicals.”<sup>479</sup> In 1934, a \$1.19 million sale price was finally agreed upon. The new Times Building rose quickly throughout 1934, yet the city’s vision for a new Civic Center slowly came to fruition and the former Times Building stood until 1937 when it was demolished.

### **Prosperity on Display: Sunkist in the 1930s**

At the time of its building’s opening, Sunkist was comprised of 13,500 citrus growers across California and Arizona. Theoretically, all had an equal say in the business proceedings of the organization through participation in monthly grower meetings held in Los Angeles. The co-operative was first formed in 1893 as the Southern California Fruit Exchange.<sup>480</sup> Two years later it became the California Fruit Growers and Shipping Association and, in 1903, was renamed the California Fruit

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<sup>478</sup> “Los Angeles Times New \$4,000,000 Home,” 2.

<sup>479</sup> Gottlieb and Wolt, *Thinking Big*, 154.

<sup>480</sup> For a full history of the orange in California and Sunkist’s role in its marketing, see Barker, *Selling the Gold*; Kirkman, *The Sunkist Adventure*; Sackman, *Orange Empire*; *Heritage of Gold*; and Boulé, *The Orange and the Dream of California*.



Growers Exchange. No further name changes were made until 1952, when the company acknowledge the widespread use of its trademarked word and changed its name to Sunkist Growers, Inc.

President of Sunkist for thirty years, Teague was an extremely active member in both the California citrus and business community in California, which explains his far-reaching influence and ceaseless drive to shape the state's agricultural production.<sup>481</sup> The Maine-born Teague moved to California in 1893 from Kansas and within five years was made manager of Limoneira, the lemon branch of Sunkist based in Ventura County.<sup>482</sup> In 1911 he was voted on to the board of directors of Sunkist and served as president of the co-op for thirty years. In addition, he was president of the California Walnut Growers Association (1912–42), the Agricultural Council of California (1919–45), and the California State Chamber of Commerce (1932–34). Teague even was a Regent of the University of California system for twenty years (1930–50). Throughout the 1920s, Sunkist, under Teague's tenure as president, celebrated tremendous growth in comparison to its greatest rival, the Florida Citrus Exchange. This Tampa-based cooperative, today known as Seald-Sweet, Intl., was formed in 1909 and dominated not only the East Coast markets, but also those in Europe, which had a taste for fresh Florida citrus at Christmas. While the Florida Citrus Exchange controlled the East Coast fresh citrus market, two other companies founded in 1933 would go on to quickly control the processed citrus market, Florida's Natural and Citrus World. Closer to California, the Texas-based cooperative, the Rio

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<sup>481</sup> For more on Teague, see Lillard, "Agricultural Statesman," and the Charles Collins Teague Papers, 1901-1950, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>482</sup> The Limoneira Company left Sunkist in 2010.

Grande Valley Citrus Exchange, dominated the grapefruit market. Within five years of its founding, the Rio Grande Valley Citrus Exchange became the world's largest juice canning plant in 1932.<sup>483</sup> The encroaching competition by other exchanges coupled with prices for Sunkist oranges in 1933 settling in at or below the cost of production, Sunkist needed to drive consumption and cut costs.<sup>484</sup> It first cut salaries of its employees by ten percent in 1933 and then went on an aggressive marketing campaign in 1934–35.<sup>485</sup> The two million in advertising spent in that year effectively contributed to increasing the per capita annual consumption of oranges from fifty-two in 1926 to seventy-nine in 1936.<sup>486</sup> But budget cuts and increased demand put even greater pressure on the laborers in the fields as 1934–35 was a record-breaking year for the amount of citrus picked and packed.<sup>487</sup>

The trademarked word “Sunkist” was born from the co-op’s first advertising campaign launched in Iowa in 1908.<sup>488</sup> The Iowa campaign’s slogan “Oranges for health—California for wealth,” and the idea behind oranges being “kissed by the sun” were the first of many ways the co-op connected oranges to health and associations with California, and its weather, as a place of unbridled opportunity.<sup>489</sup> Often using the

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<sup>483</sup> James A. Jacobs, “Cooperative in the U.S. Citrus Industry,” *Rural Business and Cooperative Development Services Research Report* 137 (December 1994): 36, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/rr137.pdf>.

<sup>484</sup> *Heritage of Gold*, 80.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>487</sup> “California Fruit Growers: Coöperation at a Profit,” *Fortune* 14, no. 1 (July 1936), 48.

<sup>488</sup> Iowa was selected because a large percentage of the population wintered in California and thus was familiar with the still-exotic fruit.

<sup>489</sup> Kirkman, *The Sunkist Adventure*, 13. For more on this marketing see chapter three of Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 84–116. In July 1907 copywriter R. C. Brandon proposed Sunkissed which transformed into Sunkist because it was easier to defend as a trademark. It was officially adopted in April 1908.

orange as a symbol for the sun and likening the fruit to gold, citrus historian Douglas Cazaux Sackman has argued that Sunkist positioned the fruit “as a necessity and an object of desire.”<sup>490</sup> Through what Sackman terms the “semiotics of selling,” Sunkist oranges were marketed to the public through connections to nature and the sun in idyllic views of rolling orange groves run by small, family farmers and gendered appeals to mothers to provide vitamin-rich oranges for their families.<sup>491</sup> These connections were promoted endlessly throughout the architecture and art of its headquarters in Los Angeles as well as in its advertising.<sup>492</sup>

Yet the nostalgic imagery that Sunkist built its public image around in the early twentieth century made up only a small portion of the co-op during the 1930s. The production of citrus that was necessitated by the sheer volume needed to meet market demand meant Sunkist was, in reality, comprised largely of commercial farms run by “gentlemen-farmers” not family farmers.<sup>493</sup> These “do-nothings who own the groves,” as Carey McWilliams labeled them, had everything at their disposal from machinery to fertilizer and pesticides to phone calls reminding them when to light smudge pots to prevent frost—all provided by Sunkist.<sup>494</sup> The system’s network was so efficient that grove owners were often paid within five days of the sale of their crops. In 1930 just one hundred and fifteen commercial growers made up 3.4% of the total number of

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<sup>490</sup> Douglas Cazaux Sackman, “‘By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them’: ‘Nature Cross Culture Hybridization’ and the California Citrus Industry, 1893-1939,” *California History* 74, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 89.

<sup>491</sup> Garcia, *A World of Its Own*, 18. See also chapter three of Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 84–116.

<sup>492</sup> For example, see the profile of the “typical grower,” George Gray Laidlaw, who owned only sixty-six acres, in “California Fruit Growers,” *Fortune*, 55.

<sup>493</sup> Carey McWilliams characterized gentleman-farmers as “typical grove-owners...who have purchased a suburban estate as a means of acquiring status.” Carey McWilliams, *Southern California*, 211.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

growers in the state, receiving 27.7% of the \$20 million profit.<sup>495</sup> The 1935 Agricultural Census further noted that two percent of farmers in California owned a quarter of the total acreage in the state and the top ten percent of farms were responsible for over half of the state's annual crops.<sup>496</sup> This disproportionate division of the profits only grew as the decade progressed. That same year with 70,000 acres of orchards in Orange County, Sunkist-brand citrus made up seventy-five percent of all the oranges, lemons, and grapefruits coming out of the region, which represented almost one half of the production in the United States.<sup>497</sup> Yet in the 1940s, these profits would often be as high as three thousand dollars an acre, bringing in six to nine million dollars for the largest two commercial farms at that time, the two thousand acres of the Fullerton-based Sunny Hills Ranch and the three thousand acres held by the Irvine Company (what would amount to be one hundred to one hundred and fifty million dollars annually).<sup>498</sup> Smaller scale farms, on the other hand, were only fifteen acres with an average annual income of one thousand dollars (\$200,000 today).<sup>499</sup>

To handle production on that scale while keeping its profit margin high, a large and inexpensive workforce was needed to work what McWilliams termed "factories in the fields."<sup>500</sup> In the early years of citrus production in California, those who picked and packaged the fruits were Caucasian, as this side of the business was often an extension of family-run farms. Sunkist was well aware that this romanticized image of

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<sup>495</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Southern California*, 212.

<sup>496</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 63.

<sup>497</sup> Louis Reccow, "The Orange County Citrus Strike of 1935-1936: The 'Forgotten People' in Revolt" (PhD diss, University of Southern California, 1971).

<sup>498</sup> Reccow, "The Orange County Citrus Strike," n.p.

<sup>499</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 209.

<sup>500</sup> See McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*.

extended (white) family members lending a hand in harvesting the orange groves would support its image, although in reality it was largely a fallacy parallel to the concoction that the co-op was still comprised of amateur growers. In the late nineteenth century, the number of Chinese and Japanese laborers was declining rapidly. This was coupled with a similar decline in Filipino workers that took place in the early decades of the twentieth century. As a result, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans made up the majority of laborers within the citrus industry after 1914.<sup>501</sup> By 1920, they represented thirty percent of the work force, and by 1940, virtually one hundred percent.<sup>502</sup> While men worked in the fields, thousands of Mexican and Mexican-American women worked in packinghouses and their children were unpaid “rats” who joined their fathers in the groves, picking up fallen and low-hanging fruit.<sup>503</sup> Throughout the 1930s, approximately half of citrus pickers were Mexican Americans, often second or third generation residents.<sup>504</sup> Those who were foreign-born were often exempt from the repatriations that were taking place in Los Angeles at the time.<sup>505</sup> Teague, himself, lobbied both the United States government and the Mexican consulate in order to have Sunkist’s Mexican workers exempt from deportation efforts.<sup>506</sup> Furthermore, because owners and Sunkist officials would have very little contact with the Mexican and Mexican-American workforce, interacting through a Spanish-speaking foreman, the entire system was as Carey McWilliams

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<sup>501</sup> Records show that approximately 750,000 Mexican immigrants came to the United States between 1910 and 1930. Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 7. See also McWilliams, *Southern California*, 218.

<sup>502</sup> Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 7.

<sup>503</sup> Garcia, *A World of Its Own*, 48.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., Tables 6 and 7, 265.

<sup>505</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 210.

<sup>506</sup> Garcia, *A World of Its Own*, 108.

notes, “perfectly designed to insulate workers from employers.”<sup>507</sup> This produced a clear binary, what McWilliams describes as “the workers are Spanish-speaking, Catholic, and dark-skinned, the owners are white, Protestant, and English-speaking.”<sup>508</sup> Sunkist has continued to dominate the citrus market throughout the twentieth century, making millions in profits every year through a network of largely commercial growers who pushed for commercial interests and profits. Thus today, the same as 1936, it is nowhere near the small-scale company it had been when it was incorporated in 1893.

### **“Factories in the Fields”: The Orange County Citrus Strike of 1936<sup>509</sup>**

1936 marked two significant events in the history of Southern California’s citrus industry. The first was the opening of the Sunkist Building in downtown Los Angeles, headquarters of the California Fruit Growers Exchange; the second was the largest, most violent strike to date of citrus workers in Orange County. Mounting discontent among the laborers of the Southern Californian citrus industry, stemming from Sunkist’s support of an open-shop movement coupled with the economic pressures of the Great Depression, climaxed in Orange County from June 11 to July 27, just six months after the opening of Sunkist’s new headquarters. Mexican citrus workers, organized under the Confederación de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros de Mexicanos (CUCOM), clashed very publically and aggressively for six weeks with the Associated Farmers of California, Inc. (Associated Farmers), an anti-union

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<sup>507</sup> Garcia, *A World of Its Own*, 108; McWilliams, *Southern California*, 219.

<sup>508</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 219.

<sup>509</sup> This phrase is taken from the title of McWilliams’s 1935 book, *Factories in the Field*.

countermovement largely supported by Sunkist.<sup>510</sup> The resulting strike of citrus workers was the largest the state had seen and quickly escalated into the most violent, with widespread coverage by local news agencies. The actions of the Associated Farmers, and Sunkist's implied role in the viciousness, led writer Carey McWilliams, in an article about the strike published in *Pacific Weekly* during the midst of the unrest, to rename their ubiquitous product "Gunkist Oranges" and include a very pointed woodcut alongside.<sup>511</sup>

The circumstances that led to the 1936 strike were, as outlined above, a result of the continued push within the citrus industry to maximize profit during the Great Depression at the cost of the wellbeing of its workforce and the anti-union mentality of Sunkist leadership, including its president, Charles C. Teague. The forty-six-day strike that took place in June and July of 1936 shattered the idealized stereotypes and myths touted by Sunkist, which strove to present an image of its growers as small family farmers and its primarily Mexican immigrant citrus workers as being, in the patronizing words of Teague, "loyal and faithful...good-natured and happy."<sup>512</sup>

Sunkist's reaction to unionization and labor struggles was not always as extreme as the aggression manifested during the *naranjeros* strikes of 1936. In the early years of the 1920s, Sunkist worked closely with the California Commission of

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<sup>510</sup> Reccow, "The Orange County Citrus Strike," n.p. CUCOM was a 1933 revival of the Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas, which was formed in 1928. CUCOM was an umbrella organization for California agricultural unions and worked closely with Mexico's labor organization, the Confederación Regional de Breros Mexicanos (CROM). A year prior to the Stock Market Crash, CUCOM had 3,000 members and represented eight unions. Its membership and activity waned until it was revived in 1933 under the new name, CUCOM. For more information on this history, see also F. Arturo Rosales, *Dictionary of Latino Civil Rights History* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2006), 109.

<sup>511</sup> Image reproduced in Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 257. Originally the image was published in McWilliams's article "Gunkist Oranges," *Pacific Weekly*, July 20, 1936, 38–39.

<sup>512</sup> As quoted in Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 159.

Immigration and Housing to support improved living conditions for its largely Mexican laborers through the construction of citrus camps. Similar to the early twentieth-century company towns of Hershey, Pullman, and Corning, these citrus camps were comprised of simple bungalows with plumbing and electricity. Plans could be secured for free from Sunkist and homes built for three hundred dollars apiece.<sup>513</sup> Representing a form of corporate paternalism, these improved living conditions were coupled with other forms of Americanization for the workforce: lessons on the importance of United States-defined standards of nutrition, interior decoration, proper hygiene, education, and the benefits of the sunshine and fresh air that made up California's idyllic environment. Sunkist's goal was to create ideal workers who were fit, active, energized, and indebted to the generosity of its growers, thus improving employee retention and placating them in spite of lower wages while reaping higher profits.<sup>514</sup> As Sackman writes, "citrus growers...remained convinced that they had solved their labor problem. They had workers, they worked for low wages, and they were content with their lot."<sup>515</sup> Teague even had the prestigious architectural firm of Green and Greene design worker housing for Limoneira Ranch.<sup>516</sup>

Yet Teague's politics surfaced in 1934, when, as discussed previously, he was a vocal advocate against Upton Sinclair's gubernatorial campaign and platform to End Poverty in California (EPIC) along with Chandler. In addition to Teague's anti-EPIC

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<sup>513</sup> Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 173.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 172.



activism, he was also a key funder and supporter of the Associated Farmers of California, Inc., a ruthless organization that opposed any agricultural unionization. The intense strikes and unionization efforts taking place across California also affected the citrus industry in Orange County as laborers sought to improve their working conditions and wages. During the 1930s, those who participated in strikes or attempted to organize were often evicted from their company-owned homes. Furthermore, strikes were violently suppressed through a “reign of terror and intimidation” led by the Associated Farmers.<sup>517</sup> This anti-union group, what Nelson A. Pichardo describes as “perhaps the most virulent and notorious right-wing American group, with the possible exception of the Ku Klux Klan,” was formally organized in 1934 with support from both the California Chamber of Commerce and the California Farm Bureau Federation to neutralize threats to the state’s agriculture in the form of labor organizing.<sup>518</sup> Teague, together with Chandler, was instrumental in early fundraising efforts and raised money by taxing Sunkist packinghouses.<sup>519</sup> He even allowed the Associated Farmers to meet at Sunkist’s headquarters.<sup>520</sup> The extreme intimidation tactics used by the Associated Farmers especially around the 1936 strike—especially the heavy recruiting of vigilantes to break strikes and advocating of a “No Work, No

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<sup>517</sup> Nelson A. Pichardo, “The Power Elite and Elite-Driven Countermovements: The Associated Farmers of California During the 1930s,” *Sociological Forum* 10 (1995): 25.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. See also Nelson A. Pichardo Almanzar and Brian W. Kulik, *American Fascism and the New Deal: The Associated Farmers of California and the Pro-Industrial Movement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 77.

<sup>519</sup> Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 219.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

Eat” policy—led to the organization to being dubbed “Farm Fascists” by Carey McWilliams in 1939.<sup>521</sup>

Involving almost three thousand Mexican citrus workers in Orange County, the 1936 strike was organized under CUCOM, what has been called the most active and effective agricultural union, and successfully tied up what was reportedly a twenty million dollar crop.<sup>522</sup> The men and women involved were protesting low wages (1933 pay had dropped fifty percent from their 1929 rates). Other grievances included an unfair bonus system, transportation and equipment fees, abusive foremen, and the lack of a right to organize.<sup>523</sup>

Foreshadowing the strike of 1936 were earlier rumblings within the agricultural community in California, which included the Laguna Beach vegetable pickers’ strike of 1933, the unsuccessful and poorly organized Imperial Valley lettuce strike of January 1934 and the apricot pickers’ strike in Contra Costa County in June 1934. During 1935 there were pockets of strikes in Anaheim, Villa Park, Tustin Hills, Orange, and Santiago Hills, yet the strike of the summer of 1936, being the largest, and most threatening to the status quo, received the most hostile response.<sup>524</sup> Tensions within Sunkist administrators and its workers on the ground were further exacerbated

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<sup>521</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 162.

<sup>522</sup> McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 258; Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 135.

<sup>523</sup> Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 67; Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 141.

<sup>524</sup> See Kate Bronfenbrenner, *Imperial Valley, California, Farmworkers’ Strike of 1934*, 1990, accessed October 1, 2014, <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles/553/>. This was preceded by the California cotton strike of October 1933.

by a December 1934 vote to increase the annual salaries of general managers and sales managers by thousands of dollars.<sup>525</sup>

Within hours of the strike being called on June 6, the Associated Farmers intervened and authorized strong-arm tactics to deal with the strike: blacklisting workers; evicting picketers from their homes in company housing; and assisting local police to make trumped-up arrests and issue arbitrary tickets. They even made deportation threats. After almost a month, tensions escalated, and on July 6 there were a number of severe beatings with wooden clubs, iron bars, and rocks, leading the *Los Angeles Times* to term that day's carnage to be on par with a miniature civil war.<sup>526</sup> One hundred and fifteen were arrested as a result of the July 6 clash. The purported suspects were held in a makeshift bullpen with exceedingly high bail amounts and without food for many days as they awaited trial. Violence continued to intensify after tear gas was thrown into meeting locations. Cars burned, windows were broken, and "shoot to kill" orders were issued by local sheriffs after four hundred armed men were deputized.<sup>527</sup> Finally, after almost six weeks of constant strife and news coverage, the strike officially ended on July 27 with some concessions made on both sides, including the end of seasonal bonuses, the end of fees for transportation and equipment, and a small wage increase. Although grove owners cited large losses as a

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<sup>525</sup> McWilliams cites that general managers approved an increase in their annual salary from \$18,000 to \$22,000 and sales managers went from \$16,200 to \$18,000. McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 253.

<sup>526</sup> As quoted in Gonzalez, *Labor and Community*, 154.

<sup>527</sup> McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 258. Yet Gonzalez notes this number was only 175 (*Labor and Community*, 154).

result of the strike, gross sales for Sunkist in 1936 totaled one hundred and seven million dollars.<sup>528</sup>

### **Monumental Moderne: The Times Building**

Embodied in the architecture, amenities, and art commissions of the corporate headquarters for both the *Los Angeles Times* and Sunkist, are the ways in which each attempted to address concerns over economic stability and public image as a result of labor strife during the 1930s. The choice of architects as well as the restrained opulence found in the materials, decoration, and overall architecture style selected for each building illustrate how these corporations attempted to project financial soundness while justifying the expense of construction in the midst of the Great Depression.

With the press calling it the largest West Coast daily newspaper publishing plant, excavation on the new Times Building began on August 8, 1933.<sup>529</sup> Its cornerstone laying ceremony took place eight months later on April 10, 1934 and was broadcast over ninety-four stations on CBS radio, trumpeting the regard with which the *Los Angeles Times* saw itself.<sup>530</sup> Seemingly to impress its audience, within the cornerstone was a copper time capsule filled with “precious data” including a biography of General Otis, a bottle of California champagne, and a petrified pinecone

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<sup>528</sup> McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 280.

<sup>529</sup> “Many Unusual Construction Features in Great Newspaper Building,” *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 83, no. 15 (April 13, 1934): 18.

<sup>530</sup> “Cornerstone Laying Ceremony,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1934, n.p., Huntington Library Archives, file 8, box 597.

excavated from the building site.<sup>531</sup> By contrast to these very publically staged events, almost a year and a half later on September 11, 1935, Sunkist placed its cornerstone in a more restrained celebration that reflected a desire to appear conservative in its spending and approach to the future.

The ambition to have a building that projected self-importance was found in its architect, Gordon B. Kaufmann. When approached for the Times Building in 1931, Kaufmann was already a well-established architect having recently received the contract to design the Hoover Dam, the greatest engineering feat of its day.<sup>532</sup> Kaufmann was born in London in 1888 and came to Los Angeles in 1914 in the hopes that a more favorable climate would improve his wife's health. After a few years working as a draftsman for Reginald D. Johnson, Kaufmann formed a firm with Johnson and Roland E. Coate in 1922 designing residential homes in the popular Mediterranean Revival style.<sup>533</sup> After this firm dissolved in 1925, Kaufmann established his own private practice and quickly received a number of prominent design contracts including buildings for Scripps College in Claremont and the California Institute of Technology in Pomona. With these credentials as well as the Hoover Dam contract, it was no surprise that Chandler choose Kaufmann as the

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<sup>531</sup> "Cornerstone Laying Ceremony," n.p.

<sup>532</sup> How Kaufmann was selected for the Hoover Dam is unknown, as he had little record of large-scale industrial projects (and no open competition was held). Kevin Starr argues that the Bureau of Reclamation, the body responsible for selection, knew the importance of hiring a Los Angeles-based architect but, for reasons unknown, intentionally passed over Modernists of the time such as Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra, as well as other established architects like John Parkinson. Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 303–4.

<sup>533</sup> For more on this firm's work, see Margaret Meriwether, *Architectural Works of Reginald D. Johnson, Gordon B. Kaufmann and Roland E. Coate* ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1992); and Joseph N. Newland, ed., *Johnson, Kaufmann, Coate: Partners in the California Style* (Claremont, CA: Scripps College, 1992).

architect as he came with a great deal of distinction within both the local and national community.

Kaufmann wrote that Chandler's only requirements for the building were: "Let it be fireproof and earthquake proof. Let it be a suitable newspaper plant and a monument to our city."<sup>534</sup> The fireproof edict was most likely a reference to the fire that engulfed the second Times Building when bombed in 1910. In addition, because the presses in the 1910 bombing crashed through the floors and ignited gas lines, Chandler and Kaufmann wanted to guarantee a similar fate would not occur in the new building. As a result, the majority of its heavy machinery was housed in the roof of the new building, leaving the basement open for paper storage. The need to be earthquake proof came from Chandler seeing the devastation caused by the 1925 quake in Santa Barbara and, more recently, the earthquake damage suffered by Long Beach in 1933. Through the request of the building being earthquake-proof, Chandler was, like the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings of 1931, extending the resilience of the building in times of crisis to that of the newspaper and its ability to withstand the "quake" of the Great Depression. In order to fulfill it standing as "a monument to the progress of the city and of Southern California," Kaufmann designed the building in the style of "monumental moderne" with a heavy reliance on Indiana limestone, much like the Edison Building.<sup>535</sup> This was a consequence of adopting an architectural style that was similar to the buildings already present in the Civic Center, such as City Hall and the California State Building. Additionally, the severity of the Great Depression caused

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<sup>534</sup> Gordon B. Kaufmann, "A Monument to Our City," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1934, B13.

<sup>535</sup> "Los Angeles Times New \$4,000,000 Home," 11.

architects across the country to practice restraint in their designs and reflected the austerity of the times. All exterior ornamentation was kept at a minimum, Robert Merrell Gage's bas-reliefs and black and pink California granite along the ground floor, notwithstanding. Like the Edison and Title Guarantee Buildings, ninety-two floodlights were used to illuminate the upper stories, calling "attention to the architectural beauty" of the building.<sup>536</sup> To complement this, the words "The Times" and the building's fifteen-foot Telechron clock were highlighted in blue and red Lumenarc, a kind of neon tubing that claimed to be eight to fifteen times brighter than standard neon which gave "tremendous added effect" to advertising.<sup>537</sup> Consequently what the building lacked in decorative ornamentation, it made up for in extravagant lighting at night.

The memory of the bombing was not forgotten in the new building nor the symbolism of opening on its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1935. The combative posture found in the architecture of its third home was carried over into its fourth building, as noted by a reviewer for *California Arts & Architecture* who described the building as a "citadel" that had "an air of conservative solidity."<sup>538</sup> Furthermore, the company's strong open-shop commitment was proudly displayed for all to see on inscriptions flanking the main entrance, including one that read: "This building is dedicated to the cause of true industrial freedom and liberty under the law" (fig. 38). This statement that theoretically spoke to equal rights for both employer and employee, yet to many

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<sup>536</sup> "Create Light in Advertising," Electrical Products Corporation advertisement, "The Los Angeles Times Building," *California Arts & Architecture* (October 1935), 10.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. The clock cost \$2,000, half as much as Ballin was paid for the murals. Contract between Ballin and Kaufmann, *Los Angeles Times* records, The Huntington Library, box 48, folder 13.

<sup>538</sup> "The Los Angeles Times Building," 20, 22.

of those who passed by it would have been what Michael Hiltzik described as a “transparent code for the General’s [Harrison Gray Otis] violent distaste for organized labor.”<sup>539</sup>

Eighteen bronze reliefs covered the Spring Street doors, which led to the main lobby, each a symbol of the various departments of the newspaper (fig. 40). All visitors and white-collar employees had to traverse the Globe Lobby in order to reach the elevators to the building’s upper floors.<sup>540</sup> For all the restraint exercised on the exterior of the building, much like the Edison Building, the circular Globe Lobby is lavishly appointed and the elevator lobby is clad in Verte de Sued green marble with bronze inlays featuring depictions of previous homes of the *Los Angeles Times*. Kaufmann designed the lobby to allow for “a free flow of people to transact their business and the globe in the center expresses the world-wide scope of the *Times*.”<sup>541</sup> The lobby was so named for both its spherical shape and the aluminum globe at its center that was designed based off of Kaufmann’s blueprints.<sup>542</sup> The globe had a diameter of five-and-a-half feet and completed a full revolution every five minutes. Running almost the entire circumference of the lobby are Hugo Ballin’s sepia-toned murals. Given Kaufmann’s minimal experience with such an industrial project, he toured East Coast printing plants in order to gain a better understanding of how to

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<sup>539</sup> Michael Hiltzik, *Colossus: Hoover Dam and the Making of the American Century* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 59. See also Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, 16. The inscription across from this reads “This building is the fourth home of the Los Angeles Times and stands as a symbol of faith in California.”

<sup>540</sup> A panorama, virtual tour of the Globe Lobby is available online, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/la-me-panorama-los-angeles-times-globe-lobby-pano-dto-htmstory.html>.

<sup>541</sup> Kaufmann, “A Monument to Our City,” B13.

<sup>542</sup> For the original blueprints, see the *Los Angeles Times* records, The Huntington Library.



design the Times Building. It is thought that Kaufmann based the *Los Angeles Times*' Globe Lobby after the circular lobby of the Hood and Howells' New York Daily News Building of 1930 in New York City as both are designed as spheres with large dominating globes at their centers and are clad in a lavish use of colored marble. As in New York Daily News Building, the *Los Angeles Times*' Globe Lobby literally makes visible the international scope and influence of the newspaper.

If this sentiment was somehow lost on those passing through, there are additional bas-reliefs and quotes that reinforce the *Los Angeles Times*' global reach. Around the base of the globe are eight bas-reliefs thought to be designed by Harold F. Wilson, who was also responsible for the bas-reliefs on the exterior of the Sunkist Building.<sup>543</sup> Four of the bas-reliefs depict the “great activities of the minds of men—industry, religion, science, and art.”<sup>544</sup> Between each of these larger reliefs are figures representing “the four major racial, geographical and cultural divisions of man—an American Indian, Greek scholar, Zulu warrior, and Chinese Mandarin.”<sup>545</sup> As in the Edison and Title Guarantee Buildings, the symbols found throughout the Globe Lobby use history to remind the viewer of the place the newspaper occupies in the larger timeline of humanity as well as its on-going contributions to it.

If these literal embodiments of global history were not clear to viewers, two quotes found in the Globe Lobby further cemented the international reach and impact of the newspaper. The first is an excerpt from the final scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*:

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<sup>543</sup> Loose page in folder, dating from August 10, 1935, *Los Angeles Times* records, The Huntington Library, file 11, box 597.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

carved into the marble floor, encircling the globe is an  
 His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm  
 Crested the world: his voice was propertied  
 As all the tuned spheres...<sup>546</sup>

The second quote runs under Hugo Ballin's murals and although it appears to be one quote, it is in fact two. The fragment is taken from the American activist and minister Henry Ward Beecher's 1904 book, *A Treasure of Illustration*, published in 1904: "The newspaper is a greater treasure to the people than uncounted millions of gold."<sup>547</sup> The second quote is made up of lines from the 1839 poem "The Memory of the Heart," by American senator Daniel Webster: "There is no dimming. No effacement here. Each new pulsation keeps the record clear."<sup>548</sup> Both quotes work in tandem with the other symbols housed within the Globe Lobby and reinforce the fundamental role the *Los Angeles Times* saw itself playing in offering the news to not just the people of Los Angeles but all those across the globe.

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<sup>546</sup> Act V, Scene II of *Antony and Cleopatra*, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.bartleby.com/70/4552.html>.

<sup>547</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *A Treasure of Illustration* (New York: F.H. Revell Company, 1904), 523.

<sup>548</sup> The full text of "The Memory of the Heart" by Daniel Webster is:

If stores of dry and learned lore we gain  
 We keep them in the memory of the brain;  
 Names, things, and facts—whate'er we knowledge call,  
 There is the common ledger for them all;  
 And images on this cold surface traced  
 Make slight impressions, and are soon effaced.

But we've a page more glowing and more bright  
 On which our friendship and our love to write;  
 That these may never from the soul depart,  
 We trust them to the memory of the heart.  
 There is no dimming—no effacement here;  
 Each new pulsation keeps the record clear;  
 Warm, golden letters all the tablet fill,  
 Nor lose their lustre till the heart stands still.

The Times Building spared no expense in creating a state-of-the-art printing plant and office environment for its employees, seeing it as a long-term investment in the company and employee retention. As with other corporate headquarters built at the time, such as the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings, the Times Building had employee amenities that included a roof garden, two banquet rooms, an employee cafeteria that was open till four o'clock in the morning, an auditorium that sat eight hundred, a test kitchen that held cooking demonstrations, and a recreation room with card tables, ping pong, and a reading room. Large double windows blocked out street noise from downtown traffic and soundproofing in ceilings and walls minimized the reverberations from presses. Additionally, it was the first newspaper headquarters in the country to have air conditioning and heating systems throughout.<sup>549</sup>

Opening day in 1935 was celebrated with typical Hollywood fanfare, with Will Rogers, Cecil B. DeMille, and Bing Crosby in attendance along with thousands of locals, who were given tours of the building and printing plant. The printing presses and Globe Lobby in the Times Building quickly became a tourist destination with tours held at multiple times throughout the day. In its review of the building, *California Arts & Architecture* applauded "the magnificent new marble and limestone home" that was a shining example of "combining beauty and efficiency."<sup>550</sup> Further fame for both the *Los Angeles Times* and Kaufmann came in 1937 when Kaufmann's design for the building was awarded a gold medal at the Paris International Exhibition.

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<sup>549</sup> *Our Place in History: The Story of the Los Angeles Times Building*, brochure (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Times Media Group, 2008), n.p.

<sup>550</sup> "The Los Angeles Times Building," 20.

**“Temple of the Golden Apple”: The Sunkist Building<sup>551</sup>**

The now-demolished Sunkist Building, by comparison, had less lofty goals for the image it projected yet it still needed to counter fears over instability and impermanence. Concerns by Sunkist growers over frivolous spending was of key importance to Sunkist executives and can be seen in the building’s design, materials, and choice of artists for its commissions. Teague acknowledged these criticisms in his cornerstone laying speech on September 11, 1935, explaining, “I realize...the construction of this fine building at this time may seem a strange and extravagant act, especially when the condition of our industry requires the utmost economy.”<sup>552</sup> He continued, very matter-of-factly, outlining the careful and meticulously researched course that informed the board’s decision to construct a new building:

In considering future quarters your board of directors investigated for more than a year the cost of a new lease in the same or other office buildings, what a suitable existing building could be purchased for, and the cost of a new building using anticipated rental costs to pay operating expenses, interest on investment in lot and building and amortize the building over a period of twenty-five years. We concluded to build this building, and it is my judgment that the board made a wise decision and that any of you who examine the facts as we have done will come to the same conclusion.<sup>553</sup>

Not wanting to seem imprudent with their revenue, Teague defended the board’s decision to spend almost \$500,000 on this venture citing their good fortune to purchase the land, building materials, and labor at a significantly lower cost than normal, explaining, “we are building while costs are low and when we can finance

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<sup>551</sup> Harry Muir Kurtzworth, “Art” ([n.p.]: [n.p.], n.d.), n.p. Walker & Eisen scrapbook, Albert Raymond Walker Papers, 1920-1940, Young Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, box 2.

<sup>552</sup> Charles C. Teague, “Wise and Sound Investment – The New Sunkist Building,” *The California Citrograph* 21, no. 3 (January 1936): 90.

<sup>553</sup> “Citrus Home Stone Laid,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1935, A3.

through government agencies at very low interest rates.”<sup>554</sup> Two days later, an anonymous admirer congratulated Sunkist for their good business sense writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, “Hats off to the ‘Sunkist’ crowd for their good example!”<sup>555</sup> The author goes on to explain, noting:

Conservative they’ve always been, conservative they’ll always be. ... Extravagant? Not they! They’ve figured it all out. That building will cost them less than rent when everything is taken into account. When their lease expires next year, they’ll be all ready to move into it. Biggest item of all, as they see it, is that building costs are so low. Same with real estate generally. That lot was a ‘buy.’ No New Deal ‘spending’ hooley about this project. It’s just good business.”<sup>556</sup>

As evidenced by the enthusiasm of the columnist, it seems Teague’s practical appeal may have rung true with some.

Like Kaufmann, the architecture firm Walker & Eisen, had an impressive reputation in Los Angeles when selected for the Sunkist Building. Theoretically, Sunkist benefited from the implied prestige of the firm as much as they benefited from such a large-scale industrial project.<sup>557</sup> Noted for ranking “among the highest type of western architects,” Walker & Eisen was established in 1919.<sup>558</sup> Both native Californians, Albert R. Walker worked in 1903 with Irving Gill’s firm, Hebbard and Gill, in San Diego for some time in the early 1900s and shortly after moving to Los Angeles, he established his own firm in 1909 that primarily designed churches and

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<sup>554</sup> “Sunkist Buys Building Site,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1934, A1.

<sup>555</sup> “Sunkist Rises,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1934, A4.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Donald J. Schippers, “Walker & Eisen: Twenty Years of Los Angeles Architecture, 1920-1940,” *Southern California Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (December 1964): 371-94.

<sup>558</sup> The Ideal Steel Drawer-Slide Corporation 1932 catalog, ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1932), 27, Albert Raymond Walker Papers, 1920-1940, Young Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, box 2.

residential homes.<sup>559</sup> Percy A. Eisen was a second-generation architect, trained under his father, Theodore Eisen. Walker & Eisen's partnership lasted from 1919 to 1941. By 1935, the pair had been already responsible for a number of high-profile Beaux-Arts buildings in the region including the Fine Arts Building (1924), Wilshire Beverly Hotel (1926), and the Texaco Building (1927). How they received the Sunkist commission is unknown. It can be inferred that because jobs were so much more less prevalent in the 1930s as compared to the 1920s any design job was welcomed, even if it meant curtailing their characteristically extravagant Beaux-Arts and Revival style to design such a conservative and utilitarian structure.

The seven-story Sunkist Building, like the Times Building, was monumental moderne or, in the words of one contemporary reviewer, "the new 'no cornice' version of architecture."<sup>560</sup> *The California Citrograph* praised "The beauty comes from the very simplicity of the building and perhaps the realization of what it stands for, and not any expensive frills, massive ornamentation or any 'hollywoodish' conception of grandeur. ...the style of architecture, therefore, reflects the modern age, with straight lines and plane surfaces, with the basic construction being used for ornamentation and decoration."<sup>561</sup> Sunkist was praised for its innovation in using concrete yet still compared it to other, richer materials, possibly harkening back to the boom years of the 1920s "a pleasing surface not unlike the texture of Indiana limestone."<sup>562</sup> The choice to have the building be cast completely in concrete with no decorative facing

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<sup>559</sup> Schippers, "Walker & Eisen," 373.

<sup>560</sup> Kurtzworth, "Art," n.p.

<sup>561</sup> "Sunkist Building: A Milestone in Progress," *The California Citrograph* 21, no. 3 (January 1936): 69.

<sup>562</sup> "Large New Downtown Los Angeles Structure Takes Form" *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1935, 14.

was solely dictated by costs. It was a relatively new building material touted at the time as “Weather-resistant...Firesafe...Distinctive...Economical.”<sup>563</sup> Because of its simplicity in design and decoration, the building only cost \$350,000 to construct—nowhere near the millions spent by the *Los Angeles Times* and others on their corporate headquarters. Furthermore, the overall style, especially for Walker & Eisen, exercised restraint, what a *The California Citrograph* review of the building saw as, “No fad or freakish ideas have been used.”<sup>564</sup> Words like economical, utility, durable, and simple are endlessly repeated and appear in one variation or another in countless reviews of the building. For example, *Architectural Concrete* acknowledged this minimalism, noting, “Simple, pleasing design, practical arrangement and precise formwork distinguish this splendid building.”<sup>565</sup> *The California Citrograph* noted, “although the Sunkist building was erected strictly for utilitarian purposes, those charged with putting up this permanent home for the California Fruit Growers Exchange recognize that beauty need not be sacrificed in the name of utility.”<sup>566</sup> Furthermore, Sunkist’s celebration of concrete as an earthquake proof material was metaphorical, like Title Guarantee and Edison. The building’s ability to withstand acts of God was to be similar to the way Sunkist could weather the Great Depression.

Like the other corporate headquarters discussed in this dissertation, the Sunkist Building was located on the corner of Fifth and Hope in downtown Los Angeles, sharing a block with the Edison Building and in close proximity to Pershing Square

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<sup>563</sup> Portland Cement Association advertisement, *Architectural Conference Business Week*, April 11, 1936, 1.

<sup>564</sup> “Sunkist Building: A Milestone in Progress,” 66.

<sup>565</sup> “California Fruit Growers Exchange: The Architecture,” *Architectural Concrete* 2, no. 1 (1936), 2.

<sup>566</sup> “Sunkist Building: A Milestone in Progress,” 69.

where thousands pedestrians moved through daily. A building that was easily accessible was a high priority for Sunkist as their weekly grower meeting needed to be reached via car or public transportation—both of which were easily fulfilled as Pershing Square was a major public transportation hub. Additionally, Sunkist promoted that fact that they had a roof top garden with boxed citrus trees for employees and was now located directly across from the Public Library. This was an ideal location as the Sunkist Building would never be engulfed in valleys of darkness from surrounding construction and, like their brand, the building would be connected to sunshine and ultimately the good health that supposedly accompanied it. While not nearly as long as list as the Times Building, other amenities for employees included sound-absorbing ceiling tiles, air-conditioning throughout, and a fifty-five-car garage.

The main entrance of the building was centrally located on Fifth Street under one of three bas-reliefs by Wilson, a representation of cooperation, and framed in black Porterville granite. *California Arts & Architecture* noted, “Here is no paucity of ornament and yet the dignified entrance is undeniably modern.”<sup>567</sup> A decorative set of metal gates led to the vestibule and were filled with stylized Art Nouveau designs on them that one reviewer joked, could be “depicting the juice of a grapefruit squirting curvedly into the pupil of a detached retina and unrelated eye.”<sup>568</sup> The lobby itself, known only through archival photographs and descriptions in articles, was simple in its design, mirroring the exterior. Two smaller Bowers and Pruiner murals flanked the entrance (even the frames the encircled the murals were made of colored concrete)

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<sup>567</sup> Edwin Turnblad, “A Prophetic Social Development,” *California Arts & Architecture* (February 1936): 16.

<sup>568</sup> Turnblad, “A Prophetic Social Development,” 17.



while the other two murals were in the third floor auditorium. Little else is known of the lobby's utilitarian design.

When the U-shaped headquarters for Sunkist opened to the public on January 1, 1936, it was hailed as a “masterpiece” and “a magnificent addition to our Fifth street collection of architectural treasures” which included the Public Library and the Edison Building.<sup>569</sup> Like the *Los Angeles Times*, tours were held regularly at the building and groups of school children would meet in the auditorium where they would see the other set of Bowers and Prunier murals. As with the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings, throughout the Sunkist Building one finds a great investment made in patronizing the arts.

### **Antiquity for the Modern Era: The Bas-Reliefs of Robert Merrell Gage and Harold F. Wilson**

Although restrained in their architecture, both corporate headquarters included bas-reliefs by well-known artists on their façade. Like the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings of 1931, these examples of architectural sculpture relied on Classical language to conjure ideas of stability, permanence, and history in the minds of their viewers. The *Los Angeles Times* commissioned Robert Merrell Gage, sculptor of the Edison Building bas-reliefs, and Sunkist hired Harold F. Wilson. Gage sculpted three men in limestone on the sixth floor that are perched high above the Spring Street

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<sup>569</sup> Kurtzworth, “Art,” n.p.

entrance.<sup>570</sup> These nine- by three-foot figures were carved in place and stand as symbols of Father Time, the Spirit of the Times, and Gutenberg (fig. 41). Below the figures are three shields representing California, Mexico, and Canada. Gage placed the columnar figures into niches, each bound, like his Edison bas-reliefs, in tight frames. On the far left, literally representing the urgency of the temporary nature of the news, a bearded Father Time holds a quill in his right hand as he looks to his left hand which grasps a blank tablet. At his feet is a winged hourglass, a traditional memento mori. In the center is the Spirit of the Times, chainmail-clad and grasping a sword with both hands that is thrust into the head of a dragon-like beast at his feet. Behind him is an eagle in profile, yet another symbol of the *Los Angeles Times* and one of many found on the exterior and interior of the building. On the surface, this figure can, with a simple reading, represent a “defender of liberty, ever alert to preserve liberty under the law.”<sup>571</sup> Yet within the context of the *Los Angeles Times*’ relationship with unions, it is also a clear image of the newspaper slaying the beast of organized labor. To the far right is Johannes Gutenberg, the first European to use moveable type in the fifteenth century. Gutenberg stands holding a torch, possibly alluding to the light of knowledge, a bound book in his other hand; a simplified Gutenberg press rests at his feet. As with the Edison Building, Gage was able to outfit the exterior of the building with decorous figures that were perfectly suited to the commission and spoke directly to the purview of his corporate patron.

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<sup>570</sup> In its 1948 extension, five similar figures by the Harry D. Donato Company and Ivan L. Adams appear: Culture, Justice, Faith, Progress, and Equality.

<sup>571</sup> Arthur Millier, “Work of Noted Artists Graces Impressive New Edifice of This Newspaper,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1934, B14.

Arthur Millier's glowing review of Gage's work explained the difficulty of carving these in place as well as the challenges in capturing the correct proportions given viewers looking up at these from the ground. Millier proclaimed, "He succeeded magnificently, creating three of the most dignified architectural reliefs in the West."<sup>572</sup> Millier's enthusiasm and praise can be better understood given he was the *Los Angeles Times*' resident art critic and his review was published in the newspaper itself. Gage's figures are carved in such a way that they echo statues from antiquity calling upon their classical styling and extending that permanence to the *Los Angeles Times*. Furthermore, each figure references history, again connecting the centuries of printing to the activities of the *Los Angeles Times*—itself in its fifth decade of existence. Together with the architecture, these bas-reliefs reinforce to its viewers the core ideals of the newspaper and stand as testaments to its place of power within Los Angeles.

Similarly, the Sunkist Building capitalized on Classical motifs and historical references in its figural representations of three core principles: production, distribution, and cooperation. Through these panels, the co-op was able to connect a prosperous past and project confidence about its future. Harold F. Wilson, a local sculptor with little known about his life, was hired to create the three bas-relief panels on the exterior of the building. Prior to this commission, Wilson was recognized for his 1930 large bas-relief on the exterior of the Venice Police Station building, now SPARC, and the California State seal inlaid into the floor of the State Building in 1939. How he received the Sunkist commission is unknown but it is probable that if he

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<sup>572</sup> Millier, "Work of Noted Artists," B14.

did in fact design the reliefs around the base of the globe in the *Los Angeles Times*' Globe Lobby, then he came with some prior corporate commission experience.

On the Sunkist Building, Wilson's two fifth-floors panels are allegories of Production and Distribution—key elements that make up the citrus co-op and themes that reappear in the murals inside. In Production, a classical male, nude from the waist up, pours water from an amphora hoisted on his shoulder into an overflowing fountain in front of him. Surrounded by countless rows of orange trees and a massive mountain range similar to the San Gabriele and San Bernardino mountains that traverse the Inland Empire and Orange County where many of Sunkist's groves were located, the figure is framed by the sun acting simultaneously as the heavenly body and as a halo radiating light (fig. 42). Flanking him are two women in flowing drapery and head coverings. These twins function as symbols of agricultural fertility, possibly evoking Demeter, the goddess of harvest, and help to sow the land and harvest the fruit. Two robust citrus trees frame the entire scene.

Distribution on the right side of the building celebrates Sunkist's technological advances in being able to ship nationally and internationally (fig. 43). Surrounded by the same lush background as the first panel, the genders of the figures have been reversed. In place of the classical male is a personification of the bountiful harvest. Here, Production rises out of crates of citrus holding not an amphora of water but a woven basket filled presumably with fruit. She is flanked by two Mercurys—the god of travel and commerce. The framing orange trees have been replaced by high-rise buildings as the winged-capped Mercurys hold a miniature ship and train that point

towards the metropolises, emblematic of the modes of transportation Sunkist employed.

The panel over the entrance points to a third theme—that of Cooperation (fig. 44). Uncannily similar in style and placement to Last Judgment scenes found in the tympanums of Christian cathedrals, such as the west façades of the Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris or the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, a feminine personification of California and agriculture is seated on a throne. The robed figure reaches out to embrace the two men kneeling and grasping hands in front of a basket of citrus. Behind them flows an irrigation canal. Orange groves stretch into the characteristic landscape seen in the other two panels, while a radiant sun frames her head like a halo, much like the images in *Production*. The scene is flanked by two fasces, bundles of reeds symbolic of a unity that is hard to break and thus the unity of Sunkist's cooperative of growers.

Together, these three panels stood as allegories narrating “the story of each of these foundation functions which brought the organization into being and continue to maintain it.”<sup>573</sup> Wilson's panels thus point to Sunkist's reliance on a traditional and conservative visual vocabulary of easily identifiable and well-known Classical imagery that gives historical weight to and reinforces their themes of cooperation, production, and distribution. They also illustrate Wilson's ability to deftly match subject matter and style with the expectations of a patron.

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<sup>573</sup> “Sunkist Building: A Milestone in Progress,” 69.

### Labor on Display: The Times Murals

The murals that run the circumference of the Globe Lobby of the Times Building offer a curious mediation on the newspaper's relationship with organized labor when viewed through the lens of past battles. The murals, like those in the Edison and Title Guarantee Buildings, reference history to insert themselves into the larger narrative of the city. In the *Los Angeles Times* murals, like the Globe Lobby itself, the international scope of the newspaper is the focus as is the impressive steps involved in printing. What Kaufmann described as giving "expression to the influence of a newspaper on humanity, and the mechanical means employed to prepare a newspaper."<sup>574</sup> Implied in these murals are the countless people who read and are read about in the newspaper, highlighting the self-importance with which the *Los Angeles Times* was itself and its dominance of the production and dissemination of information.

Once again, it was Hugo Ballin who was commissioned to create a series of panoramic, sepia-toned murals that depicted the sources, printers, and carriers of the news. These murals, two measuring seven by ten feet and two twenty-six by ten feet, were described in the building's brochure as "bold statements of industry, technology and local history."<sup>575</sup> Ballin was a natural choice for such a large and significant mural commission with his past experience completing successful corporate murals and having recently completed a multi-panel mural cycle for the rotunda of the Griffith Observatory. In addition to his reputation, Ballin had met Kaufmann through Joe Beck, a friend from New York, who introduced to two at a luncheon in Los Angeles shortly

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<sup>574</sup> Kaufmann, "A Monument to Our City," B13.

<sup>575</sup> *Our Place in History*, brochure, n.p.

after first arriving to the city in 1921. Balling enquired after mural commissions and Kaufmann, also Jewish, connected him with the Meyers whose estate in Beverly Hills he was designing in 1924.<sup>576</sup> Through this connection, Ballin was commissioned for a series of murals in the Ben R. Meyer House and later, worked with Kaufmann again in 1927 when he completed murals for the dining room of the Milton E. Getz House in Beverly Hills.<sup>577</sup> Kaufmann also designed this house and Getz was the brother-in-law of Meyer. All of these factors theoretically combined to give Ballin a clear path to receive the commission for four thousand dollars.<sup>578</sup>

Entering the lobby, three monumental, heroic workers of the 1930s dominate the mural directly above the elevator lobby. Contemporary dynamos in their own right, and not Gage's historical references, Ballin's men confront viewers and are each associated with a different technology. The central figure gazes out to the viewer while straddling and grasping a telephone pole with both hands (fig. 45). He is framed in a halo of white with the dome of the United States Capitol Building rising behind him. To his left, a seated man with a mammoth plate camera prepares to take a photograph, and to his right, a man holds up a photoflash bulb, its light streaming downward. Surrounding these figures are the recognizable icons of international cities that were within reach of the newspaper's influence: London, Paris, and Rio de Janeiro. Los Angeles's own City Hall is clearly included among them. These icons are intermixed with paired modes of transportation, both old and new. Directly across and

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<sup>576</sup> Ballin, *I'll Be Damned*, 172.

<sup>577</sup> Sam Watters, *Houses of Los Angeles 1920-1935, Volume 2* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2007), 75–83.

<sup>578</sup> Contract between Ballin and P. J. Walker, February 14, 1935, *Los Angeles Times* records, The Huntington Library, box 45, folder 23.

visible when exiting the elevator bank, is its pendant mural in which the process of creating, designing, printing, and delivering the newspaper is depicted (fig. 46).

Lacking a clear center, the mechanisms of printing, such as linotype and stereotype machines, dominate the panel as men are seamlessly integrated into the well-oiled machine. In the upper left, three figures call out from a globe, possibly as symbols of inspiration to guide and encourage the reporter or editor below. The upper right is filled with eager hands reaching out for the news, set against rolling and falling reams of paper. Below this is a delivery truck filled with freshly printed newspapers and a newsboy yelling out to potential customers.

On either side of the larger murals are two smaller panels with pairs of figures that reference the history of the city and the newspaper's place within it. One pair represents a Native American and Spanish missionary alongside a depiction of the iconic mid-nineteenth-century Plaza Church, which lay at the historic center of downtown Los Angeles (fig. 47). Below the couple is a rider for the Pony Express frozen in mid-gallop hinting at an early network of information exchanges. The other pairing is of a Californio and a contemporary farmer with a depiction of the Times Building that was destroyed in 1910 below them (fig. 48). The likening of the bombed Times Building to the historical Plaza Church highlights how centrally this corporation saw their place in the city's history. To further reinforce this idea, above the two figures is an eagle, which functions on one level as a representation of



patriotism but also as the adopted symbol of the newspaper.<sup>579</sup> These two smaller murals act in a similar way to the Title Guarantee and Edison commissions discussed earlier, in that they also address the issue of civic identity through depictions of local history intertwined with that of the corporation. Placing the *Los Angeles Times* squarely within this narrative implies that its contributions are directly related to the ongoing history and success of Los Angeles.

Comparing the Times Building murals with the Edison or Title Guarantee commissions of just three years earlier, it is clear that Ballin takes a political position centralizing both the process of labor and the laborer. I contend that this temporary shift in his work can be attributed to an awareness of the Mexican mural movement and experimentation with certain notable characteristics of modern art as he understood them. As an artist active in the Los Angeles art world, Ballin would have been familiar with the three major Mexican muralists working in the United States at the time: Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros. Orozco was represented in California by his 1930 *Prometheus* mural at Pomona College (some thirty-five miles east of Los Angeles), and Rivera had been working in San Francisco and Detroit from 1930 to 1932. In early 1934, when Ballin was working on both the Times Building murals and those for the Griffith Observatory, the removal of Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads* from Rockefeller Center was widespread news and the story would have undoubtedly been of great interest to a fellow muralist, though this cannot be confirmed at this

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<sup>579</sup> The bronze eagle mounted on the 1910 Times Building had survived the bombing and was proudly displayed on the third and fourth homes of the Times. Today, the eagle is exhibited next to the elevators. While the artist is unknown, it is thought to be Gutzon Borglum. HCM Application, 2008, 10.

time.<sup>580</sup> Likewise, by the opening of the Times Building, the portion visible from the street of Siqueiros' *América Tropical* had been whitewashed. It has also been confirmed that Ballin was well acquainted both professionally and personally with Mexican artist Alfredo Ramos Martínez, an early teacher of Siqueiros, so it is probable that Ballin and Siqueiros met at some point during his time in Los Angeles.<sup>581</sup>

By foregrounding workers within the composition of these murals, Ballin moves dramatically away from his past depictions of laborers. Ballin's chosen symbols of the international presence of the newspaper are not members of the ownership elite or the newspaper's editors or managers, nor again allegorical figures, but instead three blue-collar laborers. No longer are they the small, marginal figures found in the Title Guarantee and Edison murals; instead, the figures dominate the canvas, at once individuals and also symbolic representations of heroic work. The appearance of these men is in stark contrast to those found in the mural across the lobby, where figures in suits—such as editors, reporters, and photographers—work directly with heavy machinery, a reversal of typical portrayals of blue- and white-collar labor. Although hard to establish definitively, the politics informing Ballin's elevation of monumental laborers in the lobby of a corporation that had a decades-long contentious relationship with unions and their workers would not have been lost on the murals' audience. As the men in the murals strive for the common goals of progress and economic prosperity, albeit in separate panels—and social regimes—Ballin's

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<sup>580</sup> Rivera's Rockefeller mural removal would have been widespread news as well as the removal of Leo Katz's mural in the Frank Wiggins Trade School in 1935 in Los Angeles.

<sup>581</sup> Nieto, "Mexican Art and Los Angeles," 131.

depictions hint at a perhaps uneasy sense of cooperation and harmony between the two classes by elevating, and thus “celebrating,” all types of labor.

In both murals, Ballin experiments with a new kind of dynamism and abstraction similar to that developed in the work of Siqueiros and Orozco. Both Mexican muralists were heavily influenced by the shifting planes and kinetic articulation found in the work of the Italian Futurists as they strove to capture the movement and energy of modern life. A similar kind of dynamism is clearly found in Ballin’s murals as evidenced by shifting points of view, the fragmentation and collapsing of space, and overall sense of movement. Beams of raking light shine downward and act as sharp dividing panels within the densely layered murals. The Mexican muralists’ theatrical use of lighting and dense, interlocking compositions is also apparent in Ballin’s murals: there are dramatic plays of light and shadow as well as little to no depth in the scenes. Though it is unknown whether the monochromatic brown-spectrum grisaille of the murals was decided upon by Ballin, Kaufmann, or the *Los Angeles Times*, it seems an odd choice given the artist’s deft handling of color elsewhere, and may be further evidence of Ballin’s attempt in the Globe Lobby to test a new style.

As scholar Margarita Nieto argues, it was Rivera who had the most tangible and direct influence on Ballin’s style.<sup>582</sup> While Ballin’s central figure holding the telephone pole bears a striking similarity to the central blonde man at the controls in Rivera’s *Man at the Crossroads*, additional influence can be seen in the Globe Lobby

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<sup>582</sup> Nieto, “Mexican Art and Los Angeles,” 134.

murals, which Nieto states “reveal a careful analysis of Rivera's Detroit Institute of Arts frescoes in their linear construction and spatial composition as well as in the theme of workers in a new industrial age.”<sup>583</sup> In Detroit and throughout his career, Rivera placed the process of labor and its various mechanizations at the center of his visual story lines, an emphasis that Ballin clearly adopts in his *Los Angeles Times* murals. Additionally, Ballin's detailed rendering, emphasis on tubing and gears, and monumental size of the mechanical elements in a printing plant suggest Rivera's influence by way of his Rockefeller mural. Likewise, the poses, placement, and movement of those who interact with the machines echo both Rivera and the Futurists.

Ballin's understanding of decorum, as discussed in the previous chapter, is shown in his attempt to find a delicate balance between fronting the labor process and highlighting the newspaper's role in serving and educating the public. Ballin's work is rarely political or class-focused, and these murals point to his attempt to engage with depictions of labor while retaining the support of his patron. The murals can also be viewed as representing Ballin's experiments with elements of modern art and the influence of Mexican muralism while trying to reconcile these tendencies with his more conservative, academic style.

Curiously, coverage of the building hardly mentions the murals. When they are mentioned it is only in passing and always uninspiringly factual, offering no comment. For example, when Ballin's murals were mentioned in *California Arts & Architecture* it was only within the context of the lobby: “The murals, by Hugo Ballin, depict the

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<sup>583</sup> Nieto, “Mexican Art and Los Angeles,” 134.

printing of a newspaper, the gathering of the news, as well as journalism's service to the community."<sup>584</sup> Even Millier, in his review of the murals printed for the *Los Angeles Times* (which one would think would celebrate the commission more so) uses the majority of his article to simply describe the murals. In the last line, Millier concedes, writing, "With dignity, clarity and fine decoration these murals tell the story of news and the newspaper."<sup>585</sup> This language is very similar to the measured enthusiasm found in earlier reviews of the Title Guarantee and Edison Buildings and illustrates, once again, how the art commissions of corporations were acknowledged in the local and national press.

### **Golden Apples of Discord: The Sunkist Murals**

Separated by only six months, the opening of the Sunkist Building in January and the strike that summer were deeply intertwined and reflect an era of growing unrest amongst its citrus pickers and packers that culminated in that summer of 1936. In tandem with the three bas-reliefs by Harold F. Wilson on the exterior of the building, the murals in the Sunkist Building showcased the long history of citrus in California and reinforced Sunkist's core ideals of harmonious production, cooperation, and distribution. Representing one of only three known collaborations by Frank Bowers and Arthur Prunier, the two sets of pendant murals depict complementary, idyllic views of historical and present-day citrus cultivation and harvesting by family farmers, furthering Sunkist's nostalgically-grounded public image. In reality, the

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<sup>584</sup> "The Los Angeles Times Building," 21.

<sup>585</sup> Millier, "Work of Noted Artists," B14.

murals papered-over the fervent battles against agricultural unionization spearheaded by Sunkist leadership and the increasing power exercised from within the company by commercial growers during the 1920s and 1930s. It is this context that frames Sunkist's mural commission and necessitates a rereading of the layered murals found within the Sunkist Building.

Upon entering the lobby, one finds the first pair of murals by Bowers and Prunier. Both men were born in 1905 and 30 years old at the time of the commission yet it is unknown how they received the job. Bowers was a California native, while Prunier was originally from Massachusetts. They would collaborate a total of two other times on mural commissions. In 1937, the pair painted a mural in El Monte, California at the Ruth Home, a place for young girls suffering from "social diseases," which included unplanned pregnancies.<sup>586</sup> Four years later in 1941 as part of a WPA sponsored commission, Bowers and Prunier would paint a pair of murals entitled *City Activities* in the South Gate City Hall.<sup>587</sup> While Prunier faded from history following the South Gate commission, Bowers had a successful career, specializing in bar and restaurant murals.

This pair of lobby murals can be read as an allegory for the ideals that Sunkist claimed to stand for, such as the importance of family, the promise of the future, health and vitality, and the successes of harmonious cooperation and distribution. The first panel showcases Sunkist's connection with traditional symbols of abundance, fertility, and family, as well as the orange's symbolic connection to gold and the sun

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<sup>586</sup> In the 1940s it would become the Sister Kenny Polio Hospital, which was founded by Ruth K. Kerr of the Kerr Glass canning jar company. It was located at 4039 Gilman Road, El Monte, CA, 91732.

<sup>587</sup> It was located at 8650 California Ave, South Gate, CA 90280.

(fig. 49). To the left is a semi-nude, golden-haired woman who holds a similarly golden-locked child in her right arm as she reaches up with her left hand to pick a ripe orange from the boundless harvest she is immersed in. A symbol of fertility similar to those on the exterior bas-reliefs, this Sunkist Venus is bathed in a golden light that matches the loosely slung drapery around her waist. The child in her arms offers one of these perfectly ripe oranges to the viewer. Below the pair is a faceless farmer, an emblem of masculine production and cultivation, crouched on the ground tilling the soil with his muscular back turned out towards the viewer. Beside him is a basket overflowing with oranges. Stretching into the background and filling the right side of the mural is a monumental figure of Progress rising nude out of a utopian metropolis. Behind him the sun's rays gloriously radiate out in all directions, illuminating the Arcadian scene that presents the rural and urban in harmony with one another.

The fertility Sunkist connects to its brand as a way of creating a market for oranges is an extension of the natural abundance that turn-of-the-century boosters claimed could be found in California. Oranges, as Sackman argues, were promoted by Sunkist as “the answer to the anxieties of city-bound Americans: they would restore their health, vigor, and contact with nature.”<sup>588</sup> The untamed wilderness that surrounds the woman and her child allude to the imagery of nature promoted by Sunkist in the 1920s and 1930s. During these decades, Sunkist's advertising often featured cars

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<sup>588</sup> Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 86.

meandering through unpopulated orange groves so to present an image its consumers could easily identify with and desire as an alternative to urban life.<sup>589</sup>

The sun offered another direct connection to the therapeutic landscape that can be found in California and, by extension, Sunkist oranges. Long a symbol for Sunkist, Sackman theorizes, “The trick of Sunkist advertising was to make metaphoric relationships seem metonymic.”<sup>590</sup> In doing so, the sun-kissed oranges were truly touched by the sun and meant “consumption of the orange would literally be getting in touch with nature, unmediated by any signs of culture; the consumer would also be sun-kissed.”<sup>591</sup> Sackman further argues that in order to keep the purity of the sun-orange-consumer lineage, the numerous people who actually handle the fruit needed to be invisible, lest they contaminate the connection.<sup>592</sup> The only one who could mediate this, Sackman offers, is “the woman-as-Mother-Earth icon” that represents nature in the form of a woman, frequently offering or holding fruit—much like the woman found in this first lobby mural.<sup>593</sup> Furthermore, connecting individual women with its products implied “Sunkist was not a large, impersonal organization that rationalized the growing and selling of millions of boxes of oranges.” Instead it was presenting these “golden apples of the sun” to its consumer in an intimate exchange that similarly offered the benefits of health and embodied nature.<sup>594</sup> The connection to gold was

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<sup>589</sup> Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 88.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>592</sup> This is not unlike today, with orange juice commercials such as those that drink from a straw stuck into an orange (Tropicana Orange Juice) or a farmer reaching from his orange groves into the super market to offer fresh squeezed orange juice to a (female) consumer (Florida’s Natural Orange Juice).

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, 92. The phrase “Golden Apples of the Sun” first appeared as the last line of William Butler Yeats’s 1899 poem “The Song of Wandering Aengus.” The American science-fiction writer Ray



twofold. Sunkist marketed the orange's connection to the golden rays of the sun but others saw the fruit as literal gold given how profitable it was and continue to be.

The second panel that would have hung across the lobby from this first panel builds upon the agrarian bounty and promise of a utopian future present in its companion piece (fig. 50). This mural features two sets of light-skinned men, one blonde and one brunet, actively engaged as partners in their labor. The bottom half of the mural is anchored by two men that offer a mirror image of each other as they grasp the other's arm. Below the intertwined arms symbolizing Cooperation are pairs of trucks and trains that emerge from a large globe featuring North and South America; above is a plane and two steam ships. Similar to those presented in the Distribution panel by Wilson on the exterior as well as that found throughout the *Los Angeles Times'* Globe Lobby, this imagery functions as a symbol of the transportation network and global scope of Sunkist. Occupying the upper portion of this mural are two bare-chested men engaged in turning a large gear with great effort, a symbol of the labor involved in the physical distribution of its citrus. Filling the space behind the figures are the lush branches of orange trees laden with fruit. This mural offered a rare counterpoint to the agrarian utopia presented in the first lobby panel in that the labor behind Sunkist's product is revealed and celebrated. This is seldom found in its advertising from the era which is normally dominated by scenes of leisure, nostalgic images of California missions, or untouched nature. Despite this, it is glaringly obvious, as in the other Sunkist panels examined shortly, that these murals

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Bradbury further popularized it when it appeared as the title of his short story anthology in 1953 (it was also the title of one of the stories included in the publication).

prominently feature Caucasian figures who are positioned as central to Sunkist's fabricated myth of who is participating in the cultivation, production, and successful distribution of its products.

In moving from the lobby to the auditorium, one finds the larger of the two sets of murals. This space was where monthly grower meetings were held, as well as other types of gatherings, such as school groups on tour and employee events. One panel is a sweeping scene of a nineteenth-century Spanish mission filled with bustling activity (fig. 51). Oranges and lemons were widely grown in Baja California Jesuit missions prior to 1739 and thought to be brought to San Diego in 1769 by the Franciscans. The first orange grove was planted in 1804 at Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, just outside of Los Angeles proper. This mural features a padre in white with a group of settlers behind him who have arrived to the mission grounds via covered wagon. The padre holds an orange in his right hand and gestures out with his other to the scene unfolding in the lower right as a nude toddler grasp his robes. Here one sees a seated Native American male, dressed only in a small loincloth, who turns his bare back to the viewer. In front of him is a large, shallow basket of oranges and above him is a bare-breasted woman who reaches down to the young child in front of her who holds a bowl up to his mouth. Behind her is the only fully clothed non-white figure, a Mexican with a hat and folded arms. Above him are two Native American males picking oranges, while others in the center background transport and load bushes and boxes onto a cart.

The stark contrast between non-whites in various states of undress versus the settlers and missionaries is similarly echoed by those who participate in the orange's handling and harvesting as compared to those who purely observe others at work—presumably work from which the observers will benefit. The message is clear—those of presumed higher racial and socio-economic standing are the ones who oversee and those who perform the labor are, by the very nature of their work, lower. This mural, with its Spanish Fantasy Past imagery, is one that fits neatly within the larger advertising narratives of both Sunkist and Los Angeles boosters. By connecting the history of oranges to the history of missions in the state, the mural would have offered a nostalgic moment to its viewer in which, like the rolling, untouched orange groves found in other advertisements, viewers could have imagined themselves taking part in the long history of the citrus in the state. Furthermore, like in other corporate murals from the 1930s, such imagery inserted Sunkist's own corporate history (which had nothing to do with missions and the early cultivation of oranges) within this long, romanticized history.

The companion piece, which would have been installed directly across the room from this mural, moved forward in time to the present moment and displays a fairly similar scene of the picking and packing of oranges and lemons (fig. 52). Here the Native Americans have been replaced by a variety of Caucasian men. Some are fully clothed and others, presumably hot from the effort of their work, are represented shirtless, arranged in the foreground on ladders and moving containers of oranges. In the central place occupied by the padre, we encounter a white male surveying the work

while, similar to the other panel, a mustached man in a hat looks on. This figure is comfortably at rest with one hand in his pocket and the other holding a pipe while his female companion looks out and smiles (the similar figure in the opposite panel looks down and smiles at her child). Between them, a man in a well-tailored suit stares out from the background, his arm and leg propped up on a truck from which the driver peers at the scene in front of him. Instead of a rudimentary cart, boxcars on a railway stand ready to transport the citrus along with a truck in the far right background with an open bed awaiting goods. This imagery would have been relevant to the exclusively male managers and growers of Sunkist who could see themselves within the romanticized mural—placing themselves in any number of the roles included.

In these two murals, Sunkist is making a clear statement that present-day labor is no longer comprised of Native Americans, and by extension, immigrants. Instead, its workers, whose faces we can clearly see, unlike the Native Americans in the mission panel, look like the growers and their families, those who would be sitting in the seats surrounded by these murals. This scene evokes nostalgic reminiscences of shared harvesting where relatives and neighbors would gather to help each other out and merrily share the burden of work. The reality, of course, was made up of long days of hard manual labor picking citrus on the endless acreage of commercial farms or packaging a never-ending conveyor belt with products. In both jobs, one's (low) pay corresponded directly to high productivity. Furthermore, the gendered divisions found in these murals are in line with its racial divisions of labor. In total, only three women are present as compared to the twenty-eight men and four children. The

women are always shown statically and linked directly, as in the mission panel, or indirectly, as in the present day mural, to a child, thus reinforcing their place as nurturers and mothers. While not as blatant an allegory as the Sunkist Venus in the lobby panel, these women, as the men, still stand as stereotypical evocations of traditional gender roles in the 1930s.

It does not take an especially critical reading of the murals to see through the superficial subject matter they present. With these murals, Sunkist was attempting to evade any acknowledgement of current racialized conflicts and labor disputes through an erasure of ethnic identities. Supporting—and some would say glorifying—the appropriation of indigenous lands by the mission system in the first panel, Native Americans are shown under the watchful eyes of the controlling padres. The danger this indigenous labor poses no longer exists; it has long ago been neutralized. Although the real threat embodied by the citrus industry's immigrant labor population during the present moment is still very much alive, they are completely erased from the panels, replaced by harmless and non-violent Anglo workers. Thus it is the Mexicans who have inherited the earlier indigenous lineage of both racial and ethnic clashes and have yet to break out from under the watchful eye of their Sunkist supervisors.

In July 1936, *Fortune* ran a feature article on Sunkist entitled “Coöperation at a Profit” that was lavishly illustrated with black and white photographs as well as five full-color watercolors by Los Angeles-based artist Millard Sheets commissioned by

the magazine.<sup>595</sup> To the question it poses of what is the Exchange, the author offers four answers: the grower, the packinghouse, the District Exchange, and the Central Exchange. While the article is fairly straightforward in its coverage of Sunkist's operations, its treatment of laborers in Sheets' artwork and the article is particularly telling. The terms of the commission unknown, Sheets' artwork portrays similar stereotypes as those found in the murals in the Sunkist Building. His idealized men that pick the oranges are faceless but more Caucasian than not. The women who pack the fruit are as graceful as dancers, set within "the cheerful décor of the Exchange's San Fernando packing house."<sup>596</sup> Most powerful of all, Sheets conjured clichéd associations of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in his watercolor described as "Mexican pickers of a Sunday afternoon."<sup>597</sup> In this genre scene of one of the countless villages these workers would live in, women stroll and men rest with hats over their faces under the shade of a large tree. All told, Sheets' vignette reinforces stereotypes of Mexicans as idle and backwards—preferring to live in tents with livestock running free as seen in the goat Sheets included in the foreground. For the readers of *Fortune*, this image perfectly captured the idea that Sunkist's workers were nothing more than, in the words of Teague, "easygoing, kindly Mexican people" who have "a natural skill in the handling of tools and are resourceful in matters requiring manual ability."<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> "California Fruit Growers," 47–55, 90, 92, 95.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>598</sup> Lillard, "Agricultural Statesman," 11.

Throughout the article and images there is nearly no mention of labor strife—clearly an unspoken omission considering that the strike in Orange County had begun on June 11 and was the result of months of mounting tensions. The one moment it is acknowledged is in a small inset on the bottom right of the eighth page of the article entitled “Labor is Contended.”<sup>599</sup> Among images of smiling children of workers and the impeccably maintained workers’ cottages the author describes how content Sunkist’s laborers are:

Labor is Contended...in the citrus groves of California, and this is big news. For of late years California’s agricultural labor has erupted in may a bloody strike. In recent files of any left-wing journal you will find plenty about the Salinas lettuce strikes, the Imperial Valley vegetable strikes, the Sacramento strawberry strikes. But you will find nothing about labor trouble among the 20,000 men and women who pick and pack the citrus crop. This may be because the Exchange is big and efficient enough to have some sense of social responsibility towards it workers. Or it may be because it is prosperous enough to pay slightly higher wages: around thirty cents an hour in the field.<sup>600</sup>

Blindly ignoring the truth of the strike that was currently taking place, *Fortune* and *Sheets* instead chose to feature image after image of contented workers and family farmers.

These idealized visions of citrus industry work—and workers—that Sunkist celebrated in its murals and press coverage are clearly far from the truth. For instead of recognizing mounting tensions between the citrus industry and its workforce, the murals helped to reinforce Sunkist’s claim of a benevolent relationship with and ongoing altruistic service to its growers, pickers, and packers, as well as the larger

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<sup>599</sup> “California Fruit Growers,” 54.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*

public. With the strikes erupting in the summer of 1936, the hard truth of Sunkist's treatment of its laborers could no longer be hidden under the brightly colored murals lining the walls of their headquarters.

## **Conclusion**

1935 was a year in which the city of Los Angeles was battling the Great Depression, far removed from the optimism of the early years of the decade. Criticisms over unnecessary spending and a lack of funding pervaded everything from the city's museum to its hosting of the Olympics. There were fears over Communist propaganda in murals and the campaign platform of potential governors. As a result, the corporate headquarters for both the *Los Angeles Times* and Sunkist reflected these strains on commerce in Los Angeles through their art commissions and architecture. The selected architects designed buildings that offered a restraint in decorative flourishes and exterior ornamentation. Bas-reliefs were notably conservative in their neoclassical approach, like those found in 1931 that proclaimed stability, durability, and longevity. The Times Building, with its lavishly appointed Globe Lobby trumpeted its place and role in shaping the news on an international scale, literally. Sunkist by contrast, appeased its growers and opted to be more frugal—constructing its building almost entirely of concrete both inside and out. Both headquarters commissioned artists and use these commissions as a form of CSR, a way to give back to their community through cultural philanthropy, which was needed more than ever given the city's museum threatened closure over a lack of funds. Yet, within the



context of each company's dealings with organized labor, the murals that graced their interiors pointed directly to this, as in Hugo Ballin's, or chose to ignore it completely, as Arthur Prunier and Frank Bowers did for Sunkist.

Despite the public success of the artists following the commissions, none would go on to have other corporate mural commissions of this scale. While Prunier and Bowers painted two other murals together, their partnership after that presumably ended. Ballin, on the other hand, went on to continue to create murals and easel paintings yet he does not receive another corporate mural commission. While there is no clear reason behind Ballin's failure to secure another corporate mural commission following the *Los Angeles Times*, a combination of factors can be said to contribute to this. Ballin became increasingly disillusioned with the art world leading up to 1935. In 1934 he staged a hoax with the National Academy after receiving a critical review yet was praised for a painting he submitted under a false name. That same year he was refused payment for his Griffith Observatory murals because his signature was included when the works should have been anonymous. Lastly, in 1936, after being rejected for other Treasury mural competitions, Ballin submitted a proposal for a mural depicting the debauchery of a gold-rush-era saloon that was excessively poor in technique and design. When it was selected, he was insulted and saw it as proof of the government's lack of an aesthetic appreciation of art. As a result, Ballin very publically turned down a government commission for a mural in the Inglewood post office. Together, these incidents unfolded very publically and may have formed an impression on potential patrons that he was difficult to work with. This is paired with

his more politically, left-leaning *Los Angeles Times* murals and his alignment with the Mexican muralists as well as the issues surrounding the political nature of this work. It may be very possible that his *Los Angeles Times* murals angered Chandler and thus, he was blacklisted from other corporate commission in Los Angeles. While Ballin does continue to receive mural commissions until his death in 1956, these were not in Los Angeles proper but in the neighboring cities of Burbank and Santa Monica.

Chapter three, in part, contains material that was previously published in “The Apotheosis of Power: Corporate Mural Commissions in Los Angeles during the 1930s.” *Public Art Dialogue* 4 (2014): 42–70.

## Conclusion

*Men are remembered by the artists they employ. The artist is the last person sought by the one who gives posterity its most precious heritage.*<sup>601</sup>  
—Hugo Ballin, (circa 1950) *I'll Be Damned*, personal memoirs

Anchoring the corner of Adams Boulevard and Western Avenue just west of downtown Los Angeles, is the third home office of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, which opened to the public in August 1949. Paul Revere Williams, the first African-American member of the American Institute of Architects, designed the modernist building that stood as a testimony to the success of the oldest African-American-owned business of any kind west of the Mississippi River. The structure's prominent location in the historically African-American neighborhood of West Adams was emblematic of Golden State's commitment to investing in the community it served. Yet the building itself represented only one part of this mission.

The opening celebration revealed its showpiece—a pair of monumental murals by New York-based, African-American artists Charles Alston and Hale Woodruff that were prominently displayed in the lobby, each measuring sixteen-and-a-half by nine feet (figs. 53 and 54). The murals celebrate the pivotal role Africans and African Americans played in California's history with vignettes featuring scenes beginning with the region's exploration and settlement in 1527 spanning through to the building's opening in 1949 and rightfully reclaim a rich heritage that had been, thus

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<sup>601</sup> Ballin, *I'll Be Damned*, 27.

far, largely ignored. Representing Golden State's deep-seated responsibility to support African Americans and their artistic practices, the commission foreshadows its own corporate collection of African-American art, established in 1965. Thought to be not only the sole collaboration between Alston and Woodruff but also the first major example of corporate patronage by an African-American-owned business for a largely African-American audience in Los Angeles, the murals have yet to be the subject of any extensive scholarly inquiry. Like the examples of corporate patronage of art and architecture discussed in this dissertation, the role the Golden State commission had in championing the history and culture of African Americans in Los Angeles has been largely disregarded in current scholarship.

This commission is significant for another reason—it marks the last major corporate mural commission in Los Angeles appearing over a decade after the Times and Sunkist Building commissions of the mid-1930s. The waning popularity of murals as a form of corporate cultural philanthropy can be explained by a number of reasons. Firstly, there was simply a lack of new commissions by private entities. As the Depression continued during the 1930s, it was increasingly rare to have new corporate headquarters built as profits were reinvested back into the companies themselves.

Secondly, buildings constructed during the late 1930s and early 1940s were largely public buildings that relied heavily on governmental fund and financing through the New Deal—schools, post offices, and the like. These government-funded properties, some existing and others new, frequently included murals as part of their interior spaces, building on the earlier connections discussed that connected murals to

civic identity and public education. Yet, as a result of a proliferation WPA-awarded commissions that drew on regional styles and subject matter, the late 1930s were overwhelmed with highly visible (yet often mediocre) murals. Through the 1940s, as attention turned towards supporting the efforts of World War II, public murals of all kinds became dated and, whether accurate or not, were frequently associated in the minds of the public with those produced through the WPA.

Thirdly, the clean lines and rejection of ornament found in the aesthetics of modernist architecture became increasingly popular with corporations following World War II as it became a way to embody modernity. Lobbies, therefore, no longer were planned around a central mural—much less one that was representational in an era of Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism. When artwork was included it was often in the form of an abstract sculpture or a large painted canvas. These works were usually not the result of a direct commission but were collected and signal the rise of the corporation as art collector. This move to collecting contemporary, abstract art for display throughout a building was championed by David Rockefeller in 1959 as discussed earlier in this dissertation. Aside from the associations that were inherent in collecting this genre of art, paintings and sculpture—as opposed to site-specific murals—were far easier to transport if a corporation should have to vacate their current building.

While the mural was being replaced by abstract sculpture and no longer found in the lobbies of corporate headquarters, it became visible again through the Community Mural Movement and Chicano Mural Movement of the 1960s. These

murals were largely painted by amateur artists and spoke to social issues relevant at the time to the community in which it was located. This revival marks the second wave of mural painting in Los Angeles with the third following the lifting of the ban on murals in 2013.

While all but one of the buildings examined in this dissertation still stand, the artworks have lost their connection to their original patrons. The Edison Building, commonly known today as One Bunker Hill, is located at 601 W. Fifth Street and its lobby is open to the public. In 1971 it was sold to commercial investors and converted into rental office space shortly thereafter. The lobby has been since renovated and in 1988 the building became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #347. These murals are in good condition and, while it is unknown if the Miller and Buff murals ever underwent restoration, the Ballin mural was repaired after it suffered damage in the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

The Title Guarantee and Trust Company, now the Title Guarantee Apartments and Lofts, is located at 411 Fifth Street. Unfortunately, the corporation did not fare as well as Edison. In little over a decade after opening its new building, the company was unable to secure enough business to continue operating. In 1942, its rival, the Title Insurance and Trust Company, bought the company and the Title Guarantee Building was sold the following year. In 1984 it became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #278 and that same year it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Its lobby is open to the public and while the building was converted into lofts in 2008, the murals are still in their original location. Unfortunately, the murals are

greatly discolored and in need of restoration. At one point, it seems small patches were cleaned on each of the six panels resulting in semi-restored rectangles scattered throughout the canvases. The murals were not taken into account when modern fixtures replaced the original ceiling lamps. As a result, the fixtures now hang directly into the sight path of the murals and cause a large amount of glare that makes it difficult to photograph the panels.

The Times Building is located at 202 W. First Street and the Globe Lobby is open to the public during normal business hours, while tours are by appointment. In the early 1960s, the murals were nearly taken down to give the lobby a more “modern” feel but, fortuitously, aluminum panels were chosen instead, thereby covering and protecting the murals for three decades. The late Huell Howser, a local PBS television host in Los Angeles, was touring the Times Building in 1990 and, while filming, repeatedly asked the *Los Angeles Times* representative why Ballin’s murals were still covered. Public pressure in response to this episode was a catalyst in the uncovering and restoration of the murals. However, the building is not a protected property or listed on any historical registries, local or national, which calls into question the future status of the building and its artwork.

The Sunkist murals are still visible despite the 1936 building being demolished in 1972. When it was torn down, the murals were mounted and moved to the boardroom of Sunkist’s next headquarters in Sherman Oaks. They underwent restoration in the early 2000s and, today, the murals are available to be seen by appointment in Sunkist’s third home, fittingly, in Valencia, California.

This dissertation is an investigation of the intersection of art, commerce, and public space. The corporate art commissions throughout corporate headquarters in Los Angeles during the early part of the twentieth century examined in this study sought to express permanence, stability, and authority. By serving to embody an educational and aesthetic experience within its lobbies, the art commissions were a way in which corporations could engage in a very early form of corporate social responsibility. Reaping the benefits of such cultural philanthropy with customers, employees, and the public at large, these corporations could shape public opinion and assert authority through its murals and architectural sculpture that strategically reframed local history and civic identity through a corporate lens. These corporations, in particular the Title Guarantee and Trust Company, Southern California Edison Company, California Fruit Growers Exchange, and *Los Angeles Times*, celebrated their commissions as cultural contributions and offered their lobbies as public spaces where learning could take place.

Disregarded most often as one-dimensional embodiments of corporate branding, this study has shown that these murals are far more complex and offer mediations on the issues of the time: a corporation's relationship to organized labor, definitions of masculinity, who is included and excluded from Los Angeles's history, and the promise of the progress. The artists commissioned represent the range of traditional and modernist approaches to art making at a time when such definitions were in flux. Some artists, like Conrad Buff and Barse Miller, were able to temper



their modernist leanings to please their patrons and found the artistic language of the Italian Futurists who celebrated the machine to be particularly relevant as was the case with the Edison murals. Furthermore, the theory of decorum serves to give structure to questions of content, style, and reception. Hugo Ballin is a key figure, now forgotten, who embodies both. His representational style, what I term as corporate realism, was rooted in artistic tradition, accessible, and easily applied to a variety of commissions. As a result, he was a master of decorum, leading to numerous mural commission at a time when an artist was fortunate to receive just one. Yet, a misstep in his mural for the Times Building that elevated the laborer (both literally and figuratively) within a space in which such figures were shunned, proved to be his end.

Furthermore, this research helps to inform our understanding of the value of corporate art commissions as well as the role of the corporate patron within the larger history of art. It also serves as a reminder of the importance of lobbies as sites of urban public space. By expanding the definition of public art, patronage, and public space to include the corporate sphere, it allows for a more nuanced understanding of patronage in our modern era. This dissertation reveals that corporate support of the arts today is not as new a phenomenon as one may think. Prior to World War II, corporate patronage of the arts in the United States, and Los Angeles in particular, was thriving and vibrant. By taking into account the history of these early forms of corporate cultural philanthropy, one is able to reflect upon and complicate modern day notions around the role and legacy of the corporation patron.

## **Epilogue**

Twenty-first century corporate cultural philanthropy takes many forms—from partnerships with artists to creating limited edition advertising campaigns and packaging to financing new museum wings and funding the performing arts; from sponsoring international art fairs and awards to having artists in residence and sending turnkey exhibitions to museums drawn from its collection. The following epilogue offers readers an overview of corporate art collections and the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) following World War II as well as a look into the increasing corporate sponsorship of museums and art awards. This section ends with a discussion of the repercussions following the decline of governmental support of the arts in the 1980s. This history is rarely presented together and, given the complexities and the far-ranging ramifications as a result of greater privatization of the arts in the United States, it necessitates additional scrutiny and scholarship.

### **Corporate Art Collections in the United States at Mid-Century and After**

Though not driven by the private art-collecting habits of high-level executives, corporate art collections following World War II continued to serve as a public relations strategy and a form of CSR—and, more importantly, a way to spend wartime profits to avoid taxation. With the 1960s, a shift came in the types of art that corporations collected. They moved away from representational artworks by

established artists, instead acquiring abstract, contemporary works, often by American artists, that were stimulating, modern, creative and artistically progressive in nature—all values corporations hoped to embody and convey themselves.<sup>602</sup> As Wu has argued:

The appeal of contemporary art...lies in the mythological cult of artistic personality and the strong association between avant-garde art and innovation within the paradigm of modernism that has provided the business world with a valuable tool to project the image of itself as a progressive and innovative corporate force.<sup>603</sup>

Additionally, many corporations turned to works by living local American artists, a decision which would support their surrounding community and would be a source of pride for employees and locals who would visit the collections on view—and would also increase the corporation's visibility within the community at a much lower cost than building a collection around European Old Masters. The move by corporations to collect contemporary art was not solely due to the relatively low cost and progressive nature of such artwork; its popularity also came from the success of cultural diplomacy programs of the 1950s that equated American avant-garde art with the superiority of democratic ideals and freedom of expression.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> See Martorella, *Corporate Art*, 70–75, where she cites that seventy percent of corporations in 1990 favored contemporary American art over other forms. She also notes that corporations generally avoided works with nudity or overly political and religious themes.

<sup>603</sup> Chin-tao Wu, "Corporate Collectors in Britain," in *Art and Business: An International Perspective on Sponsorship*, ed. Rosanne Martorella (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 91. See also Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 212–70.

<sup>604</sup> For more on this topic, see Barter, "The New Medici;" Taylor Littleton and Maltby Sykes, eds., *Advancing American Art: Painting, Politics and Cultural Confrontation at Mid-Century* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Dennis Harper, ed., *Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy* (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, 2012); Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Frances

Indicative of this trend were three exhibitions organized in the 1960s. At the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1960, *Business Buys American Art* showcased works of American art collected by fifty-one corporations. In 1965, Philip Morris sponsored *11 Pop Artists: The New Image* and *Pop and Op: An Exhibition of 65 Graphic Works*. The Whitney exhibition began when fine arts consultant Judith Selkowitz sent a questionnaire on collecting art to nine hundred American businesses, including all the Fortune 500 companies. The results were unexpected: 57% were active in acquiring artworks and 48% owned contemporary works by American artists. The exhibition catalog essay by David A. Prager, chairman of the exhibitions committee, notes that “although much has been accomplished, the utilization of art by industry is still in its infancy,” and “of the art actually owned or used, a considerable quantity is of disappointingly poor quality.”<sup>605</sup> He hints that “the impetus to buy seems to have come from the enthusiasm of one member of a firm,” pointing to the fact that much of what constituted corporate collections in 1960 still followed early twentieth-century habits of collecting.<sup>606</sup> Yet the growing interest in including acquisitions for display in public places was acknowledged as a “major development” by Prager:

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Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2001). In addition to likening itself to the avant-garde ideals of contemporary art, other corporations visibly placed such art in their offices as with the department store Neiman Marcus. In 1951, Stanley Marcus commissioned Alexander Calder to create the sculpture *Mariposa* for the first suburban store outside of Dallas, Texas. Cited as making the retailer “special, engaging and inspiring,” the artworks in the Neiman Marcus collection are believed to not just be decorative but “rather, it enriches the environment, educates and entertains our customers. ... Like a museum, our art collection hopes to engage the curious. ... Through art, we want to be a part of people’s lives and the community in which they live. The intension of the collection is not to intimidate, only to inspire.” The Neiman Marcus Group, Inc., “The Neiman Marcus Story: Corporate Art Collection,” accessed May 28, 2013, <http://www.neimanmarcuscareers.com/story/art.shtml>.

<sup>605</sup> David A. Prager, *Business buys American Art, March 17-April 24, 1960, third loan exhibition by the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1960), 4.

<sup>606</sup> Prager, *Business buys American Art*, 4.

“Large scale works of outstanding quality have been commissioned by leading architects as focal points of imposing buildings and centers which exemplify the importance to a company, not alone of attractive working conditions, but of the subtle but very real connection between beauty and good business.”<sup>607</sup>

Conversely, Philip Morris, as a corporation, not a museum, had hoped that by sponsoring exhibitions of avant-garde contemporary artworks, it would, by extension, also be seen as innovative—what chairman George Weissman recalls as wanting “to demonstrate to our own employees that we were an open-minded company seeking creativity in all aspects of our business.”<sup>608</sup> In 1966, the year following both exhibitions, Weissman, in an address to fellow corporate heads at the Business and Arts Conference, stated:

For our company—perhaps for American business in general—this is only the beginning. The future will see an ever-closer partnership between business and the arts. The passing of the giant private patron...the growing awareness of the corporation’s potential and responsibility for enlightenment, the ever-widening scope of the corporation’s horizons—these are the factors that will cement lasting relationships with the arts.<sup>609</sup>

Furthermore, as Richard Maxwell argues, the Philip Morris exhibitions were “an excellent tool to inspire enthusiasm for both the American consumer lifestyle and the political and economic structures that made that lifestyle possible.”<sup>610</sup> These exhibitions were intended not only to symbolize Philip Morris’ own progressive nature

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<sup>607</sup> Prager, *Business buys American Art*, 3.

<sup>608</sup> Mervyn Rothstein, “Uneasy Partners: Arts and Philip Morris,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1990, C15f.

<sup>609</sup> Address by George Weissman at the Business and Arts Conference at Lincoln Center, New York City, March 28, 1966, as quoted in Sam Hunter, *Art in Business: The Philip Morris Story* (New York: Business Committee for the Arts by Abrams, 1979), 9.

<sup>610</sup> Richard Maxwell, *Culture Works: The Political Economy of Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001), 35.

but also were a form of much needed image recuperation, appearing as they did in the year following the first report by the Surgeon General on the link between smoking and lung cancer.

While different from commissioning site-specific works of art for corporate spaces, such as the program spearheaded by his brother Nelson Rockefeller, at Rockefeller Center in the 1930s, Rockefeller's showcasing of works throughout corporate spaces quickly became a customary practice among businesses. As J. Walter Severinghaus, a partner with SOM, recalled, "We felt that a better atmosphere was possible if employees could live with art in their work areas instead of being exposed to just a few examples as they came through the lobby in the morning and evening. At the same time, this enhanced environment would have a beneficial effect on those who came to the bank's offices on business."<sup>611</sup> Rockefeller, in a foreword to a 1984 catalog of the collection, describes the value he perceives in the collection, remarking that Chase was one of the first large-scale, bank-owned art collections: "I believe that Chase can take pride in having established a trend that has beautified the work places of businesses everywhere and, at the same time, has given important encouragement to contemporary artists."<sup>612</sup> Willard C. Butcher, chairman of the board and its art committee in 1984, explained the benefits of the program for the company:

Our acquisitions through the world demonstrate our ongoing commitment to gaining knowledge of the many cultures in which we do business; the thinking processes of our employees are stimulated by the influence of art in their work environment, sometimes directly, sometimes subtly; the

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<sup>611</sup> J. Walter Severinghaus, "Work Places for Art," in *Art at Work: The Chase Manhattan Collection*, ed. Marshall Lee (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1984), 16.

<sup>612</sup> David Rockefeller, "Looking Back," in *Art at Work: The Chase Manhattan Collection*, ed. Marshall Lee (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1984), 12.

emphasis on contemporary art underscores our responsiveness to the present and our commitment to the future. ...The sense that art is something to be used, loved, understood, integrated into our everyday work lives—not revered as something beyond our grasp—is one of the real advantages in living with it as we do. By relating to art as an integral element of our work place Chase people have come to gain respect for the creativity, the thinking, the imagination, and, indeed, the hard work that artistry requires.<sup>613</sup>

Today the JPMorgan Chase collection is the third largest international corporate collection, with approximately 30,000 works, reinforcing the sentiment that Rockefeller expressed in 1959 when he described the function of the collection as:

“provid[ing] visual and intellectual interest to nourish the imagination.”<sup>614</sup>

The German and Swiss banks Deutsche Bank and UBS (Union Bank of Switzerland) rank as today’s two largest global corporate art collections, boasting holdings of 57,000 and 35,000 works of art respectively and continuing in the vein that Rockefeller began. Deutsche Bank’s collection, begun in 1978 by the prompting of a board member, Herbert Zapp, is primarily comprised of works on paper. The corporation believes its collection functions to “support living artists, benefit local communities and create an energized work environment...the primary objective is to display quality works of art that embrace and reflect their time.”<sup>615</sup> Instead of existing merely as an investment, the collection’s ethos echoes its larger mission to foster creativity and innovation through its installation in over nine hundred buildings

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<sup>613</sup> Willard C. Butcher, foreword to *Art at Work: The Chase Manhattan Collection*, ed. Marshall Lee (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1984), 13.

<sup>614</sup> “Company History,” J.P. Morgan, accessed March 20, 2013, <https://www.jpmorgan.com/pages/jpmorgan/about/art>. In 1967, David Rockefeller was one of the founders of the Business Committee for the Arts (BCA), a national task force of heads of corporations committed to increasing philanthropic support for the arts.

<sup>615</sup> “Deutsche Bank Collection,” Deutsche Bank AG, accessed March 20, 2013, <https://www.db.com/usa/content/en/1097.html>.

worldwide. UBS's collection was the product of its acquisition of PaineWebber Incorporated, which had a sizable collection of contemporary art built under the direction of its former Chairman, Donald B. Marron. Its collection is built upon the philosophy of "build[ing] and maintain[ing] a seminal body of work that provokes thought while being inspirational. We also believe it upholds our commitment to support and encourage the artistic communities in the places where we do business."<sup>616</sup>

Other noteworthy American corporate collections include those of the Progressive Casualty Insurance Company (Progressive) and Microsoft, whose collections each contain between five thousand and six thousand works of art.<sup>617</sup> Like JPMorgan Chase, Progressive states that its collection, which began in 1974, embodies its corporate culture "by encouraging the pursuit of innovation and change"<sup>618</sup> and provides "a stimulating work environment that encourages open-mindedness to what is unfamiliar and different...a tool to spark rich dialogue about the ideas and concerns of our time, ultimately inspiring our people to risk, learn and grow."<sup>619</sup>

The Microsoft Art Collection was established in 1987 with the mission of "creat[ing] an inspiring work environment that fosters creativity and innovation," while offering additional benefits ranging from enhancing employee morale to

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<sup>616</sup> UBS, "UBS Art Collection: About Us," accessed March 20, 2013, [http://www.ubs.com/microsites/art\\_collection/home/about-us.html](http://www.ubs.com/microsites/art_collection/home/about-us.html).

<sup>617</sup> While Bank of America does not disclose exact numbers of their collection, it is thought to be around 10,000 works. Since 2008 Bank of American has organized loans of full exhibitions as well as individual works of art. For more see Stacey Hecht, "Rethinking Corporate Art Programs: A Case for Sustainability in Today's Society" (Master's thesis, New York University, 2014).

<sup>618</sup> The Progressive Art Collection, "History of Our Collection," accessed March 20, 2013, <http://art.progressive.com>.

<sup>619</sup> The Progressive Art Collection, "History of Our Collection."



humanizing and energizing the work environment and from reducing stress and increasing productivity to encouraging discussion and network opportunities between employees.<sup>620</sup> But while such mission statements make for excellent, altruistic copy, Wu has astutely pointed out the equally as important function these corporate collections serve: “In a global market of sharp competition where both products and services are getting less and less distinguishable, for a company, the only meaningful differentiation from other competitors is an ‘enlightened’ corporate image. And art, or arts in general, is ultimately promotable.”<sup>621</sup>

In the late 1990s, when numerous American corporations faced a slow downturn in the economy, many opted to stop collecting in order to redirect monies to alternative philanthropic activities, yet others were forced to liquidate their collections entirely to raise funds to pay debts when faced with mergers or dissolutions.<sup>622</sup> Given the economic downturn of the early twenty-first century, the dispersal of corporate collections has intensified. While corporations like Hallmark, Gilman, Safeco, Sara Lee and, most recently, Bank of America, chose to donate portions or entire collections to museums—no doubt reaping the tax benefits while still presenting themselves as good citizens—many others sent their collections to auction houses which was less desirable but necessary if immediate funds were needed.<sup>623</sup> A now

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<sup>620</sup> “Microsoft Art Collection: About the Art Collection,” Microsoft, accessed March 20, 2013, <http://www.microsoft.com/about/artcollection/en/us/about.aspx>.

<sup>621</sup> Wu, “Corporate Collectors in Britain,” 91.

<sup>622</sup> See Swan, “The Rise and Fall of Lobby Art,” 44–48.

<sup>623</sup> For example, a selection of corporate collections that went to auction in the 1990s included CBS (1997), IBM (1995), Reader’s Digest (1998), Alcoa (1995), and USX Corporation (formerly U.S. Steel, 1990). Corporations that donated works to museums included Hallmark, which donated its photography collection to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in 2006; Gilman Paper, which donated its photography collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2005; Sara Lee, which donated numerous

infamous example of this kind of liquidation is that of Enron which, with an acquisitions budget of twenty million dollars, was poised to purchase a substantial amount of contemporary art a year before its collapse in 2001. Needing immediate funds when it folded, Enron sold more than two thousand works of art over the course of just five days in a desperate fire sale of sorts and sent the rest to auction in 2003. Lehman Brothers, Seagram, Refco, 7-Eleven, Consolidated Freightways, and Unilever all followed quickly, auctioning hundreds of works of art between 2003 and 2013.<sup>624</sup> In 2006, the dispersal of pieces from American corporate collections was so extreme that the Business Committee for the Arts<sup>625</sup> established the program “From Workplaces to Public Spaces” which aimed to pair deaccessioned corporate works of art with public institutions.<sup>626</sup> In the wake of the liquidation of American corporate collections, international companies such as Shiseido, Jumex, Banamex, and China

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Impressionist paintings and sculptures to twenty American museums in 1998; Safeco, which donated works between seven museums in Washington state in 2010; Altria Group (Philip Morris), which donated hundreds of works to New York museums in 2008; and Bank of America, which donated sixty-one photographs to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture in 2014.

<sup>624</sup> Lehman Brothers and Consolidated Freightways auctioned off work in 2011, Seagram in 2003, Refco and Unilever in 2006, 7-Eleven in 2000 and again in 2009, and Altria (Philip Morris) in 2003 and 2008.

<sup>625</sup> See Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 78–82. The BCA was founded by David Rockefeller and Wall Street financier C. Douglas Dillon in 1967 in part as a response to the government’s NEA and was a way private business could support the arts. Membership is by invitation only. Today it is a division of Americans for the Arts and “encourages, inspires, and stimulates businesses to support the arts in the workplace, in education, and in the community. The BCA board provides leadership on key initiatives including messaging, advocacy, and strategic alliances within the private-sector community.” See “Business Committee for the Arts Executive Board,” Americans for the Arts, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/business-committee-for-the-arts-executive-board>.

<sup>626</sup> Daniel Grant, “They Once Hung on Walls in Companies. Now What?,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 14, 2008, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB122393536711430297>.

Minsheng Banking have greatly increased their collections.<sup>627</sup> Further evidence of this is the number of recent publications focusing on corporate collections in Latin America and Europe, not the United States.<sup>628</sup>

## Corporate Philanthropy After World War II

Emerging from World War II, corporations returned to earlier notions of CSR but pursued philanthropic activities only after becoming economically stable.<sup>629</sup> Executives were urged “to become engaged in public affairs beyond the immediate economic functions of business which they regarded as its fundamental contribution to society.”<sup>630</sup> The prevailing idea became “no man, and no business, is an island” as corporations, because of their sizeable resources and scope of influence, were pressured—most often by each other—to be ethically obligated “to contribute to the progress of society and the well-being of individuals within society.”<sup>631</sup> After the 1950s, the arts, and in particular the performing arts, became a favored philanthropic outlet for corporations. In 1965, two federally managed agencies for the arts were

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<sup>627</sup> It is worth noting that the Japanese cosmetics company Shiseido opened an art gallery in 1919 on the floor above its original Tokyo shop. The space was formalized in 1928 as the Shiseido Gallery. See Shiseido Group, “A History of the Shiseido Gallery,” accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.shiseidogroup.com/gallery/access/history.html>; and Alessia Zorloni, *The Economics of Contemporary Art: Markets, Strategies and Stardom* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 135–36.

<sup>628</sup> See, for example, Olaf Salie, Friedrich Conzen, and Gerard A Goodrow, eds., *Global Corporate Collections* (Cologne, Germany: Daab Media, 2015), which includes one hundred corporate art collections. Of the nine companies featured on the front cover, Microsoft was the only American company.

<sup>629</sup> See “Corporate Social Responsibility: The Shape of a History, 1945–2004,” in *History of Corporate Responsibility Project, Preliminary Project Planning Paper, Working Paper No. 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Ethical Business Cultures, 2005), 1–50, accessed May 15, 2014, <http://www.cebcglobal.org/index.php?/knowledge/history-working-papers>.

<sup>630</sup> Bernard W. Dempsey, “The Roots of Business Responsibility,” *Harvard Business Review* 27 (1949): 393–404; and Donald K. David, “Business Responsibility in an Uncertain World,” *Harvard Business Review* 27 (1949): 1–8, cited in “Corporate Social Responsibility,” 9.

<sup>631</sup> “Corporate Social Responsibility,” 9.

founded under President Lyndon B. Johnson: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).<sup>632</sup> The NEA and NEH joined other federal agencies that contributed to cultural patronage in the United States, which included the Library of Congress (1800), the Smithsonian Institution (1846), the National Gallery of Art (1941), and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (1968).<sup>633</sup> As discussed later in this section, corporations, especially in the 1980s, continued to be greatly courted by and closely involved with these governmental organizations through activities such as offering direct donations, loaning artwork for exhibitions, and sponsoring events, awards and fundraisers.

With roots in New Deal arts programs of the Great Depression, the NEA instituted its Art in Public Places initiative in 1969 with Alexander Calder's *La Grand Vitesse*, installed in the plaza of Grand Rapids, Michigan's city hall. When the Art in Public Places program ended in 1995, it had funded over seven hundred installations of public art, including the short-lived Inner City Murals Program of 1970.<sup>634</sup> The NEA's partner agency, the General Services Administration (GSA), was founded to commission artworks to "enhance the civic meaning of deferral architecture and showcase the vibrancy of American visual arts."<sup>635</sup> Today the GSA oversees public art

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<sup>632</sup> The first local arts agencies in the United States were the Quincy Society of Fine Arts of Illinois (1947) and the Arts Council of Winston-Salem of North Carolina (1949).

<sup>633</sup> For more on this, see Kevin V. Mulcahy, "Cultural Patronage in the United States," *International Journal of Arts Management* 2, no. 1 (1999): 53–58.

<sup>634</sup> The NEA and NEH operate under the auspices of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities that also includes the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences. For more on this and the NEA and GSA's programs, see Townsend Ludington, *A Modern Mosaic: Art and Modernism in the United States* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 265.

<sup>635</sup> "Art in Architecture Program," U.S. General Services Administration, accessed July 1, 2014, <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/103335>.

in federal buildings through its Art in Architecture program. This program was inaugurated in 1974 with a second governmental Calder commission, *Flamingo*, installed in Chicago's Federal Center.

Both commissioning budgets for the Art in Public Places and Art in Architecture programs are derived from the allocation of half-of-one percent of a building's overall estimated construction cost. Many of today's corporate percent-for-art programs are based on a similar structure that reserves a variable percentage of a construction budget for the inclusion of public art. These percent-for-art programs were originally born from the Treasury Department's New Deal agency, the Section of Painting and Sculpture which dictated that one percent of a federal building's construction budget go towards artistic decoration. Beginning with Philadelphia in 1959, various cities in the United States adopted legislation that mandated a similar percentage being used towards including public art.<sup>636</sup> Founded in 1948, Los Angeles's Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) has since 1968 stipulated that one percent of all development budgets be dedicated to the commissioning of art.<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> Philadelphia's Percent for Arts Program began under the Redevelopment Authority in March 1959 and stipulates that one percent of total construction costs go towards commissioning site-specific works of art. Baltimore and San Francisco were the next cities to pass similar ordinances in 1964 and 1967, respectively. San Francisco offers an interesting approach to the inclusion of public art in private, commercial spaces. In 1985 the city adopted its Downtown Plan that requires developers to include publicly accessible spaces in the form of plazas, terraces, atriums, and small parks that are maintained by private developers. Found primarily in the city's downtown office district, these privately owned, public open spaces (called POPOS) are unique in that they lie in a liminal space—one between the public and private, where the public has access to these spaces but ultimately they are private spaces (both maintained by and functioning with commercial buildings). In conjunction with POPOS, the Downtown Plan also requires one percent of the total construction cost be allocated for public art that must be accessible and visible to those passing by on the street.

<sup>637</sup> This program complements the city's Department of Cultural Affairs Public Art Division, which

The steady decline since the 1980s of federal support for the arts in the United States has caused nonprofit arts organizations, federal or otherwise, to secure funding from private, local, and corporate sources, with varying and consequence. In examining the sources of funding for cultural organizations in the 1990s, political scientist Kevin Mulcahy found that the performing arts received only six percent of its support from the government, while thirty-six percent came from private and corporate donations; museums, on the other hand, receive a more balanced thirty percent in federal support and twenty-six percent from philanthropy.<sup>638</sup> This dependence on private and corporate funding ultimately, as Mulcahy and Wu have both cautioned, creates an environment that stresses profitability and “would be less likely to address questions of aesthetic diversity and public accessibility.”<sup>639</sup> Furthermore, Wu sees the “inevitable consequence” being the use of “art as a weapon to further [multinational] interests overseas as economic colonisers,” which perpetuates the cycle of dependence on corporate funding and playing to their interests.<sup>640</sup>

After taking office in 1981, Ronald Reagan sought to reverse earlier administrations’ funding of the arts through federal agencies and increase the private sector’s support. This initiative began with doubling the charitable deduction limit for

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began in 1989. Its four arts initiatives include a mural program, city art collection, one-percent-for-public-art stipulation, and a private arts development fee program. In addition to the Department of Cultural Affairs and the CRA/LA, the city’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s Metro Art Department has, since 1989, required that one-half of one percent of its budget be allocated for public art in Metro stations. Beginning in 2005, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission necessitated that one percent of its civic building budget go towards the inclusion of art.

<sup>638</sup> Mulcahy, “Cultural Patronage in the United States,” 56.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>640</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 15.

corporations from five to ten percent. Through various White House-supported galas and receptions that were well attended and supported by corporate entities, the government morphed into an arts fundraising entity instead of a funder.<sup>641</sup> Other attempts to limit the federal funding of the arts included Reagan's proposed dissolving of the Institute of Museum Services (which merged with the Library Programs Office in 1996 to become the Institute of Museum and Library Services) and cutting funding to the NEA and the NEH by half as well as limiting their funding in subsequent years. Lobbying ensured that the budget was only cut thirty percent for the NEA and twenty-seven percent for the NEH. Not relenting its quest to reduce federal support, the Presidential Task Force on the Arts and Humanities (1981) and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (1982) proposed restructuring the NEA and NEH in order to further court private support for the arts and humanities. Through their involvement, Committee members, who were often C-level corporate executives and simultaneously serving on the boards of museums and other cultural institutions, would now gain unprecedented access to the White House. As Wu describes it:

The Committee's memberships read like a *Who's Who* of the American corporate community, and included the chairmen or chief executive officers from blue-chip companies such as the Mobil Corporation and the Times-Mirror Corporation, in addition to celebrities from the arts world . . . the Committee was a 'delightful place' for the President to reward his political supporters and give presidential recognition to the private sector contributors.<sup>642</sup>

Continuing the Administration's courtship of private arts funding, the White House bestowed the Presidential Award for Service to the Arts in 1983 to twelve artists and

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<sup>641</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 51.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

patrons of the arts. Among those honored were three precedent-setting corporate entities: the Texaco Philanthropic Foundation, the Dayton Hudson Foundation, and Philip Morris. In 1985, this award, deemed to be “the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the United States government,” was renamed the National Medal of Arts.<sup>643</sup> The practice of using it to reward corporate patrons has continued with subsequent recipients including Hallmark Cards, Inc. (1985), Exxon Corporation (1986), Southeastern Bell Corporation (1990), Texaco, Inc. (1991), AT&T (1992), and Sara Lee Corporation (1998).

### **The Corporate Sponsorship of Museums and Art Awards**

As heads of corporations became more involved with the arts through service as board members, the support of cultural programs became an increasingly common form of corporate philanthropy. Partnerships with art museums and the sponsoring of exhibitions are by far the favored form of this kind of corporate patronage. Wu has argued that there are two key reasons for this beyond the higher socio-economic demographics of art museum audiences—the first being the clear connection between a company’s goods and the content of an exhibition and the second being the innate social prestige that comes from such partnerships.<sup>644</sup> The ethics of such relationships have been examined by many, including Wu and Mark Rectanus, who similarly argues caution and points to the inherent conflicts of interest that complicate the nature of

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<sup>643</sup> “National Medal of Arts,” National Endowment for the Arts, accessed July 1, 2014, <http://arts.gov/honors/medals>. In 1982 the NEA’s chairman, Frank Hodsoll, established the short-lived Office for Private Partnership in order to pursue support from the private sector.

<sup>644</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 133.



such patronage.<sup>645</sup> As Wu warns, “The increasing take-over of non-economic domains by corporations...must open our eyes to the fact that the rise of arts sponsorship is a mixed blessing: as much to be lamented as it is to be celebrated.”<sup>646</sup> Contemporary critiques notwithstanding, apprehension over corporate ties to the arts has always been present, as demonstrated by Ad Reinhardt’s famous cartoon *How to Look At Modern Art in America*.<sup>647</sup> Both the 1946 and 1961 versions of the image have shoes representing “business as art patron” and bags of money (which become much larger in the 1961 version). These, among other literal weights, help to burden the branch populated with artists who deal with subject matter, realism, and the like, as well as the many artists who have won the “popular” art contests such as Pepsi-Cola’s, which was held annually between 1944–48. Below the tree is a graveyard of sorts with the names of numerous corporate patrons such as the Container Corporation, Lucky Strike, Chase National Bank, *Life*, and *Fortune*. Yet it is in the 1970s that critics of corporate collecting and sponsorship—from both inside and outside the art world—became increasingly vocal and visible. A poignant example is the work of artist Hans Haacke, who in pieces like *Mobilization* (1975), *On Social Grease* (1975), *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Board of Trustees* (1974), and more recently, *The Business Behind Art Knows the Art of the Koch Brothers* (2014), pointedly exposed the highly

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<sup>645</sup> See Rectanus, *Culture Incorporated*; and also Allan Wallach, “The Unethical Art Museum,” in *Ethics and the Visual Arts*, eds. Elaine A. King and Gail Levin (New York: Allworth Press, 2006).

<sup>646</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 158.

<sup>647</sup> Ad Reinhardt, “How to Look at Modern Art in America,” *P.M.*, June 2, 1946. The 1961 revision was published in *ARTnews*.

political corporate connections found between museums and their seemingly neutral board members.<sup>648</sup>

But given the declining support of museums by neutral parties, such cultural institutions have been forced to procure funding from private sources and in the process, quell apprehensions about a corporation's questionable motives and hope the funding comes with few strings attached. Such trepidation is not misplaced; a troubling example of this can be found in the rise of corporate sponsorships within children's museums. For example, there is a miniature Bank of America found within the Children's Museum of Houston and a child-sized Krispy Kreme Doughnut Factory in the Children's Museum of Winston-Salem.<sup>649</sup> Criticized for overt advertising and highly visible logos, corporate sponsorship of such exhibits is nonetheless financially necessary and few museums are able to refuse such funding. Given the importance of securing such corporate sponsorship, professional museum organizations offer advice in courting such funding, as seen in a 2008 article published by the Museums Association, a United Kingdom-based organization. Here the author unabashedly

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<sup>648</sup> For more on this, see Matthias Flügge and Robert Fleck, eds., *Hans Haacke: For Real; Works, 1959-2006* (Düsseldorf: Richter, 2006); and Martha Kjeseth, "Hans Haacke: Defining a Contemporary Context and Questioning Corporate Patronage" (Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993). A similar critique has risen of late, given that an increasing number of contemporary artists are serving on the boards of art museums, which points to potential conflicts of interests that may arise over the practice of donating artwork in lieu of paying board dues. See, for example, Mark Bradford, Mark Grotjahn, Catherine Opie, Barbara Kruger, and John Baldessari on the board of the Museum of Contemporary Art, and David Hartt on the board of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. See Jori Finkle, "Mark Bradford and 3 Collectors Join Board of Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art," *New York Times*, October 22, 2014, accessed January 5, 2015, [http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/mark-bradford-and-3-collectors-join-board-of-los-angeles-museum-of-contemporary-art/?\\_r=0](http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/mark-bradford-and-3-collectors-join-board-of-los-angeles-museum-of-contemporary-art/?_r=0); and "Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago Names Four New Trustees, New COO," *Artforum*, December 22, 2014, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://artforum.com/news/id=49595>.

<sup>649</sup> Erin Geiger Smith, "Children's Museums Brand Exhibits with Corporate Sponsorship," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 2014, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/childrens-museums-brand-exhibits-with-corporate-sponsorship-1415826288>.

outlines how museums can become more attractive to corporations, stating, “Corporate sponsors can be a lucrative source of funding. But if you want to tap into this, you have to show what the sponsor will get from the deal.”<sup>650</sup>

Support of exhibitions also presents opportunities for blurred boundaries between sponsorship and advertising. Numerous examples exist of dubious self-serving corporate underwriting that point to clear conflicts of interest, such as the Guggenheim Museum’s exhibition of garments by Giorgio Armani in 1999 after accepting fifteen million dollars in funding from the fashion house. Similarly, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibition of Alexander McQueen’s “Savage Beauty” was largely financed by the fashion house itself.<sup>651</sup> Criticism has also been directed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) for selling Eames furniture replicas in conjunction with its exhibition “Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention” in 2000, and New York’s New Museum of Contemporary Art for “Skin Fruit,” the private collection of Dakis Joannau that was curated by Jeff Koons (Joannau was a board trustee and a patron of Koons). In 2010, the owners of POM Wonderful and FIJI Water, Stewart and Lynda Resnick, inaugurated their building at LACMA, the Resnick Pavilion, with an exhibition drawn from their own collection, *Eye for the Sensual: Selections from the Resnick Collection* (2010). These “vanity exhibitions,” as they have been termed by *Los Angeles Times* critic Christopher Knight, have become increasingly frequent yet present often-egregious conflicts of interests, as

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<sup>650</sup> Julie Nightingale, “Attracting Corporate Sponsors,” *Museum Practice* 42 (2008): 56–57.

<sup>651</sup> See, for example, Ellen Gamerman, “Are Museums Selling Out?” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/are-museums-selling-out-1402617631>; and Suzanne Muchnic, “Museums, Sponsors Too Cozy?” *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 2000, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/aug/30/news/mn-12530>.

they are often drawn from the collection of a trustee.<sup>652</sup> Citing MoMA as a rare example of a museum that has a written policy against such exhibitions, Knight explains, “Museums have enough problems without appearing to be exclusive clubs fueled by noblesse oblige and dependent on indulging voyeuristic shopping fantasies.”<sup>653</sup>

Likewise, exhibitions drawn from works in corporate collections are equally as problematic and becoming more common as museum budgets are stretched thin. Since 2008, Bank of America, for example, does not publically display its collection, opting instead to offer museums complete exhibitions drawn from its holdings.<sup>654</sup> Yet early examples of corporate art sent on tour can be found in the 1940s as companies like the pharmaceutical companies Upjohn and Abbott Laboratories, as well as IBM and Standard Oil of New Jersey, all organized exhibitions of artwork commissioned for advertising and publications. Much like the display of private collections, these readymade or turnkey corporate exhibitions offer little to no curatorial input from the accepting institution and pose a separate set of ethical questions that go beyond simple corporate underwriting.<sup>655</sup> These types of questions are especially relevant as many corporate collections are in the process of being liquidated and such exhibitions could increase their value prior to auction.

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<sup>652</sup> Christopher Knight, “Critic’s Notebook: Private Collections Should Stay in the Living Room – with Their Owner’s Ego,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2010, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/oct/10/entertainment/la-ca-knight-notebook-20101010>.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> See Robin Pogrebin, “And Now, an Exhibition From Our Sponsor,” *New York Times*, August 23, 2009, AR1; and Samantha Sharf, “Jackson Pollock Brand Ambassador? How Bank of America Uses Fine Art to Make You Like Them,” *Forbes*, October 8, 2013, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/samanthasharf/2013/10/08/jackson-pollock-brand-ambassador-how-bank-of-america-uses-fine-art-to-make-you-like-them>.

<sup>655</sup> Pogrebin, “And Now, an Exhibition From Our Sponsor,” AR1.

Art awards and competitions are an additional way for corporations to be publically praised as art patrons and acquire new works for their collections while functioning as publicity. But as Wu reminds us, they also allow corporations to be seen “as a legitimate force within the art world....[by] extending their tentacles right into the heart of the art establishment.”<sup>656</sup> A unique form of self-promotion and visibility, these awards, Wu explains, “cannot claim legitimacy without the prestige and status that go with their being conferred ultimately by the art establishment itself.” This validation, Wu offers, is often achieved through either the inclusion of “established personalities from the art world” as judges, as is the case today with the Future Generation Art Prize (Victor Pinchuk Foundation, 2009), PRIX Montblanc (Montblanc, 2006), or the Prix Pictet (Pictet et Cie Private Bank, 2008), or by partnering with reputable art institutions such as the Turner Prize (Tate Britain & Channel 4, 1984), BP Portrait Award (National Portrait Gallery & British Petroleum, 1980), Marcel Duchamp Prize (Centre Pompidou & Lombard Odier, 2000), or the Hugo Boss Prize (Guggenheim Museum & Hugo Boss, 1996).<sup>657</sup>

Two early examples of this form of arts sponsorship by American corporations come from the 1940s. The first, Pepsi-Cola’s experiments with combining fine art and advertising, were a move to differentiate itself from its competitor, Coca-Cola, through a series of calendars (1942–48) and annual art competition, “Portrait of

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<sup>656</sup> Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 159–160. Wu argues that corporate art awards in the United States, with the exception of the Hugo Boss Prize that began in 1996, are not as popular in comparison to those in Britain due to the lack of marketing potential and effectiveness in the United States.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

America” (1944–48).<sup>658</sup> Calendars printed by corporations for advertising purposes, such as those of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company or U.S. Time Corporation, had existed for decades, and Pepsi’s followed a set formula that reproduced works of art from museums.<sup>659</sup> Pepsi’s first two calendars, from 1942 and 1943, featured classic American oil paintings drawn from the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. However for its 1944 calendar, Pepsi opted instead to reproduce works from the Associated American Artists group. Due to aesthetic differences in choice of artwork, the overall venture was deemed a failure, rather than the commercial success the company hoped. That same year, Pepsi’s CEO, Walter Staunton Mack, Jr., helped to initiate the “Portrait of America” competition in collaboration with Artists for Victory, Inc. Operating from 1942–46, Artists for Victory had a membership of over 10,000 artists who supported the war effort through various channels such as war poster and greeting card competitions, traveling exhibitions, monthly bulletins in *ARTnews*, weekly radio shows, and art classes in military hospitals.<sup>660</sup> Pepsi, feigning a lack of artistic qualification to sufficiently judge, allowed the Artists for Victory to select the jury and run the competition. Its role was simply noted on the bottom of accompanying exhibition pamphlets as inaugurating the competition and donating the prize money.

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<sup>658</sup> Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 284–90.

<sup>659</sup> See, for example, “Calendars,” *Life* 18, no. 1, January 1, 1945, 41–46; and Christine B. Podmaniczky, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Corry Kanzenberg, eds., *A Date with Art: The Business of Illustrated Calendars* (Chadds Ford, PA: Brandywine River Museum of Art, 2014).

<sup>660</sup> See Ellen G. Landau, “Artists for Victory, Inc.,” in *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 150.

Winning entries would be also reproduced in Pepsi calendars.<sup>661</sup> Conflicts between Mack and Artists for Victory ranged from a general disappointment with the level of sophistication of much of the submitted artwork to questions concerning the larger purpose of the competition and who it ultimately benefitted.

Given these internal struggles, the first two iterations of the competition in 1944 and 1945 were uninspired and maligned in the press as evidenced by its satirical inclusion in Ad Reinhardt's *How to Look at Modern Art in America* tree. Here, Reinhardt uses the term "contest" instead of competition to minimize its cultural weight and attached tiny black bottles to the leaves with names of past winners, further emphasizing the low-brow nature of such art, as the majority are on the limb weighed down by representation. Furthermore, Pepsi-Cola is included in the graveyard of corporate patrons alongside Johnnie Walker Whisky, *Life*, 'Big Oil,' and Ohrbach's. In 1946, Los Angeles County Museum director Roland McKinney was brought in to oversee the jury process in a bid to give the competition greater legitimacy.<sup>662</sup> The competition name was changed to "Paintings of the Year," which, as Michele Bogart has argued, served three larger purposes:

First, it represented a shift from the concern for unity and nationalism of wartime to an emphasis on the individual, thus reflecting the broader cultural presences of the late 1940s. Second, by removing the mandate to depict a specific theme, the new title was intended to give painters more creative independence and to encourage a broader range of artists to participate. Finally, such an open-ended theme served as an incentive for views to approach the results without specific expectations.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> See *Catalogue of Paintings in the "Portrait of America" Exhibition Conducted by Artists-For-Victory, Inc.* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art Publications, 1944).

<sup>662</sup> Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 288.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*

Seeing little monetary or cultural benefit in the continued support of such a program, Pepsi-Cola ended its competition after 1948.

The following year, Hallmark Cards filled the void left by Pepsi-Cola when it inaugurated its first of five International Art Award competitions. Like Pepsi, Hallmark awarded thousands of dollars in prize money to the top artists selected by “an international jury of distinguished critics,” the public assertion of which possibly points to Hallmark’s attempt to give artistic legitimacy to their award given Pepsi’s recent struggles.<sup>664</sup> With the same theme of Christmas, the second award received upwards of 4,500 entries, causing the subsequent three awards in 1955, 1957, and 1960 to be limited to fifty artists submitting by invitation only. While it is unclear if winning entries were reproduced as greeting cards or, like Pepsi’s winners, as a calendar, a selection of prizewinning works did travel as an exhibition each year to museums in cities such as New York, Baltimore, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Boston, and Dallas.

International art prizes established in the first decade of the twenty-first century continue this trend of corporate support with examples ranging from the ArtPrize to the Abraaj Capital Art Prize. Based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and established by the Dick & Betsy DeVos Family Foundation in 2009, ArtPrize has been much maligned for its inclusiveness and egalitarian approach to art competitions. With two \$200,000 awards, one bestowed by a jury of “art experts” and one selected

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<sup>664</sup> See Patrick Regan, *Hallmark: A Century of Caring* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2010), 127–28. A recent exhibition organized by Hallmark Cards was “The Hallmark Art Awards: 65th Anniversary,” Hallmark Visitors Center, Kansas City, MO, December 9, 2014–January 9, 2015.



through public vote, it is exceedingly popular with the general public and a boon to local economies—so much so that it is expanding to Dallas, Texas, in April 2016.<sup>665</sup> Established in 2008 by the Dubai-based Abraaj Group, the Abraaj Capital Art Prize is limited to artists born in the Middle East, North Africa, or South Asia. Selected by a guest curator, the winning piece is shown at the Art Dubai art fair (established in 2007).

Corporate sponsorship of art fairs is in many ways an extension of not only the corporate support of art prizes but also a corporate presence at World's Fairs. With over 250 international art fairs taking place in 2015, there are ample opportunities for corporate sponsorship.<sup>666</sup> Art Basel has courted corporate sponsors since its beginning in 1970. The original Art Basel expanded in 2001 to Miami and again in 2012 to Hong Kong. UBS, the lead sponsor for both the Miami and Basel locations, took over sponsorship of the Hong Kong fair in 2013 from Deutsche Bank, which since 2009 had supported an earlier iteration of the fair, ART HK. In addition to UBS, whose chief marketing office was quoted as saying, "Art creates a certain glow around our brand," other very visible sponsors include Davidoff cigars, BMW cars, Ruinart champagne, and Audemars Piguet watches.<sup>667</sup> Of its many sponsors, only Ruinart champagne carts and Audemars Piguet branded clocks are allowed on the fair floor.

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<sup>665</sup> "What Makes ArtPrize Unique," ArtPrize, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.artprize.org/about>.

<sup>666</sup> Scott Reyburn, "Art Fair 'Fatigue' May Resolve Itself," *International New York Times*, January 26, 2015, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/26/arts/international/art-fair-fatigue-may-resolve-itself.html>. Examples of such international art fairs include Frieze London (founded 2003), Artissima (founded 1993), FIAC (founded 1974), NADA (founded 2003), VOLTA (founded 2005), Liste (founded 1997), arteBA (founded 1991), ARCOmadrid (founded 1981), and Contemporary Istanbul (founded 2005).

<sup>667</sup> Hannah Seligson, "The Brands in Art Basel's Orbit," *New York Times*, March 8, 2015, BU4.

Supposedly, these branded objects do not block views, as opposed to say “a BMW car in the middle of the fair,” as Art Basel director, Marc Spiegler, explains, “You can’t buy your way onto the floor; it’s for galleries who have earned it.”<sup>668</sup> The irony in Spiegler’s statement is readily apparent as although branded clocks and champagne carts are not as intrusive as a car, they are still obvious—and expensive—symbols of corporate sponsorship.

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<sup>668</sup> Seligson, “The Brands in Art Basel’s Orbit,” BU4. See also Alexandra Peers, “Art Basel Miami Kicks off with Corporate Sponsors, Lenny Kravitz,” *Vulture*, December 5, 2007, accessed January 5, 2015, [http://www.vulture.com/2007/12/art\\_basel\\_miami\\_kicks\\_off\\_with.html](http://www.vulture.com/2007/12/art_basel_miami_kicks_off_with.html).

## **Appendix**

Below is a list of mural sites mentioned in Arthur Millier's article "Take Your Olympic Guest on Mural-Paintings Tour" (*Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1931).

### **Corporate Headquarters**

- 1928
  - Guaranty Building and Loan Association Building: multiple artists including Einar Petersen, Conrad Buff, Maynard Dixon, and Millard Sheets
- 1931
  - Title Guarantee and Trust Building: Hugo Ballin
  - Southern California Edison Building: Hugo Ballin, Barse Miller, and Conrad Buff
- Date Unknown
  - State Mutual Building: Millard Sheets

### **Commercial Spaces**

- 1913
  - St. Francis Hotel (San Francisco): Albert Herter
- 1926
  - Barker Brothers: Maynard Dixon
  - Mark Hopkins Hotel (San Francisco): Maynard Dixon, Frank Van Sloun, and Ray Boynton
- 1929
  - First National Bank (Pasadena): Alson Clark
  - Bullock's Wilshire: multiple artists including Gjura Stojano and Herman Sachs
- 1931
  - Dawson's Book Shop: Gile McLaury Steele
  - Plaza Art Center: Jorge Juan Crespo, Jr.
- 1932
  - Robinson's Beauty Parlor: Millard Sheets

### **Olympic Stadium**

- 1932
  - Pallas Athena medallion: Hugo Ballin

### **Theaters**

- 1918
  - Million Dollar Theater: William Lee Woollett
- 1923
  - Metropolitan Theater: William Lee Woollett

- 1924
  - Forum Theater: Christian von Schneidau
- 1928
  - Warner Brothers Theater (Hollywood): Albert Herter
- 1931
  - Leimert Theater: Andre Durenceau
- Date Unknown
  - United Artists' Theater: Uhlianoff

### **Libraries**

- 1928–33
  - Los Angeles Public Library: Dean Cornwell, Albert Herter, and Julian Garnsey
- 1931
  - San Francisco Public Library: Gottardo Piazzoni
- 1931–32
  - Lincoln Library (Redlands): Dean Cornwell (murals) and George Gray Barnard (bust of Lincoln)

### **Courthouses**

- 1928–29
  - Supervisors' Hall, Santa Barbara Courthouse: Dan Sayre Groesbeck

### **Schools & Universities**

- 1928
  - South Pasadena Junior High School: Lucille Lloyd
  - Mills College (Piedmont): Raymond Boynton
- 1929
  - Royce Hall portico, University of California, Los Angeles: Julian Garnsey
- 1930
  - Frary Dining Hall, Pomona College: José Clemente Orozco
- 1930–31
  - California School of Fine Arts (San Francisco): Diego Rivera

### **Houses Of Worship**

- 1927–35
  - St. Andrews Catholic Church (Pasadena): Carlo Wostry
- 1929
  - B'nai B'rith Temple (Wilshire Boulevard Temple): Hugo Ballin
- 1930–32
  - Blessed Sacrament Church (Hollywood): Carlo Wostry

- Date Unknown
  - Ventura Community Church: Albert Henry King
  - Unitarian Church (Santa Barbara): Malcolm Thurber

### **Private Clubs**

- 1931
  - Pacific Stock Exchange Lunch Club (San Francisco): Diego Rivera and Edward Bruce
- Date Unknown
  - Cabrillo Club: Henry Thees and Artno Parsons

### **Private Homes**

- 1924
  - Benjamin R. Meyer House (Beverly Hills): Hugo Ballin
- 1927
  - Milton E. Getz House (Beverly Hills): Hugo Ballin

## Figures



Figure 1 – Edison Building (One Bunker Hill), Los Angeles, CA. Wikimedia User: Visitor7, 2012, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Figure 2 – Title Guarantee Building, Los Angeles, CA. Wikimedia User: BruceBoehner, 2014, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Figure 3 – Hugo Ballin, tile mural triptych, 1928, Title Insurance and Trust Building, Los Angeles, CA. Flickr user: Kansas Sebastian, 2010, CC BYY-NC-ND 2.0.



Figure 4 – Former home of the Southern California Edison Company, Million Dollar Theater, Los Angeles, CA. Wikimedia User: Visitor7, 2014, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.





Figure 5 – Former home of the Title Guarantee and Trust Company, Title Guarantee Building (Jewelry Trades Building), Los Angeles, CA. Wikimedia User: Visitor7, 2014, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Figure 6 – Detail of Fifth Street side of the Edison Building. Photograph by the author.





Figure 7 – Ceiling of Edison Building vestibule. Photograph by the author.



Figure 8 – Edison Building lobby interior looking towards the main entrance. Photograph by the author.



Figure 9 – Tribune Tower Chicago, Chicago, IL. Wikimedia User: Proto, 2015, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Figure 10 – Detail of Title Guarantee Building tower. Photograph by the author.





Figure 11 – Tile vestibule of the Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 12 – Eugene Maier-Krieg bas-relief for the Title Guarantee Building, 1931. Photograph by the author.



Figure 13 – *Energy* on the Edison Building by Robert Merrell Gage, 1931. Photograph by the author.



Figure 14 – *Light and Power* on the Edison Building by Robert Merrell Gage, 1931. Photograph by the author.







Figure 17 – Edison Building main lobby. Photograph by the author.





Figure 18 – Hugo Ballin, *Power*, 1931, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.





Figure 19 – Elevator lobby of the Edison Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 20 – Conrad Buff, *White Coal*, 1931, elevator lobby, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.





Figure 21 – Conrad Buff, Power from *White Coal*, 1931, elevator lobby, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 22 – Conrad Buff, Light from *White Coal*, 1931, elevator lobby, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.





Figure 23 – Barse Miller, *Transmission and Distribution*, 1931, elevator lobby, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 24 – Barse Miller, *Transmission*, 1931, elevator lobby, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.





Figure 25 – Barse Miller, *Distribution*, 1931, elevator lobby, Edison Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 26 – Title Guarantee Building lobby. Photograph by the author.





Figure 27 – 1931 La Fiesta de Los Angeles souvenir booklet. Collection of the author.





Figure 28 – Hugo Ballin, Lt. Ord Panel, 1931, Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 29 – Hugo Ballin, Spanish Period Panel, 1931, Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 30 – Hugo Ballin, Treaty of Cahuenga Panel, 1931, Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.





Mural by Hugo Ballin—Sam Little Photo

ON SEPTEMBER 4, 1781, twelve years after the arrival here of Fray Junipero Serra, the Mission builder, and two years before the end of the American Revolutionary War, Governor Felipe de Neve and a little band of pioneer settlers gathered on the banks of the river to found El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora La Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula.

On September 4, 1931, the same "pueblo," after a century and a half of existence under four different flags—having grown to be the fifth largest city in the United States, with well beyond a million and a quarter population—begins an official, ten-day celebration of its 150th birthday . . . a continuous, colorful and glamorous pageant, La Fiesta de Los Angeles, probably surpassing anything of the kind the world has ever known.

THOUGH THE 1931 FIESTA must include the ultra-modern, to typify the progress through 150 years, the music, the dancing, the flowers, the gay regalia and the romantic, old-world atmosphere of bygone festivals will dominate the modern pageantry, recapturing the gaiety and romance of Old Californian days and nights of yore.

Each night throughout La Fiesta, except Sundays, the historic old Plaza will echo again to the strains of violin and piccolo and guitar. The open-air fandango and the maroma will be continuous. The mild night air will be heavy with the fragrance of a myriad of flowers, banked high on flower stands and worn by everyone. Gay Spanish costumes, banners and Fiesta Lanterns will complete the riot of color.

## FIESTA!

Through its enchantment does this intensely modern city regain the beautiful days of its romantic youth!

Acknowledgment for photographs used in this booklet is gratefully made to: All-Year Club of Southern California, Earl C. Anthony, Long Beach Press-Telegram, Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles Junior Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles County Recreation Department, Pacific Greyhound Lines, Pictorial California, Security-First National Bank, Southern Pacific Company, Columbia Pictures Corporation, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Paramount-Public Corporation, Pethe Studios, R. K. O. Studios, United Artists Studio Corporation, Universal Pictures Corporation, Warner Bros. Studios.

California Rotogravure Company L. A.

Figure 31 – Hugo Ballin, Spanish Period Panel, reproduced in the 1931 La Fiesta de Los Angeles souvenir booklet. Collection of the author.





Figure 32 – Hugo Ballin, Railroad Panel, 1931, Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 33 – Hugo Ballin, Modern Panel, 1931, Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.





Figure 34 – Hugo Ballin, Prehistoric Panel, 1931, Title Guarantee Building. Photograph by the author.



Figure 35 – Times Building, circa 1935. Collection of the author.





Figure 36 – Postcard of the Sunkist Building, circa 1943. Collection of the author.

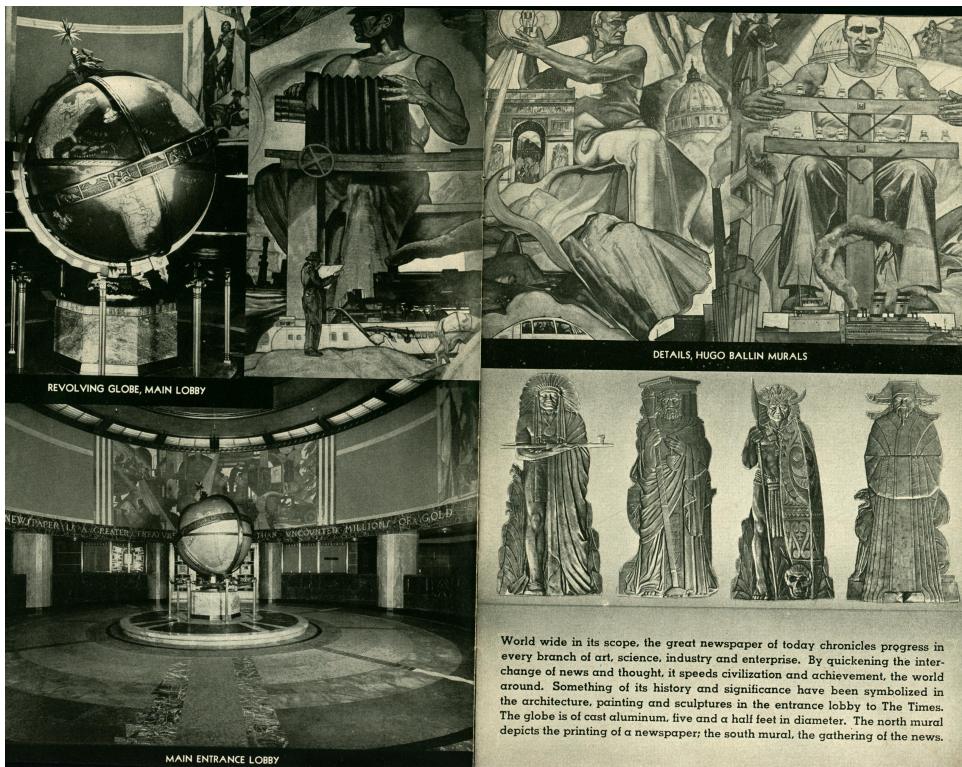


Figure 37 – View of the Globe Lobby in the pamphlet *History of the Los Angeles Times*, circa 1940. Collection of the author.





Figure 38 – Former main entrance to the Times Building and Globe Lobby.  
Photograph by the author.



Figure 39 – The hoisting of Hugo Ballin's Pallas Athena Olympic medallion, circa 1932. Collection of the author.



Figure 40 – Former main entrance to the Times Building and Globe Lobby. Photograph by the author.





Figure 41 – Robert Merrell Gage, *Father Time*, *the Spirit of the Times*, and *Gutenberg*, bas-reliefs, Times Building, 1935. Photograph by the author.



Figure 42 – Harold F. Wilson, *Production*, 1935. Sunkist archives, Box 23.



Figure 43 – Harold F. Wilson, *Distribution*, 1935. Sunkist archives, Box 23.



Figure 44 – Harold F. Wilson, *Cooperation*, 1935. Sunkist archives, Box 23.





Figure 45 – Hugo Ballin, Globe Lobby mural, 1935. Photograph by the author.



Figure 46 – Hugo Ballin, Globe Lobby mural, 1935. Photograph by the author.





Figure 47 – Hugo Ballin, Globe Lobby side mural, 1935. Photograph by the author.



Figure 48 – Hugo Ballin, Globe Lobby side mural, 1935. Photograph by the author.

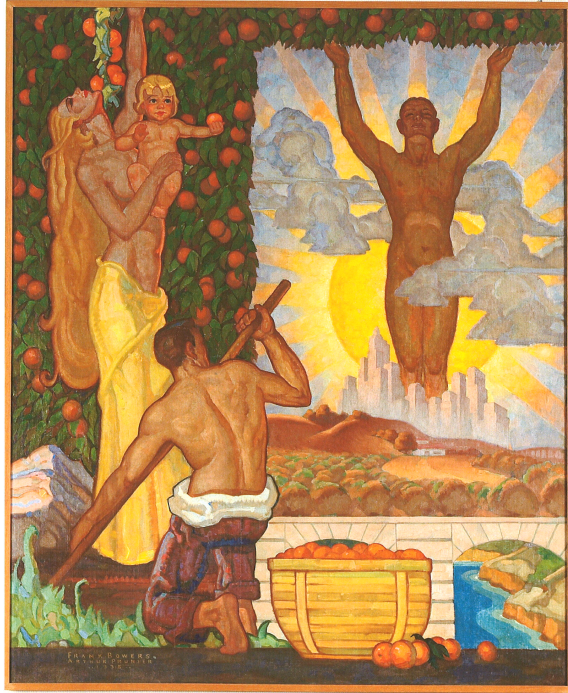


Figure 49 – Frank Bowers and Arthur Prunier, Sunkist lobby mural, 1935. Sunkist archives, Box 23.



Figure 50 – Frank Bowers and Arthur Prunier, Sunkist lobby mural, 1935. Sunkist archives, Box 23.



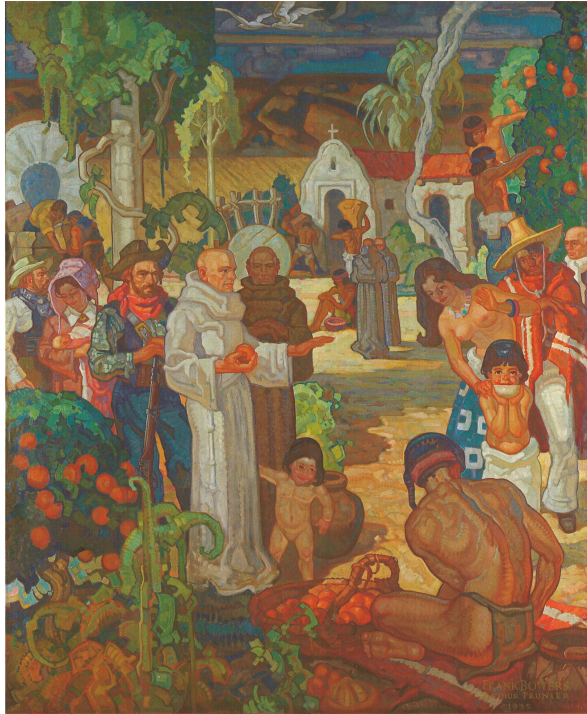


Figure 51 – Frank Bowers and Arthur Prunier, Sunkist boardroom mural, 1935.  
Sunkist archives, Box 23.



Figure 52 – Frank Bowers and Arthur Prunier, Sunkist boardroom mural, 1935.  
Sunkist archives, Box 23.



Figure 53 – Charles Alston, *The Negro in California History—Exploration and Colonization: 1527-1850*, 1948-49, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building lobby. Photograph by the author.



Figure 54 – Hale Woodruff, *The Negro in California History—Settlement and Development: 1850-1949*, 1948-49, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building lobby. Photograph by the author.

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