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Case Open and/Or Unsolved: Marcel Duchamp and the Black Dahlia Murder

Jonathan Wallis

See I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

Revelation 3:8

The successful criminal brain is always superior...

Dr. No

In *The Trial of Gilles de Rais*, Georges Bataille writes, "Crime is a fact of the human species, a fact of that species alone, but it is above all the secret aspect, impenetrable and hidden. Crime hides, and by far the most terrifying things are those that elude us."¹ Marcel Duchamp, in both his work and practice, is the elusive artist *par excellence*. He is the ultimate fugitive of art historical investigation, leaving a trail of tricks, twists, contradictory meanings, and duplicitous identities that lead to epistemological dead-ends. Upon close inspection, Duchamp's tactics to elude definitive conclusions and vex the viewer reveal themselves as criminal, not unlike those of the con man, the fugitive, and even the killer.

This paper suggests that Marcel Duchamp consciously toyed with criminal methodologies to elude interpretation and heighten the inconclusive nature of his work. I propose that criminal tactics were one means for Duchamp to enact his rebellion against traditional morality and aesthetics that followed his introduction to the philosopher Max Stirner in 1912. This program emphasizes a continual play on presence/absence, both in the artist's modes of production and identities. After a brief overview of the apparent criminality of his work, I focus on his final project, *Étant donnés* (Fig. 1), and suggest that the body in the installation may partly derive from a notorious unsolved murder in 1947 known as the "Black Dahlia."² This macabre event reveals remarkable consistencies with *Étant donnés*, particularly in the identity and character of the victim, Elizabeth Short. Short's lifestyle embodies uncanny similarities to Duchamp's decades-long obsessive erotic narrative of the "Bride and Her Bachelors," and I consider his appropriation of certain details of the Elizabeth Short murder as an enactment of a "copycat" crime in art. Finally, I relate *Étant donnés* to Duchamp's earlier works to suggest a reversal of his criminal *modus operandi* from elusion to hypervisibility. This shift is evident in *Étant donnés*, which trades conceptual for physical modes of production and complicates the presence/absence of the artist. By furthering the inconclusive nature of Duchamp's work (through the use of what Jean-Francois Lyotard terms the "hinge") and being itself most enigmatic, *Étant donnés* is stamped with the same status as the Black Dahlia murder: open and unsolved.

In 1912, Duchamp first read Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, an anarchic text that promoted individualism based on a self-exploration of the ego outside predetermined moral and societal values.³ The abrupt shift in Duchamp's aesthetic philosophy that followed his introduction to Stirner, from chronophotographic works such as his famous *Nude Descending the Staircase*, toward works of a more conceptual



Fig. 1 Marcel Duchamp, *Etant donnés: 1 la chute d'eau, 2 le gaz d'éclairage* (Given: 1. *The Waterfall*, 2. *The Illuminating Gas*), 1946-1966. Mixed-media assemblage: wooden door, bricks, velvet, wood, leather stretched over an armature of metal, twigs, aluminum, iron, glass, Plexiglas, linoleum, cotton, electric lights, gas lamp (Bec Auer type), motor, etc., 95 1/2 x 70 inches (242.6 x 177.8 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA. Gift of the Cassandra Foundation, 1969.

nature that challenged or defied metaphysics and the values of art and society, such as *Three Standard Stoppages* from 1913-14, is considered a consequence of his introduction to Stirner.⁴ Moreover, Amelia Jones has argued that the locus of this system was the incorporation of eroticism in both subject and object, which served as an agent to aggressively challenge bourgeois cultural values.⁵ The following discussion demonstrates that the nexus between Stirnerite philosophy and eroticism forms an artistic program where Duchamp breaks the "laws" of art through criminal-like behavior, while exploiting and celebrating the erotic in ways that imply violence to the body.

Duchamp "broke" many artistic rules after his shift toward self-determination. The readymades are now classic examples of his defiance of the imposed aesthetics of bourgeois society.⁶ They not only break the "laws" of art, but also illustrate a form of elusion through their absence of traditional notions of artistic production. As Walter Hopps points out, Duchamp's career is marked by efforts to suppress the artist's hand, to remove or disassociate himself from the object through an absence of visual signs that suggest the physical mark of the artist.⁷ Duchamp, defying the tradition of physical craft, creates a work that bears only conceptual evidence of its production, having been "designated" a work of art.⁸ The hand and its mark is dangerous to Duchamp. "It's fun to do things by hand," he stated, but "I'm suspicious because there's the danger of the 'hand' which comes back ..."⁹ Direct appropriation of these objects hides the handprint of the artist, as in the lack of fingerprints at a crime scene (is not appropriation, unlike imitation, a kind of stealing?).¹⁰ It is here that Duchamp's elusion seems to elicit a specifically criminal tone. Moreover, any investigative attempt to trace the sources of these works through the available evidence leads us to hardware stores or factories, not the studio, where any number of these objects were purchased or produced.¹¹ Ironically, in a recent attempt to do just this, Rhonda Shearer found that the origins of the readymades are often untraceable to any context due to slight alterations by Duchamp, no doubt meant to further complicate attempts to "solve" these works and hinder their investigation.

Nowhere did Duchamp defy conventional aesthetic authority more than in the submission of his famous *Fountain* to the first annual exhibition of the American Society of Artists in 1917.¹² An object so defiant of the "laws" of art, made by simply re-naming and shifting the base of a common urinal, *Fountain* led a supposedly unjured exhibition to censorship through its blasphemous suggestions. In addition, Duchamp mocked the committee by signing the work with the alias "R. Mutt" rather than his own name. In this clever tactic, the artist hid his association with the scandalous submission and thus insured his innocence. As a member of the exhibition committee, Duchamp debated the fate of "Mr. Mutt's" entry much like a criminal who watches their crime scene from a physical distance or under disguise. This, no doubt, amused Duchamp, who continued to emphasize this play on criminal behavior in works such as *L.H.O.O.Q.*, defacing the *Mona Lisa* with a graffiti-style moustache and goatee. Graffiti, itself an illegal form of art, involves the elusive presence/absence of an artistic "criminal" for its production and reception. In other capers, for example his fraudulent checks such as *Tzanck Check* from 1919, Duchamp focused on the act of counterfeiting. And in *Wanted* (Fig. 2), from 1923, the artist fashioned a literal image of himself as a fugitive with multiple aliases (again emphasizing absence), complete with profile photographs like those of an ex-convict with a prior record.¹³

All of these acts might be described as "petty crimes" when compared to his last work, the installation in the Philadelphia Museum of Art entitled, *Étant donnés: 1 la*



Fig. 2 Marcel Duchamp, *Replica of Wanted: \$2000 Reward, New York*, from *Boite-en-Valise*, 1923. Color lithograph, 8 1/8 x 6 3/8 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia, PA. Photo courtesy of Eric Mitchell, 1983.

chute d'eau, 2 le gaz d'éclairage – translated as *Given: 1. The Waterfall 2. The Illuminating Gas*. The title of this piece, taken from the opening lines of an introductory note to Duchamp's *Green Box*, signals its association with his earlier work *The Large Glass*, and suggests its representation as a three-dimensional (or four-dimensional) version of the narrative of the "Bride and Her Bachelors."

Étant donnés has baffled scholars since its discovery after the artist's death in 1966, when, following Duchamp's instructions, it was reinstalled in the Philadelphia Museum of Art by Anne d'Harnoncourt and Paul Matisse in 1969. With the exception of a select

group of individuals that included the artist's wife Alexina Matisse and her son Paul, the work was created by Duchamp in secrecy in New York City, first in his studio at 210 West 14th Street and later moved to another small room at 80 East Eleventh Street around 1965.¹⁴ The majority of scholarship that discusses the body in *Étant donnés* focuses on readings that emphasize violation, murder, rape, or other acts that associate criminal violence, eroticism, and the body.¹⁵ It has been described as a "mutilated woman" and a "seemingly dead female body," suggesting that some form of criminal activity either already transpired or is about to occur.¹⁶ The erotic nature of these violent interpretations is based largely on the positioning of the body and Duchamp's choice to explicitly display the female groin region, which is overtly shown to viewers who peer through the small eyeholes in the door that houses the installation. The body, in its placement before us with legs spread apart, shocks the viewer because of what numerous scholars refer to as its "hypervisibility."¹⁷

On the morning of January 15, 1947, the mutilated body of Elizabeth Short, an aspiring starlet known as the "Black Dahlia" for her stunning beauty and jet-black hair, was found purposefully placed on the edge of an open lot on Norton Avenue in Los Angeles, California (Fig. 3).¹⁸ For the next few months at first, then years as the case went on, her name littered the headlines of West and East coast newspapers that described in detail both her flamboyant lifestyle and macabre death. To this day, the Black Dahlia murder case remains California's most notorious unsolved crime.¹⁹ The



Fig. 3 Photograph of Elizabeth Short. Courtesy of the Museum of Death.

following discussion suggests that the media presentation and crime photographs of the Black Dahlia murder, contemporaneous to Duchamp's conception of *Étant donnés*, may have affected its design and progress.

The parallels between the Black Dahlia and *Étant donnés* are numerous. By far the most striking similarity involves the two bodies. In a photograph of Elizabeth Short's body at the crime scene, she lies in thick, tall grass not unlike the twigs that surround the body in *Étant donnés*; her legs spread wide displaying her sex (Fig. 4). And, in the most grisly detail of this heinous crime, her body is no longer whole; it has been severed at the waist. In a surrealist fantasy become reality, the Black Dahlia represents a real-life example of what was envisioned in the contemporaneous paintings, photographs, and installations of artists such as Hans Bellmer, Rene Magritte, Man Ray, and even Marcel Duchamp. Often times, for example, these surrealist artists would manipulate mannequins in their works for both their uncanny mixture of life-like and lifeless qualities, as well as their constructive and deconstructive potential through detachable anatomical parts. As the photograph illustrates, Short's mid-section was not only severed in a manner similar to these detachable dummies, but, coincidentally, her body was actually mistaken for a mannequin by a passer-by who, observing the severed torso and skin that was "white as a lily," believed it came from a department store.²⁰

Duchamp found both inspiration and direct use for mannequins throughout his career. He explained to Man Ray in the early 1920's that the origin of the bride theme came from the "brides in booths" at French country fairs, where dummies dressed as



Fig. 4 Crime scene photograph, Black Dahlia murder. Courtesy of the Museum of Death.

a bride and groom were used as targets for people to throw balls at in an attempt at decapitation.²¹ Closer in time to the Black Dahlia and *Étant donnés* is the artist's display window at the Gotham Book Mart in New York City from 1945 to promote Andre Breton's surrealist publication *Arcane 17*; where Duchamp installed a headless female mannequin that immediately caused a scandal with the League of Women.²²

Without question, the two most forceful formal similarities between the Black Dahlia and the body in *Étant donnés* are located in the groin region of each figure. First, both Elizabeth Short's body and the body in *Étant donnés* have no pubic hair. The lack of hair in *Étant donnés* has been discussed in relation to Duchamp's interest in gender indeterminacy, as well as a tale of the Baroness Else von Freytag-Loringhoven, who had her pubic area shaved by a barber in a film that both Duchamp and Man Ray collaborated on.²³ Furthermore, in the memoirs of Lydie Sarazin-Levassor, Duchamp's wife for eight months in 1927-28, she claims that Duchamp requested she remove her body hair, owing to his "almost morbid horror of hair."²⁴ In light of these past incidents, the absence of pubic hair from Short's body, in itself, could have proved alluring to Duchamp.

But Short's body also offers an explanation for the strange, incorrect anatomy that suggests a female vagina in *Étant donnés*. Amelia Jones has negated the conclusions of earlier scholars who discussed the genitalia of Duchamp's figure in terms of the anatomy of the female sex, proving that there is in fact no *labia majora* or *labia minora*. What exists instead is what Jones calls an "aggressively visible and grotesque gash that goes nowhere."²⁵ In the photograph of the Black Dahlia murder, a literal gash that was incised above the vagina into the lower abdomen of the body of Elizabeth Short is visible.

It is now known through the disclosure of the autopsy reports that Elizabeth Short's pubic area was underdeveloped. Detectives and crime experts suspect that the gash was a means for the sexually ravenous killer to insert himself into Short, whose genitals were underdeveloped and therefore unable to engage in vaginal intercourse.²⁶ Thus, in a "Bride and Her Bachelors" equivalency, the Dahlia could not offer her bachelors a natural way to fulfil their lustful desires, much like the failure of the love operation in Duchamp's narrative of *The Large Glass* where the "bachelors grind their chocolate."²⁷

The "gash" in *Étant donnés* first appeared in a vellum study for the figure in 1948-49 (Fig. 5), and the transition from a drawing dated controversially either 1945 or 1947 (Fig. 6), which features a female body without head and arms (severed?) with natural pubic hair, to the hairless body with a single "gash" in the vellum study has never been explained.²⁸ If Duchamp was exposed to the Dahlia murder, either in 1947 or 1949 (this will be discussed in more detail shortly), then perhaps this event was the impetus for these design alterations. Chronologically, the murder (and his exposure to it) fits neatly between the otherwise inexplicable transition from the drawing to the vellum study.

The story of Elizabeth Short presented in the newspapers during the investigation also parallels aspects of Duchamp's own erotic narrative. Short's failure to fulfil the "love operation," while not directly stated through a medical explanation, was implied through accounts in the papers that spoke of her teasing nature and relationships that ended "before the love was consummated," echoing Duchamp's non-consummation and frustration in the theme of *The Large Glass*.²⁹ Moreover, the newspapers on both coasts played up a controversial aspect of her past, in which she claimed to have mar-

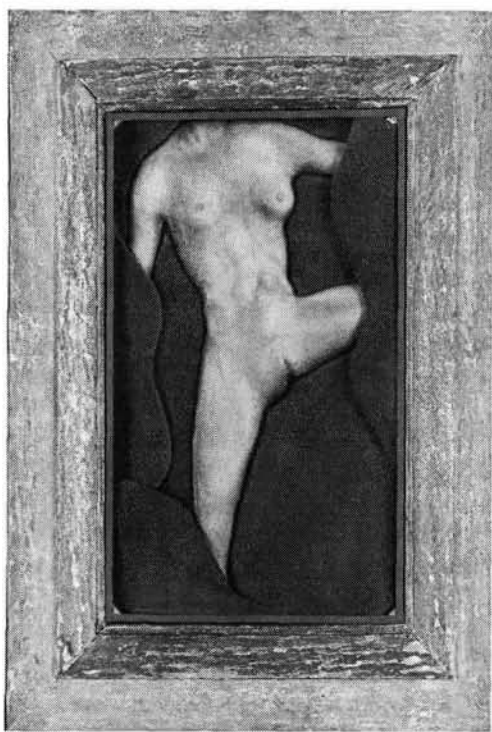


Fig. 5 Marcel Duchamp, *Etant donnés: Le gaz d'éclairage et la chute d'eau*, 1948-1949. Painted leather on plaster, velvet. Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.

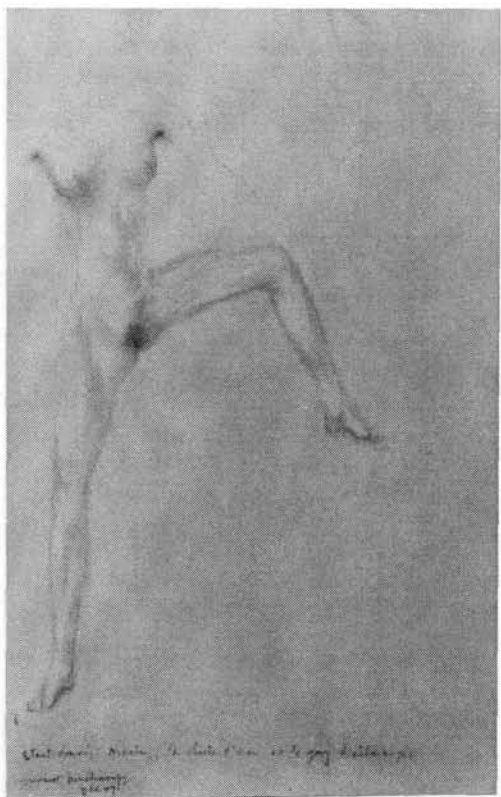


Fig. 6 Marcel Duchamp, *Etant donnés: Maria, la chute d'eau et le gaz d'éclairage*. 40 x 29 cm. Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden.

ried an air force pilot who in fact died before the ceremony could take place.³⁰ Thus, Elizabeth Short appeared to be paradoxically married and unmarried. The newspapers furthered the confusion when they obtained information from her address book, which contained "an album of pictures ranging in rank from sergeant to lieutenant general."³¹ Several newspapers ran stories that published a long list of "Bachelors," as in *The New York Daily News* headline from January 18, 1947 that reads, "Many Loves in Slain Girl's Life."³² As Jean-Francois Lyotard and others point out, Duchamp complicates attempts to locate fixed meanings in his works through what has been called a "hinge" effect.³³ The hinge, represented in language by the juxtaposition of "and/or," as in the double alias of Marcel Duchamp and/or Rose Sélavy, is both single and multiple, definitive and simultaneously inconclusive. To extend the "hinge" interpretation, the Dahlia was a Duchampian fantasy come to life – single and/or married, Elizabeth Short and/or the Black Dahlia, whole and/or severed, life and/or art. Like the Bride in Duchamp's tale, who has "no singular, definitive groom," the Dahlia represents eroticism and violence staged in these photographs as a literal "Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even(ly) Cut" as a symbol of the artist's concept of infra-mince, a physical cut that in this context plays itself out in a long list of Duchampian metaphors.³⁴ She is a "Fresh Widow," like the French women Duchamp referred to after the First World War in his 1920 work of the same name; a work whose title also, coincidentally(?), references the guillotine – "the Widow, in popular French jargon."³⁵ Lastly, in several of the crime scene photographs and those of the newspapers, the detectives, policemen, and reporters seem to echo Duchamp's description of his Occulist Witnesses and bachelors, who "stand, sadly, in 'uniforms and liveries'" and observe the spectacle before them.³⁶

In mid-January 1947 Duchamp returned from a stay in Europe, arriving in New York at the moment the Dahlia case began to unfold. The particulars of the murder and its surrounding controversies were appearing daily in national newspapers. It was so popular, in fact, that the murder remained a page-one story in Los Angeles area papers for thirty-one consecutive days.³⁷ In New York, the *Daily News* ran headlines and follow-up stories about the Dahlia murder for several weeks.³⁸ More importantly, at the time of the killing, Los Angeles was the home of the artist's close friend Man Ray. The relationship between these two artists is well documented, and Man Ray's influence on Duchamp's conception of *Étant donnés* has already been suggested.³⁹ In addition to being engulfed in a sea of newspaper headlines and Hollywood gossip about the killing, Man Ray, like Elizabeth Short, frequented the popular bars and clubs in Hollywood and knew many people in the jet set of the movie community.⁴⁰ With his lifelong fascination with sado-masochism, Man Ray would certainly have taken an interest in the particulars of this crime.⁴¹ As a photographer of such repute, Man Ray might have been able to obtain one of the many hundreds of crime scene photographs taken by reporters that circulated through the Hollywood community.⁴² These photographs were reproduced and passed from hand to hand, and were not censored like the newspaper photographs that displayed the body *in situ* covered with a sheet, nor were they the "cleaned-up" autopsy photographs that appeared in detective and crime magazines.

Compelling evidence has recently surfaced that strengthens the connection of Man Ray to the Black Dahlia murder, as well as his possible exposure to the particulars of the crime. In a new book, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story*, former LAPD detective Steve Hodel claims that his own father, George Hodel, was the Black Dahlia killer.⁴³ Through photographic evidence, witness corroboration, and handwriting analysis,

Hodel convincingly argues that his father, a doctor with surgical skills, was intimately involved with Elizabeth Short and murdered her in an act of vengeful retribution. What is important in the context of this discussion is Steve Hodel's information concerning Man Ray and his father, who socialized together regularly at the Hodel residence and at other venues in Hollywood during the years surrounding the crime.⁴⁴ Not only did the two men share an interest in surrealism and the writings of the Marquis de Sade; they were both photographers, and on at least one occasion actually collaborated (with George Hodel as the model and Man Ray the photographer).⁴⁵ As Steve Hodel suggests, the artistic and philosophical similarities between Man Ray and his father illustrates their "shared vision of violent sexual fantasy."⁴⁶ How close were these two individuals? While we cannot be certain about their level of intimacy, it remains suspicious (in my mind) that Man Ray left Hollywood shortly after the murder, possibly fearing an association with Hodel. Interestingly, one of Steve Hodel's theories is that his father posed the body of the Black Dahlia to reflect the position of the figure in Man Ray's *The Minotaur* from 1936, and extended the victim's lips by tearing her cheeks, echoing the artist's 1933-34 work, *The Lovers*.⁴⁷ Thus, the author suggests that the murderer produced an "homage" to his mentor that was actual rather than artistic.

On his way back from Paris after leaving Hollywood in 1947, the year of the murder, Man Ray spent a week in New York City.⁴⁸ This could have served as an occasion for him to share this information with Duchamp, either simply for its grisly, surrealist nature or for its many similarities with his own and Duchamp's beliefs and work. If this was not the case, Duchamp may have heard or seen something about the Black Dahlia during his visit to the Arensberg's home in Los Angeles two years later in April 1949 after his participation in a roundtable discussion in San Francisco.⁴⁹ The Black Dahlia case was again making news with new suspects, and moreover Duchamp spent each afternoon secretly meeting with Man Ray by taking "afternoon walks."⁵⁰ In a photograph reproduced in Bonnie Clearwater's 1991 book, *West Coast Duchamp*, the two artists, in what I consider a witty false "alibi," sit on a stage set in Hollywood designed as a Parisian street corner.⁵¹ Why wouldn't someone with a penchant for criminal tactics, who characterized his interest in eroticism as "Enormous. Visible or not underlying in every case..." be fascinated by this crime?⁵² In fact, in an interview with Walter Hopps during his stay in Los Angeles, Duchamp declared he was going through his "sex maniac" phase, a phrase which coincidentally appeared in newspaper articles such as the first *Los Angeles Times* piece on the Dahlia Murder, which opened with the lines, "Butchered by a sex maniac..."⁵³ It is not surprising then, that upon his return to New York, Duchamp sent the clay model for the body in *Étant donnés* out for casting in plaster and, as Calvin Tomkins describes in his biography on Duchamp, "by summer he was working on it with great intensity—up to eight hours a day..."⁵⁴

These events and shared interests between Duchamp and Man Ray in the context of the Black Dahlia suggest new meanings for two of Duchamp's later erotic objects, *Female Fig Leaf* and *Wedge of Chastity* (Figs. 7 & 8). If Man Ray was partly responsible for introducing Duchamp to the Black Dahlia murder in 1947 or 1949, this may explain the nature of Duchamp's gift, *Female Fig Leaf*, to the photographer. On a return trip to Paris with his new wife Juliet in 1951, Man Ray was surprised by Duchamp, who was waiting onboard in the couple's cabin in port in New York City.⁵⁵ Duchamp presented Man Ray with an object described as a "wax impression of what looked like a woman's vulva."⁵⁶ Could this be a hint, or subliminal reference to the body in *Étant donnés* (or the Dahlia)?⁵⁷ Did this object imply something more than a simple shared interest

in eroticism in the form of a farewell gift? With Duchamp's love of puns and double meanings, one wonders if a linkage to *Étant donnés* and/or the Black Dahlia continued with the verbal/visual play in another erotic object, *Wedge of Chastity*. A wedding gift to his wife Alexina (Teeny) Sattler, Duchamp inscribed the object with the phrase, "Pour Teeny 16. Jan. 1954." The spoken phrase, "Pour Teeny," in English carries an additional meaning; "poor teeny," as in the poor starlet who could not fulfil the "love operation" because of her "Wedge of Chastity." Is it surprising that this "wedge" seems to fit snugly into a kind of "gash?" Or that January 16th was the day after the murder of Elizabeth Short, the first day the headlines appeared in New York City papers?

Similar to *Étant donnés*, the Black Dahlia case perplexed investigators, and "facts" were constantly being undermined by the introduction of contradictory evidence. These inconclusive theories were played out, among other places, in newspaper headlines that emphasized the "gender indeterminacy" of the murderer. Authorities, first suspecting a man, reversed their hypothesis. The press ran headlines such as "Woman Now Sought In Black Dahlia Killing."⁵⁸ Ironically, the case's most plausible suspect is now a female impersonator – how Duchampian!⁵⁹ Quotes from detectives appeared in the papers as well, such as a statement from Detective Harry Hansen who regrettably admitted, "No lead had any conclusion, once we'd find something, it seemed to disappear in front of our eyes. Following any of those leads was like going down one-way streets with dead-ends."⁶⁰ When a suitcase of the victim's belongings turned up, it was filled with all kinds of objects—beauty supplies, photographs of men she



Fig 7 Marcel Duchamp, *Female Fig Leaf*, 1961 cast of 1950 plaster. Bronze, 3 1/2 x 5 3/4 x 5 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA. Gift of Mme. Marcel Duchamp, 1976.



Fig. 8 Marcel Duchamp, *Wedge of Chastity*, 1951-1952. Galvanized plaster and dental plastic. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA. Duchamp Archive. Gift of Jacqueline, Peter, and Paul Matisse in memory of their mother, Alexina Duchamp.

had known, letters, etc. In a stunningly similar manner to Duchamp's *Box in a Valise*, or better yet *Green Box*, the suitcase's contents guided detectives in their investigation much as *Green Box* serves as a "guide" to *The Large Glass*.

In this sense, the Black Dahlia/*Étant donnés* comparison can be viewed as the complicated performance of what criminologists term a "copycat" crime, played out within the sphere of art. Elizabeth Short's life represents Duchamp's pre-existing tale within the context of a specific time and place. Yet *Étant donnés*, continuing Duchamp's penchant for criminal play, becomes a kind of "copycat" crime by re-using a specifically criminal mode of appropriation, and possibly specific details from this crime, as a "readymade" for certain features of his installation. The cyclical indeterminacy of "who copied whom" once more suggests the "hinge," represented this time by the Dahlia murder, which negotiates between the narrative of *The Large Glass* and *Étant donnés*. It is amusing as well that the linguistic symbol for Lyotard's hinge has at its center a slash that "severs" the "and/or" indeterminate; thus, Duchamp's narrative and/or the life of Elizabeth Short – the Dahlia murder and/or *Étant donnés*.

Unlike *The Large Glass*, however, which presented cryptic visual versions of erotic narratives, Duchamp in *Étant donnés*, shocked his art audience by performing a spectral flip of his criminal *modus operandi*. What had been hidden up to this point in his career, was suddenly blatantly revealed.⁶¹ As detective Jess Haskins said of the Dahlia

murder, "It was not unusual – the 'display idea' as part of a sex crime...Hiding it had been the least of the perpetrator's concerns."⁶² Duchamp, it is well known, claimed that eroticism was "a way to bring out in the daylight the things that are constantly hidden...because of social rules."⁶³ Thus, the earlier use of criminal and erotic subjects and actions emphasized the elusive absence of the living artist and his cryptic narratives. Conversely, *Étant donnés* presents a hypervisible, blatant operation through another kind of artistic absence, first by, as he said, "going underground" during the secret and elusive production of *Étant donnés*, then through his literal absence in death.⁶⁴ In this role reversal, Duchamp exposes the crime and hides himself, like a serial killer, whose "psychosexual nexus is terra incognita."⁶⁵

As in many famous unsolved murders, Elizabeth Short's body was not simply dumped in a lot; it was deliberately arranged.⁶⁶ Her two halves were placed to repeat the natural position of the body several hours after the actual crime occurred. This gave the crime scene what detectives characterized as a "sacred setting," implying that messages or meanings could be yielded by its purposeful display.⁶⁷ Duchamp also stresses his intentional positioning and display of the body in *Étant donnés*, controlling among other things our line of vision. As his title implies, we are presented with certain "evidence" from which to attempt to solve this artwork and/or crime.⁶⁸ The title, presented in the format of a mathematical equation, ironically suggests that this piece can be "solved" through a logistical program. "Given" it implies, "the waterfall, the illuminated gas, and whatever else you can see." Here the spectral flip appears to hide the conceptual and offer an overtly constructed physical art environment.⁶⁹ Moreover, Duchamp's strategic placement of *Étant donnés* at the far rear of the Arensberg room in the Philadelphia Museum of Art creates two further paradoxes. One, it is literally "hidden" in a dark retreat at the back of the "display," yet shockingly reveals itself within the darkness when the viewer looks through the peepholes. Second, the entire Arensberg room creates an exhibition narrative based on a body of work, that ends with a literal body. The post-Stirnerite works in the brightly lit outside gallery hide the physical mark and presence of their creator and engage us through the conceptual and extra-dimensional. The dark hidden room of *Étant donnés* offers us the physical, both as literal body and as an attempt in understanding based on the empirical act of seeing.

In death, Duchamp left a corpus and a corpse. His permanent absence was certainly his ultimate act of elusion. As in the Black Dahlia murder, the death of the "suspect" stamps *Étant donnés* permanently "open and unsolved." We can never "break the case" of Marcel Duchamp (although we can, and have, broken his works of art). In denying us solutions, Duchamp also denies us from closing the book on his work; its inconclusive nature leaves it inevitably open and alive. Thus, by defying solution, perhaps he and his work even defy death. "Besides," his self-written epitaph reads, "it's only the others that die." This, it seems, is Duchamp's only truth.

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1. Georges Bataille, *The Trial of Gilles de Rais*, trans. Richard Robinson (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1991), 13. I was inspired by Stuart Swezey to begin this essay with these words. Swezey included Bataille's statement in his preface on the Black Dahlia. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994).
2. For a full account of this tragedy, see John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books 1994).
3. Francis M. Naumann, "Marcel Duchamp: A Reconciliation of Opposites," in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, ed. R. Kuenzli and F. M. Naumann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 29.
4. Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1907), 361. Duchamp himself stated that his reading of Stirner "marked his complete liberation." Alan Antliff, "Anarchy, Politics, and Dada," in *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1996), 212.
5. Amelia Jones, "Eros, That's Life or the Baroness' Penis," in *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1996), 239.
6. Antliff makes the connection between Duchamp's adoption of Stirner's philosophy and a revolt against what he calls "the rules 'art' imposed on the individual." Alan Antliff, "Anarchy, Politics, and Dada," in *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1996), 213.
7. W. Hopps and A. d'Harnoncourt, "Etant Donnés: 1 la chute d'eau 2 le gaz d'éclairage: Reflections on a New Work by Marcel Duchamp," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Volume LXIV, Numbers 299 and 300, April-September 1969, Philadelphia, second reprint, 1987, 37.
8. In this sense, I disagree with Antliff's characterization of the American readymades. He states, "Here Duchamp undermined the metaphysical aesthetics and socially imposed conventions that defined 'art,' replacing painting and sculpture with mass-produced objects devoid of aesthetic deliberation and any trace of the creative process." In my opinion, the readymades are neither devoid of aesthetic deliberation nor lacking any trace of the creative process. What the readymades lack are physical traces (visually recognizable) of creation. Instead, the evidence of a creative process is solely conceptual. Alan Antliff, "Anarchy, Politics, and Dada," in *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1996), 213.
9. Pierre Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Belfond, 1967), 165. Translated by, and quoted in, Dalia Judovitz, "Rendezvous with Marcel Duchamp: Given," in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, ed. R.E. Kuenzli and F. M. Naumann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 197.
10. As Steven Levine pointed out during the discussion of this paper at the Symposium for the History of Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, imitation could certainly be considered "criminal" as well. As early as antiquity, the deceitful nature of artistic imitation led Plato to exclude it from his ideal Republic.
11. As Rhonda Shearer points out, it is possible that these objects were not appropriated exactly as they were "found" by Duchamp. Manufacturer catalogs contemporary to the readymades do not contain illustrations that directly match some of Duchamp's objects. Thus, she suggests the artist may have altered them slightly to further confuse their "origin." In Leslie Cambi, "Did Duchamp Deceive Us?" *Art News*, 98 (February 1999): 98-102. Moreover, we know from photographs and remarks by Man Ray that Duchamp's studio was, for the most part, bare. This also suggests that the artist wished to confuse any attempts to "trace" the source material or influences of his work.
12. It could be argued that Duchamp's "outlaw" status began even earlier, when he submitted his *Nude Descending the Staircase* to the 1913 Armory exhibition.
13. Judovitz first suggested that Duchamp possessed criminal qualities in her discussions of *Tzanck Check* and *Wanted* in Chapter 4 of *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*. Her interpretation and discussion of criminality, however, rests solely on the idea of counterfeiting and fake transactions. Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 167-78. This paper suggests that these are but two of many examples within Duchamp's artistic career in which he looked to criminality as a means of reconciling his philosophical and aesthetic/non-aesthetic programs. Moreover, Duchamp's *Wanted* is included here to emphasize, through his multiple aliases and criminal image, the connection between criminality and elusion (absence).
14. Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 199.
15. The most complete investigation of the nude body in *Etant donnés*, its influences, and location within a history of nudes in the landscape is Juan Antonio Ramirez's discussion in his book *Duchamp: Love and*

Death, Even. In an attempt to separate fact from hearsay, Ramirez asks an important question: "What kind of things might Duchamp have seen or read; with which intellectual wave and artistic movement was he associated at any given moment?" Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London, 1998), 12. Ramirez's discussion focuses, for the most part, on art historical sources beginning as early as the end of the 15th century and ending with the surrealist work of Hans Bellmer and others. While he does briefly mention that popular photographs of pornographic subjects were more important than art historical images of the nude, his discussion of this material is brief and indirect. Rather than answering his own question in relation to this material, Ramirez offers visually similar images but fails to contextualize them and discuss the direct avenues through which Duchamp may have seen or obtained them. Therefore, re-asking Ramirez's question, I offer the Black Dahlia as a more convincing non-art historical influence.

16. A "seemingly dead female body" in Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 192 and a "mutilated woman" in Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London, 1998), 234.
17. This is discussed, among others, by Juan Antonio Ramirez, Dalia Judovitz, and Amelia Jones.
18. As Gilmore explains, soldiers began to call Elizabeth Short by this name as a re-worked version of a recent film entitled "The Blue Dahlia." The "Black Dahlia" quickly became a nickname that soldiers would use in their queries as to whether she had been spotted somewhere on the streets each day. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 56.
19. Recently, a former LAPD detective named Steven Hodel submitted a manuscript to the District Attorney that suggests his own father, George Hodel, was the killer. When this article went to press Hodel's conclusions were still unverified. Hodel's theory and evidence is convincing, and actually strengthens my argument that Man Ray was Duchamp's source of knowledge about the crime, in this case through his friendship with George Hodel. See Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003).
20. Elizabeth Short's body had been drained of blood prior to being dumped in the lot, explaining the pallor of the skin. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 5.
21. A. Schwartz, *Man Ray: The Rigour of the Imagination* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), 188.
22. W. Hopps and A. d'Harnoncourt, "Etant Donnés: 1 la chute d'eau 2 le gaz d'éclairage: Reflections on a New Work by Marcel Duchamp," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Volume LXIV, Numbers 299 and 300, April-September 1969, Philadelphia, second reprint, 1987, 32.
23. D. Hopkins, "Men Before the Mirror: Duchamp, Man Ray and Masculinity," *Art History* v. 21 (September 1998): 317.
24. "Le Recit de Lydie," *Rosopopees*, nos. 19-20, March 1989, p. 489.
25. Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 201.
26. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 124.
27. L.D. Steefel, Jr., *The Position of Duchamp's Glass in the Development of His Art* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977) 167.
28. This suggests a more convincing date for the first drawing as 1947 rather than 1945. If Duchamp had seen the photographs of the Black Dahlia, then perhaps they might explain an origin for the pose of the figure, usually referred to as Marie Martins. In addition, the last number of the date inscribed on this drawing, in my opinion, looks much more like a "7" than a "5." Calvin Tomkins also identifies the date of this drawing as 1947. Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: H. Holt, 1996), 357.
29. Statement made by Detective Brown, speaking about the letters found in her suitcase. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 138.
30. "Mother of Hero Doubts Marriage to Short Girl," *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1947, 3.
31. *Daily News*, New York, January 18, 1947, 1,3.
32. *Daily News*, New York, January 18, 1947, 1,3.

33. See J.F. Lyotard, *Duchamp's TRANS/formers* (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 58-61, and Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 215.
34. For a detailed discussion of infra-mince, see Molly Nesbit, "Last Words: (Rilke, Wittgenstein) (Duchamp)," *Art History* 21 (December 1998): 547. There are other striking similarities between the images of the Black Dahlia crime scene and Duchamp's studies for *Etant donnés*, especially a drawing from 1959 in which *The Large Glass* is juxtaposed with a landscape that includes telephone poles. These appear in the same area as some of the telephone poles in several crime scene photographs. Moreover, the Occulist Witnesses in Duchamp's drawing occupy the same position as the policemen and detectives in the crime scene photographs.
35. Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 122.
36. Amelia Jones, "Eros, That's Life or the Baroness' Penis," in *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1996), 240. This is especially so in reference to a photograph taken at the crime scene by a reporter, not published here. See, for example, John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994).
37. Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), 20.
38. From January 18, 1947 through early February, the *New York Daily News* ran three front-page stories, and fourteen other articles that appeared somewhere on the first five pages of the newspaper (most on them on page three).
39. See for example Ramirez, who claims that these "aspects (photographs), along with the adventures shared by the two friends suggests (as we shall see) Man Ray's considerable influence on Duchamp." Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London, 1998), 221.
40. Elizabeth Short is known to have frequented the following locales: Four Star Grill, Florentine Gardens, The Rhapsody, the Dugout, the Loyal Café, and the Streets of Paris. Moreover, in an email correspondence, John Gilmore informed me that there was a strong possibility that Man Ray may have known the Black Dahlia, or at least had met her.
41. For a summary see A. Schwartz, *Man Ray: The Rigour of the Imagination* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), 187-190. The articles in *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Examiner*, for example, discuss the sado-masochistic aspects of the crime.
42. In John Gilmore's book, Detective Brown is quoted in the autopsy room as saying: "there are already a thousand photographs ... You can see most of what's been done..." John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 126.
43. Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003).
44. Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003).
45. Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), 87-89, 242.
46. Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), 242.
47. Steve Hodel, *Black Dahlia Avenger: The True Story* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), 88.
48. Man Ray, *Self Portrait: Man Ray* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), 291.
49. For a summary of Duchamp's participation in this event, as well as a chronology of his California experiences, see Bonnie Clearwater, *West Coast Duchamp* (Miami: Grassfield Press, 1991).
50. Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: H. Holt, 1996), 370.
51. Bonnie Clearwater, *West Coast Duchamp* (Miami: Grassfield Press, 1991).
52. Pierre Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (Paris, 1967), 165.
53. "Girl Victim of Sex Fiend Found Slain," *Los Angeles Times*, Thursday, January 16, 1947, 2. The interview with Hopps is quoted from Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: H. Holt, 1996), 423.
54. Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: H. Holt, 1996), 366.
55. Man Ray, *Self Portrait: Man Ray* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), 295.
56. Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: H. Holt, 1996), 370.

57. To my knowledge, no one has ever made a cast of the female groin region of the body in *Etant donnés*. It could be possible that *Female Fig Leaf* is directly linked to *Etant donnés* in this way.
58. "Woman Now Sought in Black Dahlia Killing," *New York Daily News*, January 21, 1949, 5.
59. See Chapter 17 in John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994).
60. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 173.
61. Some scholars were disappointed because this seemed to point to a return to representation that negated Duchamp's "progress" toward conceptual art.
62. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books 1994), 8.
63. N. Baldwin, *Man Ray: American Artist* (New York: Crown Books, 1988), 276.
64. Duchamp told Cage that having a second studio "was a way of going underground." Joseph Masheck, *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975), 155.
65. Stuart Swezey, in John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), iii.
66. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 12.
67. John Gilmore, *Severed: The True Story of the Black Dahlia Murder* (Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1994), 9.
68. Interestingly, a 1945 work, sometimes thought to be the earliest model for the nude body, was sent to forensics and FBI specialists to test and confirm the material as human semen. Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London, 1998), 233. How interesting to think that Duchamp, in an erotic act, used the chance design of his ejaculated semen on a piece of paper as a possible "origin" for a body in *Etant donnés*.
69. The physical construction of *Etant donnés* is emphasized by its context in the museum, and also by the fact that it was posthumously reconstructed by others, "put together" again, so to speak.

Acquiescence and Convention: The Convergence of the American Renaissance and the New Deal at the United States Customs House

Andrea Foggie Plotkin

At the southernmost tip of Manhattan Island stands a noble, majestic Beaux-Arts structure—the United States Customs House. Designed by Cass Gilbert (1859-1934) and built between 1900 and 1907, the federally funded building is an expression of national pride and civic unity. Using a classical vocabulary, Gilbert, and the sculptors and craftsmen with whom he collaborated, translated into stone the correlation of international trade with America's expansionist and hegemonic ambitions at the turn of the century. This notion is vividly represented in the allegorical sculptures created by Daniel Chester French that rise from the building's ground level, and in the fresco mural inside the grandiose rotunda painted thirty years later by Reginald Marsh. With its mixture of American Renaissance ornamentation and New Deal/WPA art, the Customs House is a distinctive blend of the ideals of two periods of artistic practice and process. The artists' acceptance of establishment principles is perceptible through the themes that frame both decorative programs. The federally mandated objectives from one era to the next are analogous. In the early years of the twentieth century and once again amidst the gloom of the Depression, the symbolization of the belief in America's progress, supremacy, and enterprise of commerce was fundamental.

It did, however, take many years before the young nation felt at ease in promoting her social, economic, and technological capacity. The early years of the nation were fraught with uncertainty and divisiveness. One of the most controversial issues was legislative and concerned the content and extent of tariff law. Like many requisites of nation building in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the debate was linked to the themes of federalism and republicanism. Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804), the leading Federalist, advocated tariffs on imported manufactures to aid in paying off the debt of the Continental Congress and the establishment of the Bank of the United States, with hopes that these measures would not only strengthen the federal government but tie it to the wealth of its people. The aim of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), on the other hand, was of a decentralized agrarian nation where each state would have different tariffs and its own manner of collection, as it had been since 1776. However, Hamilton prevailed, and the Tariff Act, designed to uniformly fix and collect all duties, imports, and excise taxes, was passed in 1789. On the symbolic day of July 4th, just six years after the Treaty of Paris conferred nationhood upon the United States, the Customs Service was designated as the first federal bureau responsible for the collection of revenue.¹ Affirming Hamilton's premonition, tariff revenues became America's principle source of income from 1789 until the imposition of the income tax in 1916. In its first year, the Customs Service collected more than \$140,000 from goods ferried on over 1,000 ships, and by 1909, two years after the opening of the new New York Customs House, three-quarters of a billion dollars was collected, supplying one-fifth of all United States Treasury resources.²

Located on the first Hudson River landing, the site of Gilbert's "Temple of Commerce" at Bowling Green is central to the history of the federal government and the Customs Service. The site is at the heart of New York's earliest colonial settlement, Fort Amsterdam, which faced the Green and originally served as a parade ground until the

1730's, after which it was laid out as the city's first public park, to be used for bowling and other leisure activities.³ Bowling Green was also the home of the city's first public sculpture, a gilded lead equestrian of George III, which was later sacked by American patriots in 1776.⁴ The fort itself, which had been captured by the British in 1664 and renamed Fort James, after the Duke of York, and later Fort George, after George I (in 1714), was demolished in 1787 for the erection of Government House, designed to be both residential and business headquarters for President Washington. However, the federal government chose to designate as its capital Philadelphia rather than New York, and only governors George Clinton and John Jay lived there until the state capital was established in Albany in 1797. Two years later, Government House became the home of New York's first Customs House, yet only until 1815. Over the next ninety years, the department shifted locations within lower Manhattan, into such distinguished structures as Ithiel Town and Alexander Jackson Davis' current Federal Hall National Memorial and Isaiah Rogers' Merchants' Exchange.⁵ When the Customs House returned to Bowling Green in 1907, a federal presence was restored to the site.

Even before the need for more space to process foreign goods was determined, the significance of the country, the city, and the service was proclaimed:

Three things are perfectly clear to the citizens of New York: first, the United States of America constitutes the greatest country on earth; second; New York is the greatest city in the country; third, the Custom-house is the greatest institution in the city.⁶

At the time of this statement in 1884, the port of New York was the most prosperous trade center in the country, and befitting late-nineteenth-century ideals, an architectural program designed to express the importance of America as a commercial nation, with New York at its core, was affirmed. The site at Bowling Green was approved by the Secretary of the Treasury after more than ten years of haggling over the location, and twenty of the country's leading architects, including Carrere and Hastings, Daniel Burnham, Henry Ives Cobb, Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, George B. Post, and McKim, Mead and White, were invited to submit plans for the new building. It was under the Tarnsey Act of 1893 that the Treasury was authorized, for the first time, to hold a competition for an independent architect to design a federal structure. The legislation, which came into being through lobbying by the American Institute of Architects, is significant in evincing federal interest in high architectural standards for public structures.⁷ It was deemed that the Supervising Architect of the Treasury would serve as head of operations while the selected architect would be in charge of design and construction. Though the Tarnsey Act established relations between prominent designers and government officials, it also paved the way for corruption and favoritism. The Customs House competition was not anonymous and the coincidence of the relationship between Gilbert and the Supervising Architect, James Knox Taylor, did not go unnoticed. Gilbert, a Midwesterner who was an outsider to New York's social and political establishment, had been in partnership with Taylor, also from the Midwest, for eight years, from 1884-1892.⁸ Though the Supervising Architect claimed not to have reviewed the plans of finalists Carrere and Hastings and Gilbert, an embittered controversy ensued that required the intervention of President McKinley, who readily supported the Treasury's decision. On November 4, 1899, Gilbert officially received the "greatest (award) that has been bestowed on an architect so far away in the Northwest as St. Paul."⁹

Gilbert was both politically and artistically astute, and his ability to maneuver within the political sphere and produce work that acknowledged his acceptance of a conventional architectural idiom garnered him many significant commissions. In the nineteenth century, governmental architecture was largely based on classical precedent, and Gilbert's adaptation of a Beaux-Arts vocabulary for the Customs House illustrates his support of institutional values. He intended, through public architecture, to "supplement the education furnished by the public schools and university and ... symbol[ize] ... civilization, culture and ideals of our country."¹⁰ Gilbert's obligation to instill patriotism and good citizenship and serve the common good of the people was a theme that dominated the American Renaissance. Responding to the post-Civil War notion of national unity, artists were charged with the task of creating in a communal rather than individual language that was didactic and expressive of community values and ideals. Through imposing monumental structures adorned with classical allegories, the lofty expression of a harmonious civilization supported by the community of Americans would emerge. Acknowledging with alacrity his national responsibility, Gilbert set to work on what he called a "triumphal monument to trade and to the seas that bring trade to our shores."¹¹

The Customs House is a massive seven-story structure made of gray Maine granite (Fig. 1). It faces north towards Bowling Green and the city, and is bounded on the other sides by State, Bridge, and Whitehall Streets. While the architectural program echoed contemporary standards, it was the decorative scheme that comprehensively depicted moral and didactic concerns. Gilbert assembled a team of more than one dozen craftsmen and sculptors to assist with the project, though he decided the nature and extent of the ornamentation. The sumptuous structure is teeming with references to business and the marine world. Shells, snails, dolphins, and tridents are crafted on the façade, and the head of Mercury, Roman god of commerce, with the winged wheel of transportation, crowns the capitals of each of the forty-four columns that girdle the building's mass. While the expression of America's attachment to the sea and her commercial glory is portrayed by the richly articulated nautical and mythological symbols, it is through classical figuration that the spirit of patriotism, culture, and civilization is best personified. On the keystones of the flat arches of the main story windows are masks of the races of humanity, each one male with foliated head-dresses (Fig. 2). Designed by Vincenzo Alfano, the ethnological visages include a Celt, African, Mongolian, Eskimo, Slav, Latin, Hindu, and Caucasian. By delineating the makeup of humankind, from savage to civilized, peculiar to ordinary, a racial hierarchy is established on the building's façade. Presumably, the Caucasian, a superior being, is the American; however, what are the racial origins of the Celt, Slav, and Latin? The strong demeanor and piercing gaze of the Caucasian resemble a classical countenance, hence conflating the idea of civilization with the American "race." Though the Native American is omitted from this masculine lineup, four Indian portraits cap the arched portals on the east and west façades (Fig. 3). Given a more significant location than the others, he nonetheless remains outside the family of accepted male races. The allegorical female presiding over the main façade vestibule is Columbia (Fig. 4). She is doubtless Caucasian and her presence confirms the notion that America is not only incorporated within world history but is staged to make a momentous impact. Gilbert's interest in placing ethnological heads on the building may derive from the Library of Congress, where thirty-three heads cap the first floor keystones. Gilbert had seen Smithmeyer



Fig. 1 Cass Gilbert, United States Customs House, view looking south to Bowling Green from Broadway, photograph, c. 1912. Courtesy of the New York Historical Society.

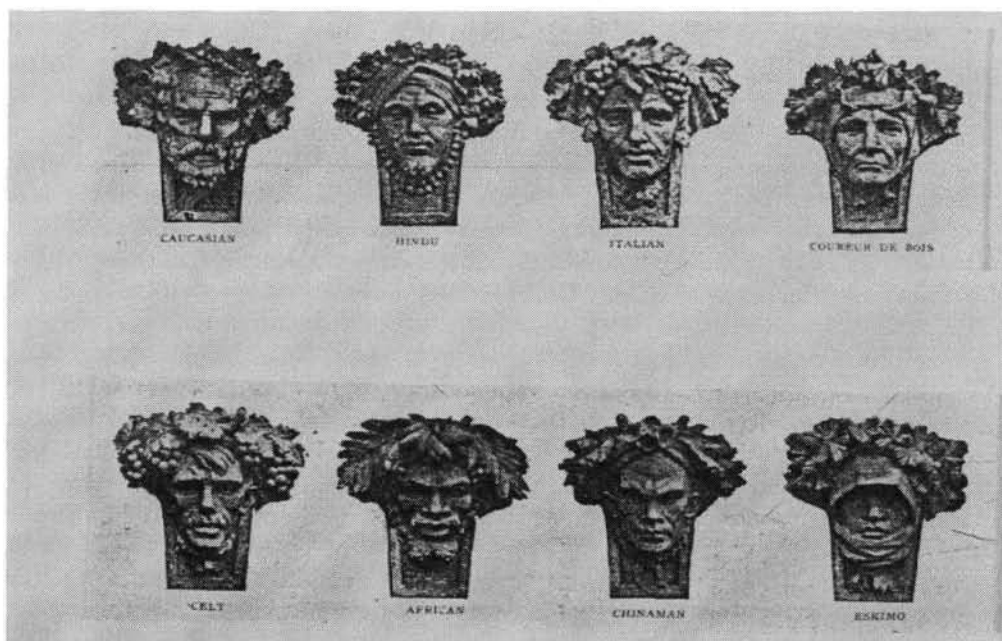


Fig. 2 Vincenzo Alfano, *Keystone Heads*, 1903. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.



Fig. 3 Vincenzo Alfano, *Indian Head*, 1903. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.



Fig. 4 Vincenzo Alfano chiseling the keystone block into the head of Columbia for the main door, United States Custom House, June 25, 1903. Courtesy of the New York Historical Society.

and Pelz's building in 1895 and was enamored with its "consistent, thoroughly studied, and well developed design ...".¹²

Gilbert's dialectical program reflected on the dignity of all of the western world's powers while simultaneously affirming America's ultimate hegemony. On the attic story, six floors above the street, the architect elected to include twelve large statues, each eleven feet tall, made of white Tennessee marble. He envisioned them as tokens of friendship with other countries and, indeed, they are straightforward personifications of prominent ancient and modern seafaring peoples (Figs. 5 & 6). They contain no overt references to racism or nationalism, but rather to conquest, and respond to what contemporary critic Charles de Kay describes as an embodiment of "the chief divisions of the globe and races and peoples which have done the most to further a knowledge of those divisions by the enterprise of their discoverers, adventurers, and traders ... pouring out their treasure in the endeavor to obtain more of the earth's surface for their teeming millions."¹³ The sculptors Gilbert selected were assigned, when possible, an allegory akin to their own nationality, and they accepted the architect's vision that they "not compete for individual reputation but [cooperate] to produce a sculptural scheme that shall be of great merit ...".¹⁴ The figures are, from left to right, Greece, as Pallas Athene, and Rome, as a Caesarian soldier, by Frank Edwin Elwell (1858-1922); Phoenicia is represented by Astarte, goddess of love, who holds a galley in her hands, by Frederic Wellington Ruckstuhl (1853-1942); Genoa, rendered as Christopher Columbus, by Henry Augustus Lukeman (1871-1935); Venice, as a doge in robes of state, and Spain, with Queen Isabella holding the globe of the new continent, by Francois Michel Louis Tonetti (1863-1945); Holland, as Admiral Van Trumo, a Knickerbocker adventurer, and Portugal, as Prince Henry the Navigator, by Louis Saint-Gaudens (1854-1913); Denmark, a stern Viking woman, by Johannes Gelert (1852-1923); Germany, by Albert Jaegers (1868-1925), with Kaiser Wilhelm's Teutonic symbols that were removed during the anti-German sentiment of the First World War, transforming the figure into Belgium and indicating the building's continued response to racial currents (Fig. 7); France, a female whose palette displays her prominence in the arts, and England, the last of the great seafaring nations, depicted as Queen Victoria holding a Hermes wand, by Charles Grafly (1862-1929).¹⁵ The varying poses and compositional structure of the statues enhance the building's architectural rhythms as they embellish and crown the columns below, and their integration in the program was a standard Beaux-Arts device. The iconography illuminates the nations that preceded and set the stage for America's commercial ascension. Between the statues are heads of the national lion of America, the cougar. The municipal coat of arms over the vestibule door by Andrew O'Connor (Fig. 8) and the seventh story cartouche by Karl Bitter (Fig. 9), with the United States shield supported by the winged figures of peace (with a sheathed sword) and union (with a bundle of reeds), complete the figurative cycle of work that is attached to the façade.

It is the limestone sculptures that rest upon large rectangular pedestals, physically separated yet iconographically contiguous to the building, that most bespeak national ideals. These are the *Four Continents*, designed by Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) in collaboration with Gilbert. Though French contended that "these groups do not come under the head of decorative sculpture, standing as they do, on pedestals where they can be examined close at hand and on all sides, they are most important things," we can perceive this statement as a way for the eminent sculptor to assert his independence.¹⁶ However, it was Gilbert who dictated the theme and, along with James

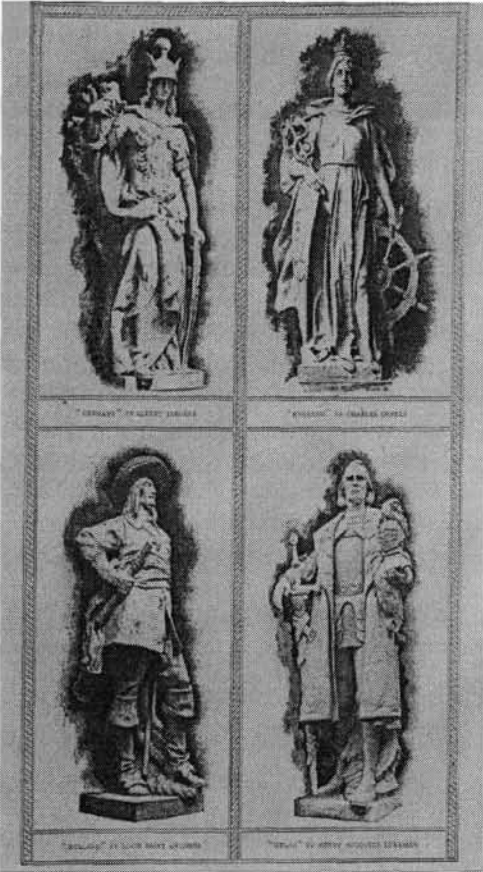


Fig. 5 Attic story marble sculptures, United States Customs House. Frank Edwin Elwell, *Greece*; Johannes Gelert, *Denmark*; Francois Michel L. Tonetti, *Venice*; F.W. Ruckstuhl, *Phoenicia*. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.



Fig. 6 Attic story marble sculptures, United States Customs House. Albert Jaegers, *Germany*; Charles Gradfley, *England*; Louis Saint Gaudens, *Holland*; Henry Augustus Lukeman, *Genoa*. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.



Fig. 7 Attic story marble sculpture, United States Customs House. Piccirilli Brothers, *Belgium*, originally *Germany* by Albert Jaegers, altered May 1919. Courtesy of Andrea Foggie Plotkin.

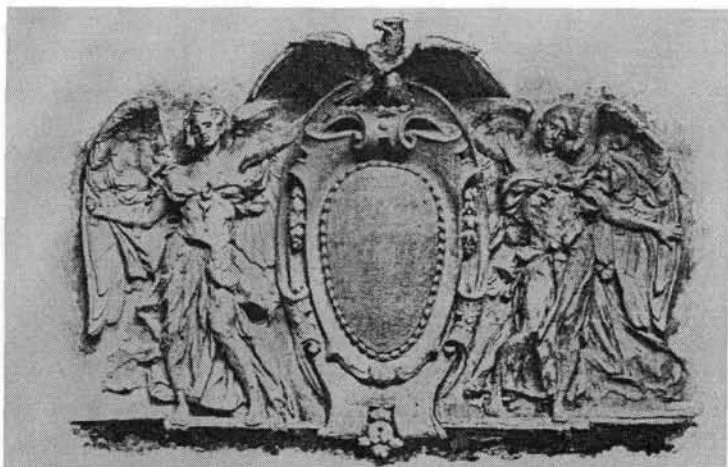


Fig. 8 Andrew O'Conner, Municipal Coat of Arms, United States Customs House, c. 1905. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.

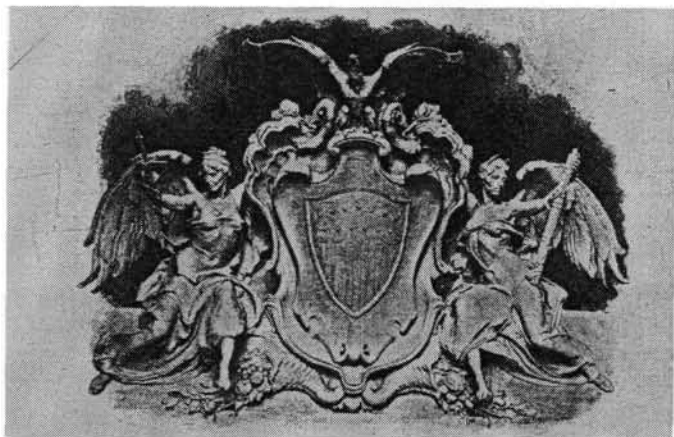


Fig. 9 Karl Bitter, Cartouche, United States Customs House, c. 1905. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.

Knox Taylor, reviewed and approved working sketches and models throughout the process. He likely selected French, the country's second most prominent sculptor after Augustus Saint-Gaudens (who declined Gilbert's invitation to produce two of the four continents), because of his connections with the social elite and his shared acceptance of institutional values. French, a wealthy New Englander who had traveled to both Italy and France, did not study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. His sensibility was thoroughly American, as evident by his first full-scale monument commission, *The Minute Man* (1871-1875), which commemorates the rising of Concord, Massachusetts's citizens during the Revolutionary War (Fig. 10). The surface modeling, definition of the body, and the alertness and determination of the patriot are emblematic of French's style. He, like Gilbert, accepted his responsibility to express national pride and optimism and "to educate, to present to future generations the best possible evidences of the civilization of today ..."¹⁷ His delight at having the opportunity to work with Gilbert is clear, for upon receiving the invitation, he announced that the project interested him "more than almost anything else I ever had to do, and I am willing to make great sacrifices in order to be permitted to execute them."¹⁸

The continental motif designated by Gilbert, undeniably linked to the function of the Customs House, had historical precedent. Sea exploration expanded the world by connecting lands and peoples, hence establishing the geographical concept of the continents. It was during the sixteenth century that the idea of the fourth, American, continent emerged, while previously, it was believed that the world consisted of three land masses—Asia, making up one-half, and Europe and Africa each partaking of one-quarter. From the 1600s onwards, allegories of the Four Continents became as prominent in maps, book pages, fresco, and decorative objects as those of the Four Seasons and the Four Elements. However, the allegory was infrequently depicted in sculpture and there is no proof that French had knowledge of the theme beyond its generalized geographical implications. It has been suggested by Kathryn Greenthal and Michael Richman that the sculptor may have been inspired by the *Four Continents* within the Albert Memorial in London's Hyde Park, which the artist admired as a "magnificent work" in 1874, though French certainly added a uniquely American twist to the theme in New York.¹⁹ The exotic and abstruse qualities of unknown worlds have persistently been wedded to the notion of the foreign, and French adeptly portrays this while simultaneously revealing America's underlying cultural attitudes and perceptions. In his fusion of the real and allegorical, the ideas of difference, expansion, and American preeminence are realized.

The concept of otherness is decisively evoked in the groups on the building's corners, *Asia* and *Africa*. On the left (facing the façade) is *Asia*, whose spiritual composure claims her role as the mother of all religions (Fig. 11). The young woman's jeweled robe and attributes are more telling of her origin than her physiognomy. She sits entranced in meditative prayer, holding a serpent-entwined lotus flower, with Buddha in an Earth-Touching pose upon her lap and the Buddhist wheel of law draping down her legs. Religious fervor is seen in the prostrate youth and the bowing male and female. The tiger, whose curving form adds a graceful flow to the composition, has lost its ferocity as it fixedly stares at the woman, proving that spirituality can pacify all forms of life. The human skulls under her feet suggest sacrifices in the name of religion. French omits the usual attributes of Asia, such as camels, elephants, perfume censers, and instead, her approach to Nirvana indicates her aloofness to change and progress. In a twist

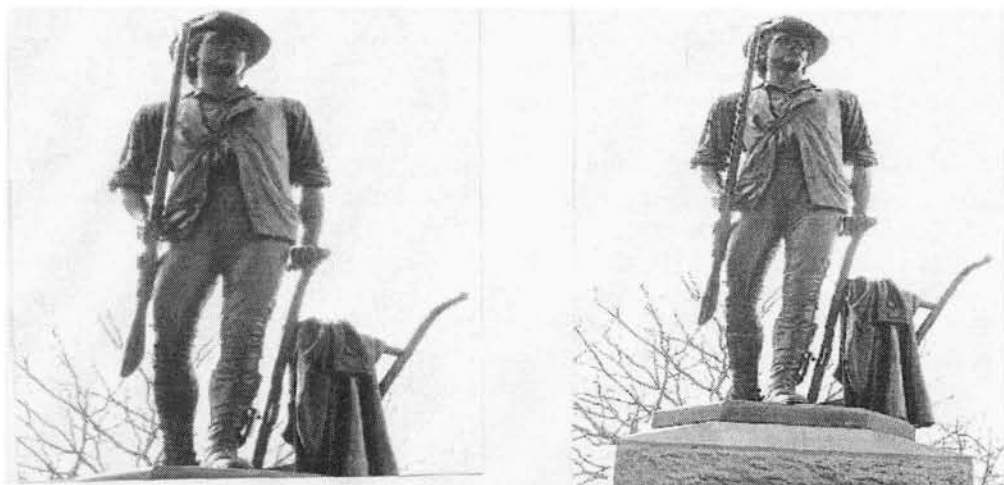


Fig. 10 Daniel Chester French, *The Minute Man*, bronze, 1871-1875. Concord, MA. Courtesy of Andrea Foggie Plotkin.



Fig. 11 Daniel Chester French, *Asia*, United States Customs House, 1904. Courtesy of Andrea Foggie Plotkin.

of irony, the cross and sunburst encroach upon the enraptured female, portraying the capacity of western civilization (Christianity) to overpower her ancient faith.

Africa, at the opposite corner of the façade, is also oblivious to progress (Fig. 12). French personifies Africa as a dark continent, impassive and obscure, as is evident by the slumbering, languorous female. Seated on a desert rock, she is emblematic of the untapped potential of the "hopeless continent," and her nakedness illuminates her uncivilized nature. One strong arm rests on the broken Sphinx and the other on a sleeping lion. Behind her is a fully shrouded figure, "mystical, veiled, contemplative and impenetrable."²⁰ The physical prowess of the central figure is enhanced by the simple sculptural mass, evoking Michelangelo's sleeping, inert figure of *Night* in the Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici (1524-35) (Fig. 13). The listless poses, androgynous forms, and somnolent expressions conjoin the meaning of *Night*—inactivity and death—with the slumbering dark African nations. It is in this image that racist and xenophobic notions are most convincingly expressed. *Africa* is given little glory; even her majestic arts are defiled. In describing his intentions for this work nearly ten years after its installation, French wrote:

It is usual to depict the Negro with a snub nose and exaggerated fullness of lips and in fact the lowest type of Negro that exists. As a matter of fact there is a type of Negro which probably represents some section of Africa in which the nose is aquiline and the whole cast of features handsome and dignified according to our Caucasian standards Of course I retreat into the safe ground that I am depicting an Egyptian and so even defend the long hair ... it is a fact that I have, in the figure, spoken the language of European art instead of sticking closely to the African type, which is at least as marked in the form as in the face.²¹

In this defense of his representation, the underlying current of dogmatism and nationalism that was part of the institutional value system to which French and Gilbert ascribed is readily apparent. While we sense in his statement a complete lack of understanding of the African, the artist cannot be faulted for his desire to create a western image that was characteristic of the Beaux-Arts tradition of drawing on classical precedent.

To the right of the main stairway is *Europe*, the regal disseminator of knowledge (Fig. 14). Crowned and dressed in an ornate Grecian gown, her forward gaze is of conscious power. She holds the prows of three ships, suggesting her exploits at sea, and the globe supporting the open book evokes her ability to extend her wisdom in science, arts, and letters to all corners of the earth. The Roman imperial eagle and the bishop's crosier behind her present the domination of Christianity over paganism, and the sibylline figure at the rear symbolizes history and knowledge with her book, skull, and laurel. The European queen sits upon a throne that is adapted, according to Greenthal and Richman, from the western frieze of the Parthenon on the right side, and on the left, from an ancient quadriga bas-relief which French likely knew of from a commercial cast.²² *Europe* is personified as she had historically been, a noble symbol of "high civilization, great luxury, intellectuality and power."²³

Across the stairs and equated by her placement with *Europe*, is *America* (Fig. 15). On the verge of supremacy, the dynamic posture and rhythmic twist of her body differs from the other more static groups. Unencumbered by excess clothing, she is ready to leap out of her seat, while she looks towards the water and the "providential vision of the future."²⁴ She holds the torch of liberty and enlightenment, and the sheaf of

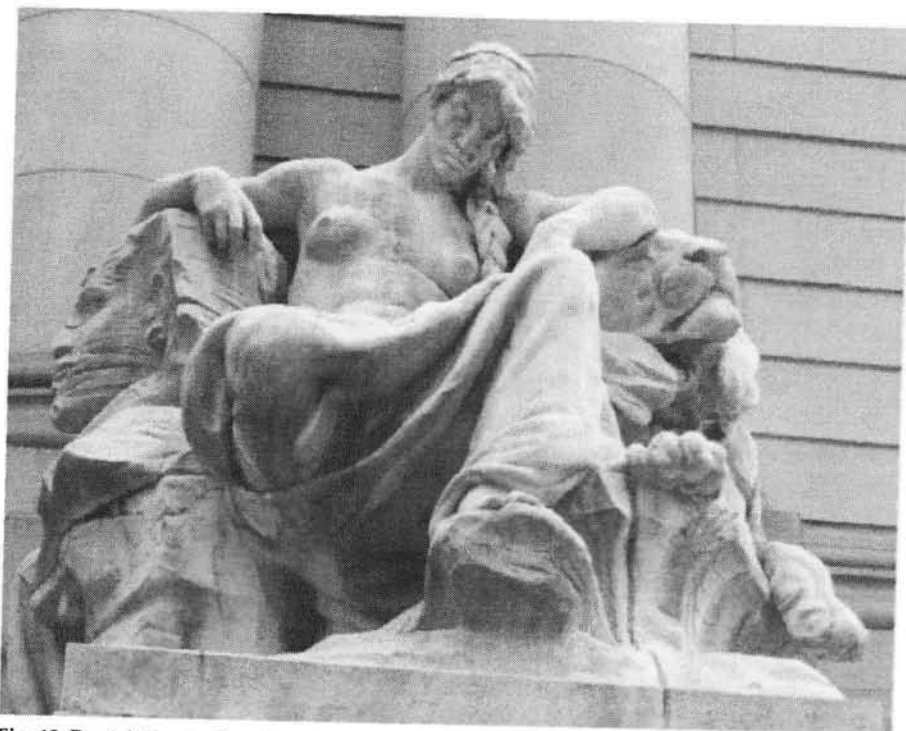


Fig. 12 Daniel Chester French, *Africa*, United States Customs House, 1904. Courtesy of Andrea Foggie Plotkin.

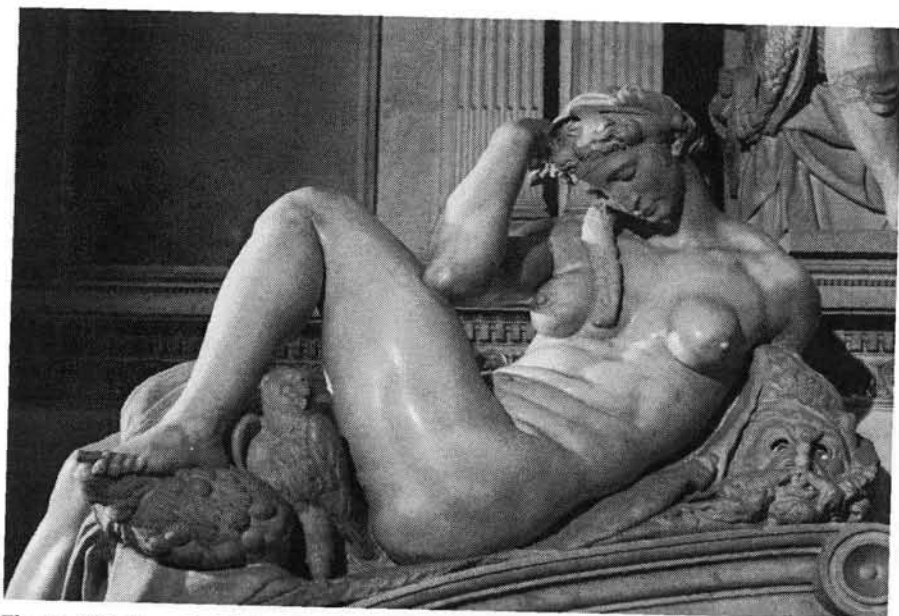


Fig. 13 Michelangelo, *Night*, from the Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, marble, c. 1521-1534. San Lorenzo, Florence. Courtesy of Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

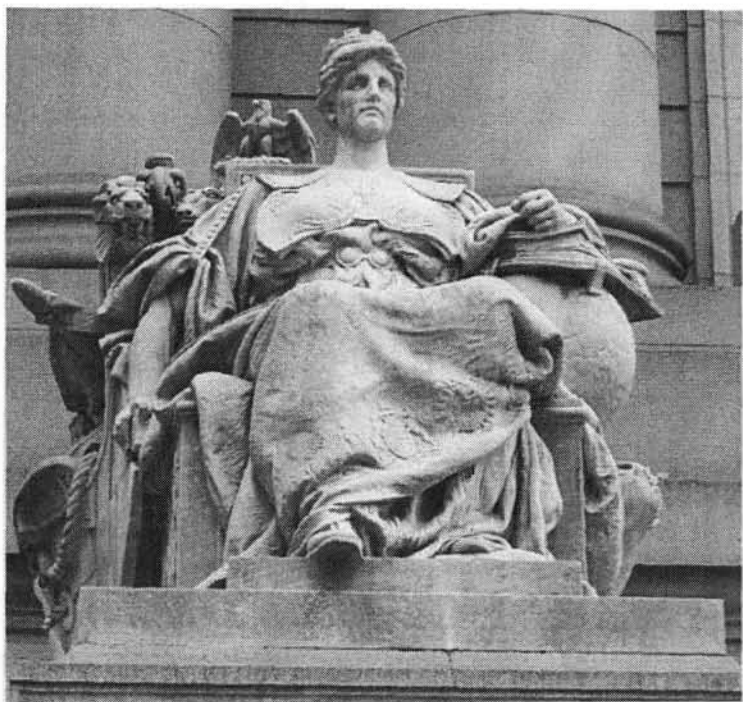


Fig. 14 Daniel Chester French, *Europe*, United States Customs House, 1904. Courtesy of Andrea Foggie Plotkin.



Fig. 15 Daniel Chester French, *America*, United States Customs House, 1904. Courtesy of Andrea Foggie Plotkin.

corn on her lap suggests material prosperity. Her flowing cloak protects Labor, who signifies industrial enterprise as he sets in motion the wheels of progress. The Indian peering over her right shoulder accepts white America's lead and is a reminder of a "savage" past, as are the totem pole and broken pots at the rear. Her throne is decorated with Mayan glyphs and she firmly steps on the head of Quetzalcoatl, legendary Aztec god of rain and culture. Though all four groups depict idealized females, it is *America* who is in fact the ideal woman—beautiful, young, and vibrant. In a break with European precedent, French has interpreted her as thoroughly American. She is not the traditional Indian princess or huntress with bow, arrow, and quiver, as seen in Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's fresco detail of *America* from the staircase ceiling of the Residenz in Würzburg (1753) (Fig. 16), but rather a comely and civilized goddess of inventive and commercial enterprise.²⁵ Despite the reliance on a European, Beaux-Arts precedent, *America's* compelling presence makes this building seem firmly rooted in American soil.

The smooth surfaces, harmonious pyramidal compositions, and accurate details of French's allegories exhibit his desire to promote the myth of America's hegemony and prestige through the language of classicism. The spectator can readily comprehend the dichotomies of East and West, ancient and modern, uncultivated and civilized, and though the iconographic details are unfamiliar to many observers, the placement of the sculptural groups in relation to the building, and the gestures and poses of the figures inculcate cultural perceptions and ideals. While the theme of the continents might summon a notion of peaceful coexistence, the nationalistic intent of the new continent in both commerce and ethnicity is paramount. The figures reverberate across the façade in various states of mind, the most alert consciousness found in the representation of the young continent. With themes of history, geography, and race in the exterior ornamentation, Gilbert, French, and the other craftsmen imparted the precious contemporary values of civic order, harmony, and unity.

Proceeding up the stairway, through the palatial archway portal and into the building, a space of quiet repose and dignity is apparent (Fig. 17). The symmetrical hallway, with finishes in rose, cream and green marble, terminates in spiral staircases, and rises two stories to groin vaults that are decorated with Pompeian-like paintings of America's bounty by Elmer Garnsey (1862-1946), a painter with whom Gilbert had previously worked (Figs. 18 & 19).²⁶ Down the hall on the right is the Collector's Reception Office, considered at the time to be more imposing than the offices of the Secretary of the Treasury and of the President of the United States, "in short, the handsomest public office in America," with its gold-coffered ceiling, mahogany doors, and hand-carved oak wainscoting by Tiffany and Company (Fig. 20).²⁷ In the office are ten Garnsey paintings of seventeenth-century Dutch ports. A conflicting sensation of simplicity and monumentality is ever-present as the other corridors and offices are plain and generally unremarkable, adorned with the nautical motif that reminds the visitor of the building's link to sea trade (Fig. 21).

The ceremonial center of business and power is the rotunda, entered by passing through monolithic marble columns opposite the entrance (Fig. 22). Though Gilbert's reason for placing an elliptical rotunda in a trapezoidal structure is unclear, both the Rogers, and the Town and Davis Customs Houses had rotundas for the processing of revenue. Engineered by Spanish-American Rafael Gustavino (1842-1908), the sky lit rotunda had, at the time, the largest solid masonry dome in the world, the Pantheon being a close second.²⁸ Its dramatic beauty and massive scale—one hundred thirty-



Fig. 16 Giambattista Tiepolo, *America*, detail of ceiling fresco of the staircase, 1753. Residenz, Wurzburg. Courtesy of Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

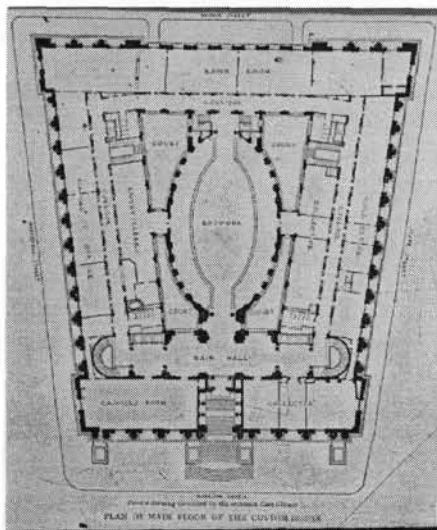


Fig. 17 Cass Gilbert, plan, main floor, United States Customs House, 1900-1907. De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," 1906.



Fig. 18 The Great Hall, United States Customs House, 1900-1907, photograph by David Heald. Courtesy of the United States General Services Administration.



Fig. 19 Elmer Garnsey, *America's Bounty*, United States Customs House, c. 1905. Photograph by David Heald. Courtesy of the United States General Services Administration.

Fig. 20 Collector's Office, United States Customs House, c. 1905. Photograph by David Heald. Courtesy of the United States General Services Administration.

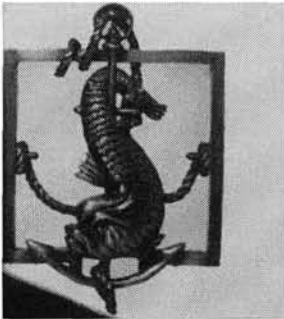
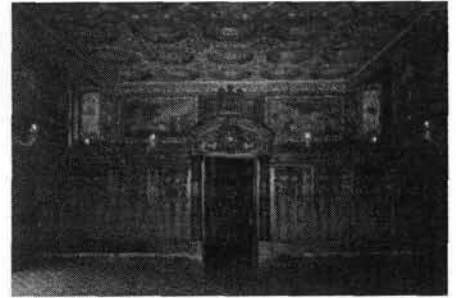
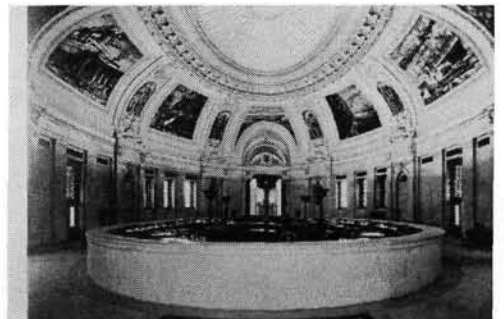


Fig. 21 Nautical Ornament, United States Customs House, bronze. Photograph by David Heald. Courtesy of the United States General Services Administration.

Fig. 22 View of Rotunda, United States Customs House. Courtesy of the United States General Services Administration.



five feet long, eighty-five feet wide, and forty-eight feet high—preserve and enhance the architectural essence of harmony and unity. Though Gilbert had envisioned a mural scheme in the rotunda panels, it appears that after spending \$5,130,000 on the building (French received \$13,500 and the land cost was \$2.5 million), the government refused to allocate further funds. It was not until the 1930s, when the federal government once again had an interest in patronizing the arts, that the full glory of the space would be realized.

The communal and symbolic significance of mural painting made it an important art form throughout the American Renaissance, but with the advent of the First World War, it was virtually abandoned. In the early thirties, the artist George Biddle believed that American artists could produce a mural art of vital, national expression, modeled on the Mexican Mural Renaissance. In late 1933, Biddle's friend and former classmate, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), established the domestic reform program designed to provide recovery and relief from the Great Depression. Known as the New Deal, the program intended to provide opportunities for needy artists to produce public projects. Under the administration of the Treasury Department, which at the time was responsible for federal buildings, several separate agencies were created to allocate funds for artwork, such as the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), the Works Projects Administration/Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP), and the Section of Painting and Sculpture (The Section).²⁹ In July 1935, The Section, with a grant from the WPA, set up the Treasury Relief Art Program (TRAP), with an initial distribution of \$531,000 to be used for the decoration of extant federal buildings.³⁰ Though seventy-five percent of the artists were required to be relief-eligible, Section director Edward Bruce, himself a painter, art collector, lawyer, and businessman, demanded high artistic standards of TRAP participants. With an emphasis on competence over need, TRAP selected one of New York's leading painters to finally complete Gilbert's temple.

Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), who had recently completed two successful TRAP murals for the Post Office at Washington, D.C., was not an acknowledged mural painter, yet his talent and ability to appease the bureaucracy was apparent and he was offered the Customs House project in 1936.³¹ Marsh, a painter who reflected on the raw realities and vigorous aspects of modern, primarily urban, American life, used a vocabulary of objective vision and acute observation. His realistic idiom and the practice of deriving material from the local environment for his imagery fulfilled TRAP's strict demand for representational accuracy. This new government-approved art, designed to express national sentiments and instill pride, was different from the turn-of-the-century mural tradition of idealization and allegory. Instead, a documentary interpretation of the social landscape was endorsed, and an artist like Marsh, who characteristically articulated humanity and modernity, was preferred. Though Marsh was apolitical and detached from the radicalism of his times, and he did not affiliate with the current Regionalist or Social Realist tendencies in American art, his acquiescence to contemporary institutional values is reminiscent of Gilbert and French's prior compliance.

In the Customs House, Marsh pictures the successive stages in the arrival of ships into New York harbor, still America's leading port. The subject for the "contemporary saga, [which is] both actual and epic," was determined through discussions with TRAP chief, Olin Dows.³² Scenes depicting vital ports of the world, present-day customs procedures, or famous explorers (the third one being what Dow assumed "Cass Gilbert had in mind ... [though] it seems to me the weakest of the three") were all considered.³³ In the eight small vertical panels in the dome, explorers' names were

inscribed in Gilbert's time, making Dow's assessment at least partially accurate. Despite Marsh's desire to reproduce the poop decks of antique galleons in the small spaces, TRAP officials condescended to the dead architect and demanded that the painter depict figures associated with maritime exploration of the New World, preferably in *grisaille* or line drawing.

Though these small panels are secondary to the swirling energy of the boat scenes painted in vivid color and precise detail in the larger rotunda spaces, they serve as a link between American Renaissance and New Deal representation, as suggested in their production, form, and content (Fig. 23). Painted in dry fresco, their *grisaille* quality lends a conventional appearance to the historicized portraits, which include Adriaen Block, Giovanni da Verrazano, Christopher Columbus, Estevan Gomez, John Cabot, Gasper Cortereal, Amerigo Vespucci, and Henry Hudson.³⁴ Marsh, who had spent time in Europe studying the work of Michelangelo, Rubens, and other Old Masters, borrowed from classical precedent for these explorers, each of whom are volumetric in form and set in niche-like spaces.³⁵ For Hudson, the artist adapted ideas from Frans Hals; Verrazano is dressed in the attire found in Titian's Duke of Urbino, and Block is borrowed from Rubens' painting of Maximilian II. The tone and posture in each mural is similar, with the animated figures attempting to step out of their niches. This portraiture, though conventional in material expression and iconographic form, caricatures these venerable adventurers and serves to balance Marsh's real-life imagery of "contemporary shipping, [painted] with a rich and real power, neither like the story telling or propagandist painting which everyone does."³⁶

The great spectacle of New York's port had long fascinated the artist and his ornate, richly painted narrative in the large spaces attests to a man who was exhilarated by the dynamism, light, and drama of the maritime world. He was well acquainted with this subject, and stated, upon being awarded the commission, that he had "... in the past painted dozens of water-colors around New York Harbor and would like to get at it with some of this knowledge."³⁷ The panels, encased in decorative Beaux-Arts moldings, have concave, trapezoidal surfaces, and their unusual shape challenged the artist to overcome optical distortion. They were painted in dry fresco by the artist and a staff of eight in just over three months in the fall of 1937, after months of preparing the walls and finalizing the scheme with the Supervising Architect, Collector of Customs, and TRAP officials.³⁸ Marsh readily conformed to the institutional criterion of realistic and optimistic national imagery, and though his murals are powerful and respond well to their *milieu*, they are more exceptional in their formal expression than in their iconographic complexity.

The reportorial quality and linear progression of the narrative mimics a cinematic excursion through customs practice. The first panel, on the north wall, *The S.S. Washington Entering the Port of New York Showing Ambrose Lightship*, portrays the first marker after Nantucket, which identifies the main deep water entrance for marine commerce, being passed by the large American liner, the only native ship included in the cycle (Fig. 24).³⁹ Panel two, *Pilot Boat New York Delivers Pilot Aboard HMS Queen Mary*, presents a pilot ascending the rigging to assist in guiding the foreign liner to port. The recession of the ship into the picture plane is bold and dramatic (Fig. 25). *Coast Guard Cutter Calumet Carrying Reporters, Immigration Officials, Doctors, and VIPs Aboard S.S. Washington*, is the next panel (Fig. 26). The role of the professional ship-news reporter, who is pictured as equivalent to personnel significant to national security, was to interview celebrities and entertain the American public.⁴⁰ Panel four, whose obliquely painted



Fig. 23 Reginald Marsh, *Giovanni da Verrazano*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

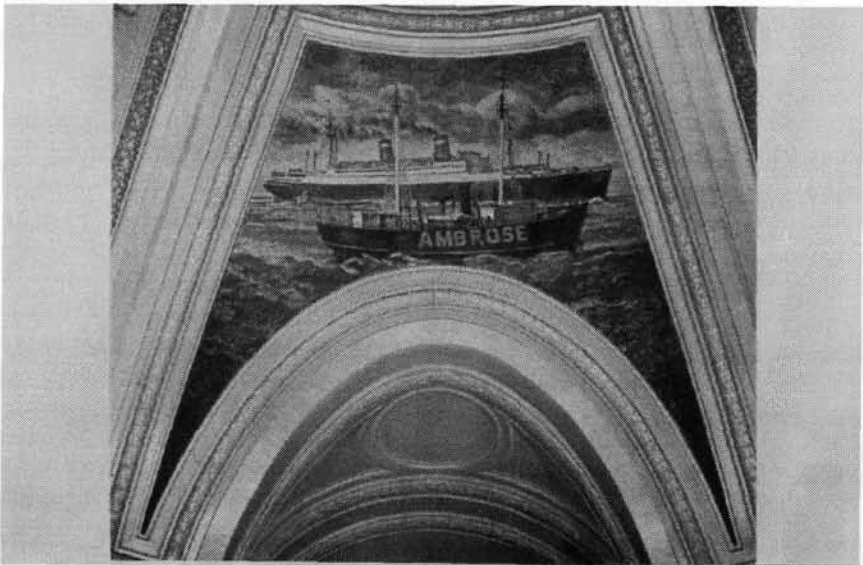


Fig. 24 Reginald Marsh, *S.S. Washington Entering the Port of New York Showing Ambrose Lightship*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

boat contrasts with the odd shape of the panel, depicts *Customs Officials Boarding S. S. Bremen* to inspect approximately ten percent of the merchandise, a standard customs practice (Fig. 27). Opposite the entry is *The Queen Mary Steaming Up New York Harbor*. Bartholdi's colossal Statue of Liberty overlooks the city skyline, and would be seen by foreign visitors not only upon entry into the port, but also when arriving at Gilbert's building to pay taxes to Uncle Sam (Fig. 28). Here, Marsh conjoins the notion of liberty with urbanism, progress, and America's (and New York's) commercial significance. In *The Press Interviewing Notables as the Queen Mary Enters the Harbor*, Greta Garbo is being swarmed by the paparazzi (Fig. 29). Commerce, industry, women, film, and popular culture, all areas that interested Marsh, are portrayed here. The center panel on the west wall depicts the world's fastest and largest ship, *The S.S. Normandie Being Warped into Her Berth by Moran Tugs* (Fig. 30). It was this panel in particular, with the French liner being "serviced" by American tugs, that caused Joseph P. Kennedy, Chairman of the United States Maritime Commission, to complain to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau. He felt that "the use of foreign flag vessels in the dome of the United States Customs House appears to us obviously inconsistent with the Government's efforts to develop and encourage patronage and support for United States flag vessels."⁴¹ Though Morgenthau supported Dow and Marsh's conception, the artist attempted to cynically appease the nationalistic objective of his detractors by painting over the name of the vessel with paint that lacked binder. Within months, the foreign vessel's name reemerged. In the final mural, *Unloading an Auto from Superliner Rex* (an Italian ship), America's most salient status symbol, the car, is correlated with the harsh physicality of the shipping industry (Fig. 31). Even in a scene resplendent with labor and docking equipment, Marsh has presented a metaphor of the beauty and glory of sea trade through manipulation of color and densely composed surface pattern. In the cycle, he has set out to represent the vital role that foreign nations might play in America's progress and recovery from the Depression. More crucially, he underscores America's cultural and political equality and increasing status in the league of world powers. In his sequential narrative of past explorers and present-day industry, optimism and authority are envisioned.

Marsh's compositional strategy of constructing the work as an extension of the space would have pleased Gilbert's Beaux-Arts sensibility of integrating art within architecture. Upon entering and standing within the elliptical rotunda, the sensation of being inside a moving vessel is pronounced. The projection and recession of the immense ships on the picture planes enhance that feeling. The rich brushwork, vibrant color, rhythmic line, and oblique and bird's-eye viewpoints make the murals an extension of the space, and hence, an extension of the function and original objective of the building. Marsh's formal and iconographic response to the space extends what Michele Bogart calls the "Beaux-Arts concern that architectural sculpture [ornamentation] serve as a visual and spatial accent and as a means of expressing the broader purpose and significance of the activities housed within."⁴² Though the vocabulary had changed, the notion of unity, order, harmony, and hegemony endured.

Both Daniel Chester French and Reginald Marsh, unlikely bedfellows though they may be, were applauded for their work at the Customs House. Charles De Kay felt that the *Four Continents* were French's richest and most complex program. Marsh's fresco has been considered not only TRAP's most distinguished and complicated project, but, according to Francis O'Conner, may "quite possibly be the most comprehensive and successful mural scheme carried out under the New Deal projects," as it

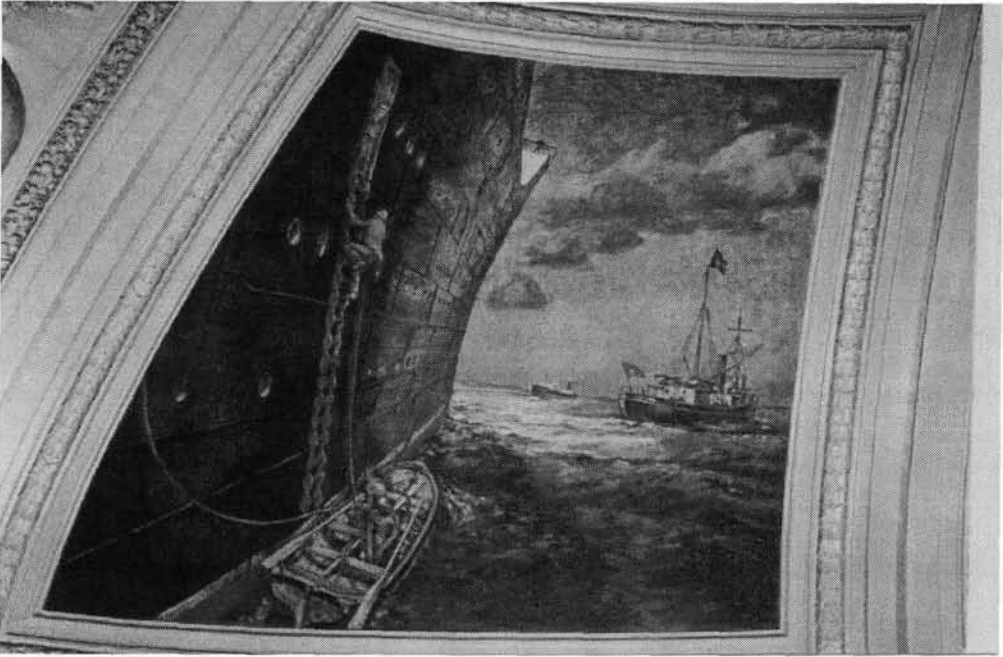


Fig. 25 Reginald Marsh, *Pilot Boat New York Delivers Pilot Aboard HMS Queen Mary*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

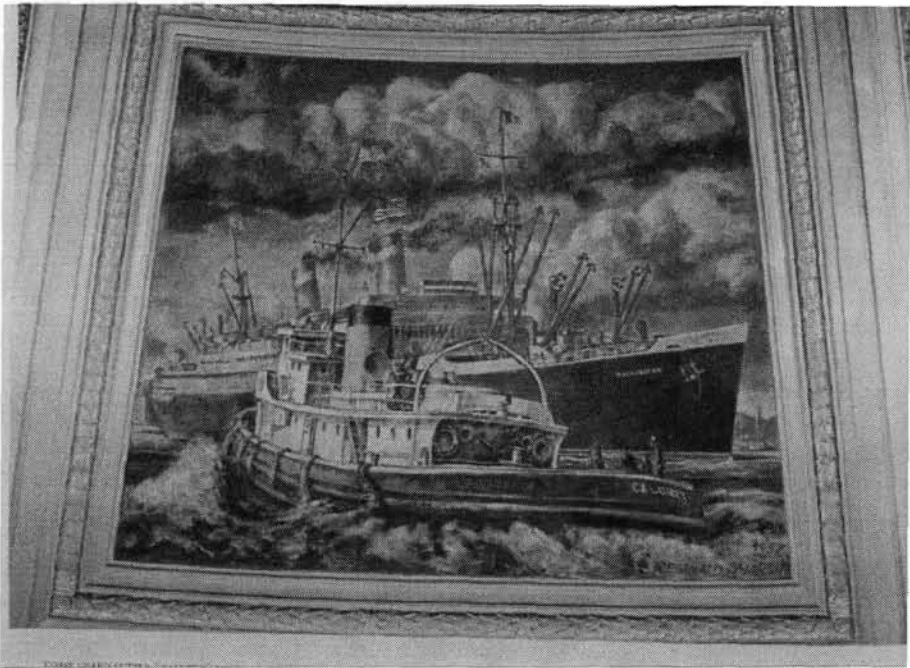


Fig. 26 Reginald Marsh, *Coast Guard Cutter Calumet Carrying Reporters, Immigration Officials, Doctors, and VIPs Aboard S.S. Washington*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco . Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

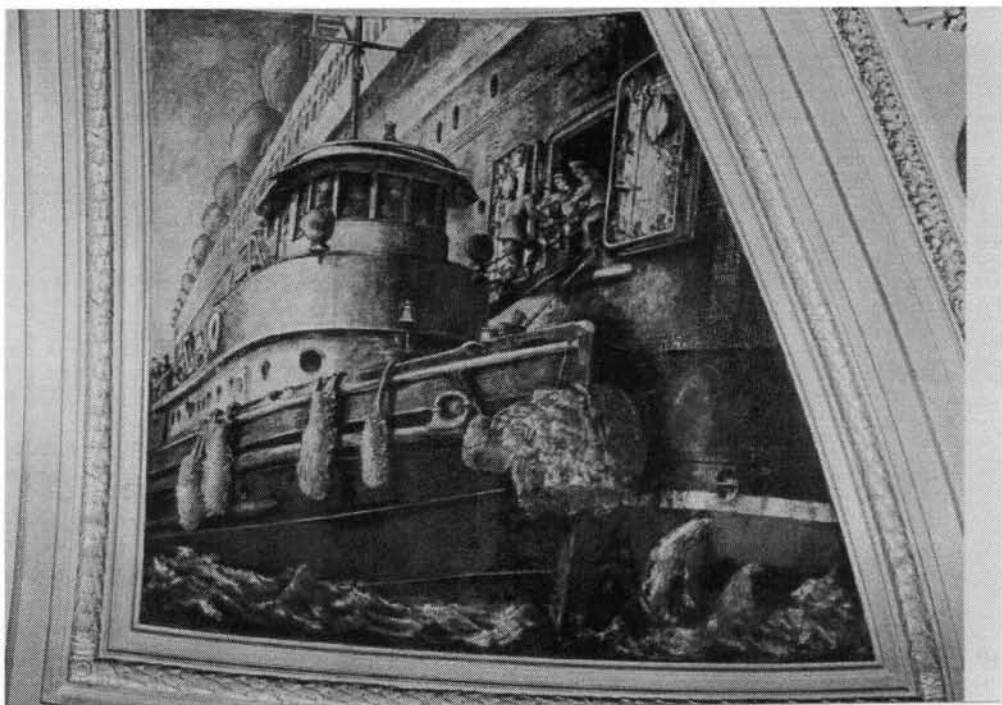


Fig. 27 Reginald Marsh, *Customs Officials Boarding S.S. Bremen*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

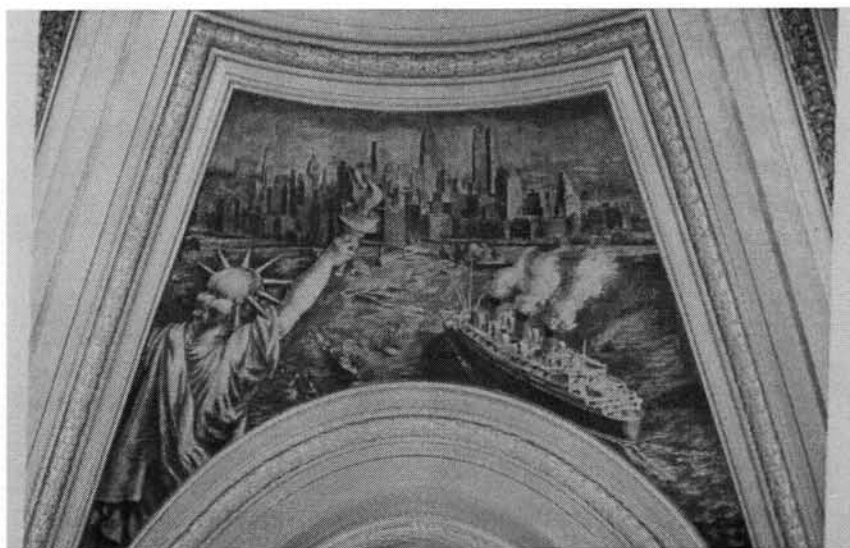


Fig. 28 Reginald Marsh, *Queen Mary Steaming Up New York Harbor*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

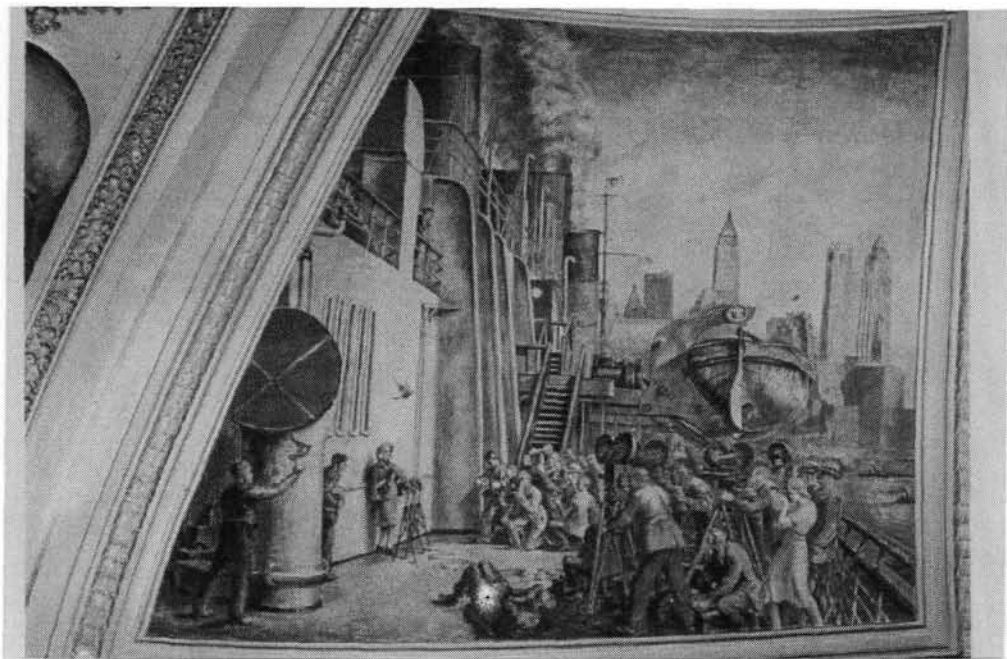


Fig. 29 Reginald Marsh, *The Press Interviewing Notables as the Queen Mary Enters the Harbor*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

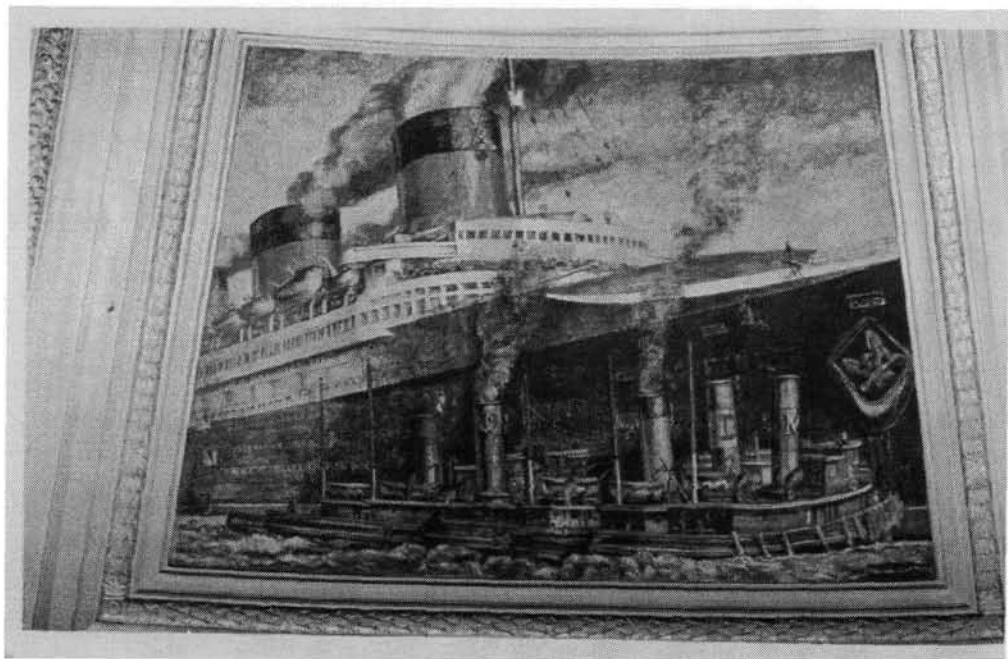


Fig. 30 Reginald Marsh, *S.S. Normandie Being Warped into her Berth by Moran Tugs*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

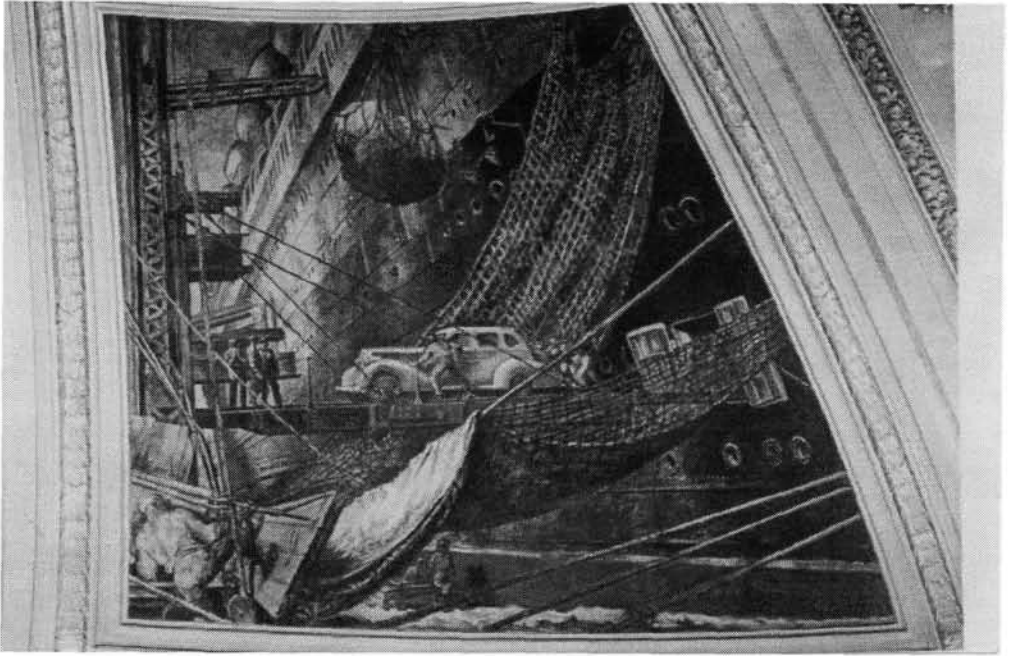


Fig. 31 Reginald Marsh, *Unloading an Auto from Superliner Rex*, United States Customs House, 1937. Dry fresco. Geoffrey Clements Archives. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

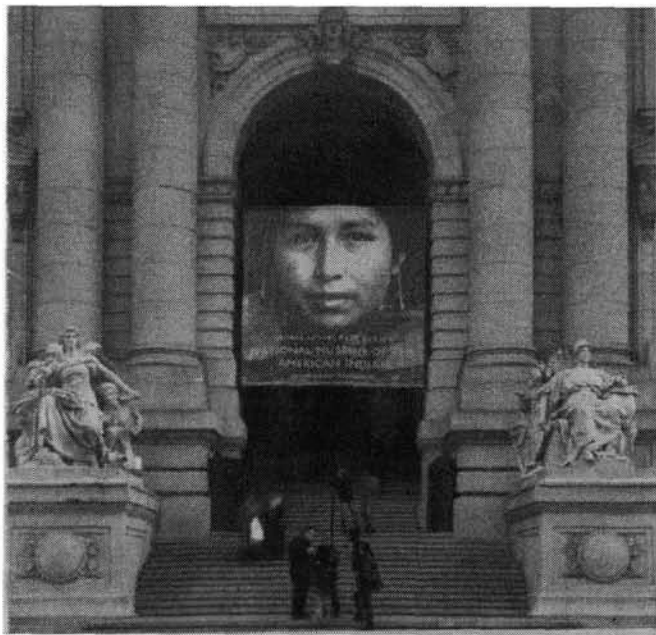


Fig. 32 Alexander Hamilton United States Customs House, The George Gustav Heye Center of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. Photograph by David Heald. Courtesy of the United States General Services Administration.

embodied the goals of social art for the people.⁴³ Each artist worked in an era when governmental patronage was an important factor for success, and they both accepted the nature and constraints of the institutional structure in order to produce cultural symbols. The sculptural and mural programs are meant to edify and enlighten the public about world history and peoples, and about America's commercial role and her expanding international power. In a virtually "encyclopedic display of world commerce and human types," the image of a unified nation is upheld.⁴⁴ Gilbert's Customs House continued to express patriotism, good citizenship, and commercial achievement, and remained a symbol of American culture and ideals throughout much of the century.

After the Customs Service moved to the World Trade Center in 1973, in a retreat that Ada Louise Huxtable characterizes as a "paradigm of modern commercial and institutional blandness," the structure remained vacant until 1994.⁴⁵ In a twist of irony, the building containing nationalistic images depicting the American Indian as a vestige of the past has become the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (Fig. 32). Cass Gilbert's Customs House at Bowling Green functions once again as a place of exchange of the ideas and symbols of humanity.

Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York

1. The Treasury Department was founded later the same year with Hamilton as its Secretary until 1795. For more information on the Customs Service, see Laurence Schmeckbier, *The Customs Service: Its History, Activities, and Organization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1924).
2. Customs were collected from foreign traders on all manner of goods that, of course, changed over the years. Items such as metals, machinery, automobiles, wood, toys, stone, live animals, and scientific equipment have been included. The service employed 3,200 people in 1909. In 1974, over 15,000 ships, 61,000 aircraft, and seven million passengers were processed by the Service, bringing in over one-third of the total United States revenue.
3. Fort Amsterdam was built in 1650 to replace an earlier earthwork fort and a subsequent 1635 stone fort. It contained within its walls a church, governor's house, barracks, storehouses, officers' quarters, and a jail.
4. George III (1738-1820) angered American patriots because of his advocacy of the *Intolerable Acts* of 1774, which limited colonists' geographical and political freedom. Joseph Wilton, a British sculptor, created the sculpture of the monarch.
5. Town and Davis's Doric temple (1834-42) is located at Wall and Nassau Streets, on the site of Pierre L'Enfant's old Federal Hall where George Washington took the oath of office in 1789. Built originally as a Customs House, it is an excellent example of New York's Greek Revival style. Roger's Ionic structure (1836-42), at the corner of Wall and William Streets, was remodeled by McKim, Mead and White for the National City Bank in 1903, and remains a bank facility today.
6. *Harper's Monthly*, Vol. 69 (June 1884), p. 38. Cited in Sharon Lee Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York, 1899-1905" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1985), p. 258.
7. The Customs House was the first New York City building designed under the Tarnsey Act that was passed on February 20, 1893 and repealed in 1912. The act stipulated a design fee of six percent of the total building cost. For more information on the act, see Michele Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 73 & 115.
8. It is interesting to note that the architect's commission for the Minnesota State Capitol came just two years after Knox joined the Treasury. For more information concerning the controversy surrounding the Customs House commission, see Irish, p. 262-96; William Towner Morgan, "The Politics of Business in the Career of an American Architect: Cass Gilbert - 1878-1905" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Min-

- nesota, 1972), p. 130-45; and Robert A. Jones, *Cass Gilbert: Midwestern Architect in New York* (New York: Arno Press, 1982), p. 82-99.
9. *Chicago Times*, October 16, 1899, cited in Morgan, p. 130. Gilbert left St. Paul for New York while still working on the Minnesota State Capitol to increase his chances of receiving the Customs House commission.
 10. Cass Gilbert, cited in Lois Craig and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1978), p. 234.
 11. Brendan Gill, *The U.S. Custom House on Bowling Green* (New York: New York Landmarks Conservancy, Inc., 1976), p. 6.
 12. Irish, p. 315. Irish contends that Gilbert repeated the design scheme of the National Library at the Customs House, with the public vestibule leading into a rotunda whose walls are surrounded by stacks. She states that both buildings organize material "for international sharing."
 13. Charles De Kay, "The New New York Custom-House," *The Century Magazine*, Vol. LXXI, no. 5 (March 1906), p. 743.
 14. Gilbert wrote this in a letter to one of the sculptors, Frank Edwin Elwell. Cited in Bonnie Marxer and Heli Meltsner, *Historic Structure Report: New York Custom House on Bowling Green, N.Y.: Its Architectural and Political History* (Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1982), p. 41.
 15. Each of these sculptors was of high repute. Some had worked at the World's Columbian or the St. Louis Exposition (Elwell, Tonetti, and Jaegers), and some were members of artistic associations, such as the National Sculpture Society (Ruckstuhl and Gelert). Though little information is available on these sculptures, a brief yet interesting article can be found in Donald M. Reynolds, *Monuments and Masterpieces: Histories and Views of Public Sculpture in New York* (New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), p. 328-337.
 16. Irish, p. 318.
 17. Michael Richman, *Daniel Chester French: An American Sculptor* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), p. 578. A detailed description of French's working methods for the Customs House project can be found in this catalogue, p. 103-108.
 18. Margot Gayle and Michele Cohen, *Manhattan's Outdoor Sculpture* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1988), p. 12. The sculptor produced the quadriga for Gilbert's Minnesota State Capitol (1896-1907) and was concurrently working on a sculpture for the St. Louis Art Museum (1903-07).
 19. Kathryn Greenthal and Michael Richman, "Daniel Chester French's Continents," *The American Art Journal*, Vol. VIII, no. 2 (November 1976), p. 55. The memorial was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott (1863-1872) and four different artists—Patrick Macdowell, John Foley, William Theed, and John Bell created the sculptures.
 20. Bogart, p. 130, remarked by Gilbert in 1916.
 21. Greenthal and Richman, p. 56-7. French wrote this on February 24, 1915, in response to a query from an F. H. M. Murray.
 22. Greenthal and Richman suggest that the Parthenon image is from slabs #IX and X.
 23. Bogart, p. 130, remarked by Gilbert in 1916.
 24. Greenthal and Richman, p. 57.
 25. This image, as part of a fresco cycle of the Four Continents, was painted for Prince-Bishop Carl Philipp von Greiffenklau. In 1764, Tiepolo completed a fresco of the same theme for the throne room of the Royal Palace of Madrid.
 26. Garnsey worked with Gilbert on the Minnesota State Capitol and the Union Club in New York City. For more information on Garnsey's decorations, see Constance S. Silver, Frank G. Malero, Richard C. Wolbers, and Joel C. Snodgrass, "U.S. Custom House, New York City: Overview of Analyses and Interpretation of Altered Architectural Finishes," *Journal of the American Institute of Conservation*, Vol. 32, no. 2 (Summer 1993).

27. L. J. De Bekker, "New York's New Custom-House," *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. LI, no. 2637 (July 6, 1907), p. 989. Other federal offices in the building included the U.S. Steamboat Inspection Service, the Weather Bureau, the Isthmian Canal Commission, the Internal Revenue Office, the Bureau of Animal Industries, the Life-Saving Service, and the Departments of Labor and Commerce.
28. The rotunda weighs over 140 tons and is made of tile.
29. Much information is available on the New Deal Art Programs. An excellent source is Francis O'Conner, *The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1972).
30. TRAP employed a total of 259 relief and 69 non-relief artists who produced 85 murals (17 in New York), 35 sculptures, and over 10,000 easel paintings before the program dissolved in June 1938.
31. The Post Office mural was the first TRAP program. Painted in fresco, they show the transfer of mail from an ocean liner and sorting of mail in a post office. For more information on Marsh, see Lloyd Goodrich, *Marsh* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, n.d.) and Marilyn Cohen, *Reginald Marsh's New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1983).
32. Norman Sasowsky, *The Prints of Reginald Marsh* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976), p.13.
33. Olin Dows, from *Reginald Marsh Papers*, Roll D-309, #1722, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution of Art.
34. Block, Dutch, active 1610-24; Verrazano, Italian, c. 1480-1527; Columbus, Italian, 1451-1506; Gomez, Portuguese, active 1525-1534; Cabot, English, active 1461-98; Cortereal, Portuguese, c. 1450-1501; Vespucci, Italian, 1454-1512; and Hudson, English, active 1607-11.
35. Marsh was born in Europe, and made seven trips there between 1925 and 1953. He was also fond of the work of Titian, Leonardo, Raphael, and Rembrandt.
36. Marxer and Meltsner, p. 125.
37. Marxer and Meltsner, p. 125. In planning for the murals, Marsh was given access to piers and ships of both American and European companies and spent time sketching and photographing the objects and activity of the industry.
38. Marsh was paid only 90¢ per hour, and after hiring fresco authority Ollie Nordmark at his own expense, he apparently lost money on the project. The artist and his assistants, who were paid \$1.60 per hour, worked more than TRAP's required 96 hours per month in order to complete the project so rapidly. The frescoes were painted from 14-foot high scaffolds and cover 2,500 square feet of wall.
39. For more information on the Ambrose and the Port of New York, see Fiorello H. LaGuardia, *A Maritime History of New York* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1941) and Stuart A. Jones, "Here's New York Harbor," *National Geographic Magazine*, Vol. CVI, no. 6 (December 1954), p. 773-814.
40. For information on the ship-news reporter, see Greg Storey, "Newshounds of the Harbor," *Seaport* (Fall 1944), p. 6-11.
41. Francis V. O'Conner, "The New Deal Murals in New York," *Artforum*, Vol. VII, no. 3 (November 1968), p. 49.
42. Bogart, p. 115.
43. O'Conner, "The New Deal Murals in New York," p. 48.
44. Irish, p. 277.
45. Ada Louise Huxtable, "New Custom House: Modern, Functional, No Match for the Old," *New York Times*, October 4, 1973, p. 47.

Folklorist of Brush and Palette: Winold Reiss and Harlem

Sydelle Rubin

In recent years various definitions of the Harlem Renaissance have been circulating amongst scholars in an attempt to clarify the geographical breadth and temporal scope of this pivotal movement in American cultural history. The one element upon which most agree, however, is that central to this movement was the vital African-American community existing in Harlem between 1920 and 1930. Given this consistency it is perhaps surprising to discover that one of the primary contributors residing at the very core of the visual arts production of the Harlem Renaissance was neither an African-American nor even an American but rather the German-born modernist named Winold Reiss (1886-1953) (Fig. 1). The fact that Alain Locke, a Howard University professor of philosophy and one of the primary facilitators of the New Negro Arts Movement, selected Winold Reiss to be his collaborator on *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925), a book still regarded as one of the most important cultural anthologies of the Harlem Renaissance, is largely overlooked by current scholarship. This erasure and denial of Reiss' presence is reflected by the fact that all subsequent reprints of *The New Negro*, including the most recent 1997 edition, have elected to expunge Reiss' artwork from the landmark anthology. Why did Locke choose Reiss? What inspired him to entrust this "outsider" to visualize and represent black culture?

Alain Locke first worked with Winold Reiss in the fall of 1924. As guest editor of a special issue of Paul Kellogg's social welfare journal *Survey Graphic* entitled "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," Locke selected Reiss to portray the major figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Duly impressed by the results of this collaboration, Locke asked Reiss to be the featured artist and oversee the art layout, including the cover design, logotypes, and illustrations of *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. Locke repeatedly came under attack for this choice. Several members of the black press argued that Reiss' portraits were "unrepresentative" of the African-American populace. One Mr. Williams in discussing Reiss' one-man show at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library entitled, "Exhibition of Recent Portraits of Representative New Negroes" claimed that Reiss portrayed *Two Public Schoolteachers* (1924) (Fig. 2) in tones that were too dark and said, "Should (I) meet those two school teachers in the street, (I) would be afraid of them."¹ In contrast, painter and critic O. Richard Reid in his review of *Survey Graphic's* "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" denigrated Reiss' portrait of Elise McDougald (1885-1971) (Fig. 3) for lacking "any of that soul and richness of color she possesses."²

This paper will argue that these criticisms were unfounded and that despite his absence in current Harlem Renaissance discourse, Reiss was in fact entrenched in the New Negro movement. Furthermore, Reiss assumed the role of what anthropologist James Clifford has termed an "ethnographic modernist," for Reiss conducted "fieldwork" in Harlem and sought to produce a visual essay that employed his idiosyncratic modern style to document Harlem's diverse community in addition to the first generation of the twentieth century's black intelligentsia. Locke risked criticism for choosing Reiss, because he believed that Reiss advanced new possibilities for representing the diversity of the African-American populace, the legacy of African culture, and the modernity



Fig. 1 Winold Reiss drawing a Harlem resident in his studio at 108 W. 16th Street.



Fig. 2 Winold Reiss, *Two Public Schoolteachers*, 1924. Pastel on board, 80.01 x 59.06 (31 1/2 x 23 1/4 in.). Fisk University Museum of Art, Nashville, Tennessee.



Fig. 3 Winold Reiss, *Elise Johnson McDougald* (1885-1971), 1924. Pastel on board, 76.36 x 54.77 cm. (30 1/16 x 21 9/16 in.). National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; gift of Lawrence A. Fleischman and Howard Garfinkle with a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

embodied by Harlem and African-Americans. One of the hidden agendas of *The New Negro* was to inspire young black artists to develop a modern aesthetic that culled from African art. In his essay, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," Locke identified an African presence in the work of Europe's avant-garde (ie. Picasso, Modigliani, Matisse, Archipenko, Derain, Utrillo) and urged African-American artists to take inspiration from their own heritage arguing that this legacy was rightfully their own.³ This paper will demonstrate that Locke upheld Reiss' form of Africanist modernism as a model for young artists such as Aaron Douglas.

Winold Reiss' ethnographic bent derived in part from his formative experiences and training within an early-twentieth-century Germany. Reiss was born on September 16, 1886 in Karlsruhe. During his childhood, Reiss traveled throughout Germany with his father, Fritz Mahler Reiss (1857-1914), a Düsseldorf Academy-trained portraitist, watching and learning from the elder Reiss as he sought out regional sitters for his picturesque peasant portraits. Fritz Reiss' quest for diverse sitters set an early example for his son, igniting the younger Reiss' interest in portraying "others" which he would later channel into a less romantic and more studied ethnographic pursuit. Reiss attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich from 1911 until 1913 where he became

familiar with Fauvism, German Expressionism, Cubism, and the Blaue Reiter. He also had access to extensive collections of African art and artifacts at several ethnographic museums as well as exhibitions of African-informed Modern Art.⁴ Under the tutelage of Munich Secessionist Franz von Stuck (1863-1928), Reiss' artistic direction diverged from his father's traditional manner.⁵ Stuck emphasized an appreciation of form for its own sake divorced from content or meaning; the play of surface and line; unnaturalistic color and abstract motifs; and psychologically effective compositions.⁶ Acceptance into Stuck's class was a significant achievement in the eyes of the art world. Hans Purrmann, a Stuck student who later became associated with Henri Matisse and the Cafe du Dome group in Paris, recalled that "...to be accepted in (Stuck's) class was a proof of recognition of a talent of which one could be proud."⁷ Mentorship from Stuck was prized so highly that Wassily Kandinsky, after an initial rejection, campaigned for an entire year in order to gain admission. In addition, Reiss in all probability first read the writings of the prolific German Africanist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938) while studying in Munich. Frobenius wrote many articles and pamphlets and sixty books, including *Und Afrika Sprach* (*The Voice of Africa*, 3 volumes, 1912-1913). Frobenius denounced false perceptions of the so-called "Dark Continent" and the fiction that Black Africa lacked a history and civilization.⁸ On the occasion of the centennial celebration of Frobenius' birth, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the world-renowned poet of Negritude, stated in the forward of an anthology of Frobenius' major works, "No one did more than Frobenius to reveal Africa to the world and to Africans themselves."⁹

In October 1913, Reiss immigrated to the United States hoping to paint the Native Americans he had read about as a young boy in James Fenimore Cooper's tales of the American frontier.¹⁰ Over the subsequent years, Reiss' initial romantic approach to type portraiture, rooted in boyhood dreams and fantasy, evolved into a serious, ethnographic pursuit. By 1919, Reiss had raised enough money to travel west and made his first trip to Browning, Montana to paint the Blackfeet.¹¹ In 1920, Reiss made a study trip to Mexico where he portrayed descendants of the Aztecs for a special *Survey Graphic* number about Mexico.¹² Facilitators of the Harlem Renaissance quickly recognized Reiss' capacity for ethnographic portraiture. In 1924, Charles Spurgeon Johnson (1893-1956) of the National Urban League commissioned Reiss to create artwork for *Opportunity* magazine. By 1925, Reiss was entrenched in the "New Negro Arts Movement" — a scrupulously orchestrated movement that set its sights on bringing African-American social issues to the nation's attention and eradicating stereotypes by creating new portrayals of African-Americans in the twentieth century. In that year alone, Reiss collaborated on "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" and *The New Negro*. Moreover, Harlem's 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library featured Reiss in a one-man show entitled "Exhibition of Recent Portraits of Representative Negroes."¹³

Locke's particular conception of the "New Negro" was complex yet Reiss was successful in capturing its many facets in the images he created. Perhaps the most well-known aspect of this vision is the concept of racial uplift. Locke intended to communicate the emergence of a class of New Negroes who were articulate, intelligent, talented, proud of their heritage, noble, and modern. His anthology — a forum that showcased poetry, fiction, African art, portraits of New Negroes, and critical essays on art and society — announced that black writers and artists were emerging from their historical invisibility. Locke believed that Reiss' visual imagery could be used in support of this cultural revolution. Not surprisingly, Reiss included the twentieth-century's first generation of African-American intelligentsia and cultural elite in his

Harlem *oeuvre*, creating images of philosophers such as Alain Locke (1925) and William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (c. 1925), artists including actor Paul Robeson (1924) and poet Countee Cullen (c. 1925), and social welfare organizers such as Charles Spurgeon Johnson (c. 1925) and Elise Johnson McDougald (1924).

The pastel portraits of Johnson and McDougald exhibit many of the elements common to Reiss' depictions of the Renaissance notables (Figs. 3 & 4). Reiss employed a dramatic technique in which he contrasted a veristic representation of his sitter's head and hands with a minimalist outline of clothing and set the figures against an empty white background. Due to this intentional refrain from detail in the clothes and background, Reiss draws our focus to his sitter's individual and racial traits—meticulously describing the furrow above Johnson's browline, replicating the textures of his smooth skin and black hair, the volumes of his full nose and lips, the tones of his brown complexion, and the raised veins on his hands. In contrast, Johnson's jacket is merely sketched with a few lines. Similarly, Reiss offers very little description of McDougald's context or clothed torso—her dress is colorless and textureless to our eyes. Once again, the background is an empty, white vacuum. Instead, Reiss elects to emphasize her intense facial expression.



Fig. 4 Winold Reiss, *Charles Spurgeon Johnson* (1893-1956), c. 1925. Pastel on board, 76.36 x 54.77 cm. (30 1/16 x 21 9/16 in.). National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; gift of Lawrence A. Fleischman and Howard Garfinkle with a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Asociologist by training, Dr. Charles Spurgeon Johnson was a leading authority on urban race relations and served as Director of Research and Records for the Chicago Urban League and Director of Research for the National Urban League in New York City.¹⁴ In 1923, Johnson founded the Urban League's *Opportunity* which he edited from 1923 until 1928. This periodical represented a major cultural force and catalyzed the blossoming of the New Negro movement, publishing African-American poets and writers of the period, organizing literary contests and award ceremonies, promoting black talent and fostering interrelations by encouraging white publishers to support black writers and artists. Strategizing that the New Negro movement needed the patronage of the white publishing establishment in order to gain national exposure, Johnson orchestrated the historic meeting of black and white literati on March 21, 1924 at the Civic Club in Manhattan which would ignite interrelations between uptown and downtown literary forces and inspired several offshoots—most notably *Survey Graphic*'s "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro."

Johnson was one of Reiss' initial Harlem supporters. In January 1925, Johnson publicly introduced Reiss to Harlem and the New Negro community on the pages of *Opportunity*. Johnson's article entitled, "The Art of Winold Reiss" described Reiss as a visual interpreter of the various shades of African-American culture, a German who possessed a:

...passionate interest in contemporary Negro life from which has come the inspiration to record this life with faithfulness to reality and grasp the elusive beauty of rhythmic and color harmony which are singularly his.¹⁵

As the editor of *Opportunity* magazine, Johnson continued to promote Reiss as a contributor to the ferment of the Harlem Renaissance, featuring the artist's work in numerous issues of *Opportunity* and inviting the artist to dinners honoring the prize winners of *Opportunity* literary contests.¹⁶

One of Harlem's unsung heroines, Elise Johnson McDougald (1885-1971) was educated at Columbia University and had an illustrious career as a leader in the women's movement, a sociologist, a labor union organizer, and the first black female principal in New York City. In McDougald's essay entitled, "The Task of Negro Womanhood," which appeared in *The New Negro* opposite a reproduction of Reiss' portrait, she assayed working conditions for black women of various socioeconomic backgrounds and assumed the task of transforming their objectification, revealing her own experience as a black woman and elaborating on the meaning of being perceived as an object.¹⁷ Speaking on behalf of African-American women who were, in 1920s America, doubly prejudiced against in 1920s America, she wrote:

She realizes that the ideals of beauty, built up in the fine arts, exclude her almost entirely. Instead, the grotesque Aunt Jemimas of the street-car advertisements proclaim only an ability to serve, without grace or loveliness. Nor does the drama catch her finest spirit. She is most often used to provoke the mirthless laugh of ridicule; or to portray feminine viciousness or vulgarity not peculiar to Negroes. This is the shadow over her. To a race naturally sunny comes the twilight of self-doubt and a sense of personal inferiority.¹⁸

In her writings, McDougald argued that black women could be both beautiful and intelligent, and she debunked motion-picture driven stereotypes that black women

could only amount to maids or prostitutes. Despite the fact that Reiss did not share McDougald's gender and ethnic identity, his portrait dignifies black womanhood and combats prejudices. McDougald is not displayed as an inhuman object of erotic fantasy or racial otherness. Reiss refuses to play into voyeuristic dynamics, and there is no suggestion of an exploitive exchange between artist and model. Instead, donning a conservative, long-sleeved, round-necked garment that covers her body, McDougald addresses the viewer with a direct glance. This cool, calm, knowing look appears to challenge viewers to see beyond stereotypes of black women. McDougald's appearance is understated yet beautiful, and a contemporary photograph, featured in the January, 1925 issue of *Opportunity*, reveals that Reiss did not enhance or idealize these features in his translation. Instead Reiss presented McDougald just as she presented herself—as a professional—poised, hair pulled back neatly with a silver streak connoting her maturity and wisdom. One must not underestimate Reiss' progressiveness; he created a portrait of a black, female intellectual during a period when invisibility and objectification plagued black women and the search for iconic heroines was crucial to black feminist politics. In addition to McDougald, Reiss depicted Mary Jane McLeod Bethune (1925), Dr. Coleman (c. 1925), and Zora Neale Hurston (c. 1925).

An intriguing pictorial element that appears in both of these and many of Reiss' portraits are the soft, pastel contours tracing the periphery of the sitter. These concentric silhouettes which outline his figures create an aura-like, halo effect as if to deify the "New Negroes." The possible spiritual connotations of Reiss' technique were first noted by Jeffrey Stewart in his analysis of Reiss' representations of the Oberammergau passion players of Black Forest (Fig. 5), Germany created several years prior to his Harlem work, during the artist's return trip to his native land in 1922. Stewart has suggested that "the whiteness of the Passion Player portraits represents Reiss' attempt to communicate the otherworldliness of his subjects, who had apparently been transformed by their roles in the play."¹⁹ I maintain that in his New Negro portraits, Reiss replaced the whiteness referred to by Stewart with this halo effect to communicate his subjects' spiritual transformation. This ennobling effect resonates with Locke's mission of racial uplift.

Reiss and Locke's conception of the "New Negro" penetrated well beyond this top layer of African-American notables. The two consistently highlighted the heterogeneity of the Harlem community. Locke's opening essay in "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," for example, evoked this picture of diversity. He wrote:

Here in Manhattan is not merely the largest Negro community in the world, but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life. It has attracted the African, the West Indian, the Negro American; has brought together the Negro of the North and the Negro of the South; the man from the city and the man from the town and village.²⁰

I maintain that Reiss' efforts to portray the variety of Harlem's inhabitants are extensive enough and his process is sufficiently rigorous so that this subset of images from Reiss' Harlem *oeuvre* may be viewed as a visual ethnographic document of 1920's Harlem. To substantiate this claim one must first understand the concept of ethnography as it stood in America in the early half of this century. The primary school of thought during this time period emanated from the Columbia University anthropologist Franz Boas and his students. Contrary to the romantic, armchair pursuits of late-nineteenth



Fig. 5 Winold Reiss, *Oberammergau Christ* (Anton Lang), 1922. Colored pencil on board. Renate Reiss.

century anthropologists, Boas championed a fieldwork approach.²¹ This approach was further developed by Bronislaw Malinowski.²² The goal to be achieved through this rigorous fieldwork methodology was a scientifically verifiable depiction of the community under study.

Recent anthropological theory has brought this pursuit of scientific objectivity into question. In particular, the anthropologist James Clifford in developing his concept of "ethnographic modernity" refers to this as the "myth of fieldwork." The fieldwork process as outlined by Boas and Malinowski requires: complete immersion in the culture under study, arduous training in language, and banishment of all personal and cultural biases on the part of the observer. These ideals, according to Clifford, are rarely met in practice. Furthermore, Clifford questions the concept of cultures existing as clearly distinct units that may be captured by observation alone. Interpretation is inherent, and increasingly in the twentieth century, cultures overlap. In analyzing a poem by William Carlos Williams, Clifford refers to this as the "predicament" of "ethnographic modernity: ethnographic because Williams finds himself off center amongst scattered traditions: modernity since the condition of rootlessness and mobility he confronts is an increasingly common fate."²³ Clifford's theory allows for the expansion of the practice of ethnography to include poets and artists. In his words, ethnography is "simply diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation."²⁴

Reiss' portraits of unnamed sitters, due to his fieldwork approach and the images' documentary style, comfortably fit Clifford's definition of ethnography. Although there are no direct links between Reiss and Boas, two of Boas' students—Melville J. Herskovits and Zora Neale Hurston—were contributors to *The New Negro* and active members of the Harlem Renaissance community. In addition, connections may be drawn between Boas and several of the Harlem Renaissance notables with whom Reiss collaborated. In particular, Boas opened the eyes of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and Alain Locke to the validation of their African heritage.²⁵ In 1906, years before Du Bois helped organize the Pan African Congress (1919) and Locke asked African Americans to mine their African heritage in "The Legacy of Our Ancestral Arts" (1925), Du Bois invited Boas to deliver the commencement address at Atlanta University. Boas took this opportunity to assert the depth of African cultures. Du Bois later reflected upon the occasion in *Black Folk Then and Now*:

Franz Boas came to Atlanta University where I was teaching history in 1906 and said to a graduating class: You need not be ashamed of your African past; and then he recounted the history of black kingdoms south of the Sahara for a thousand years. I was too astonished to speak. All of this I had never heard and I came then and afterwards to realize how the silence and neglect of science can let truth utterly disappear or even be unconsciously distorted.²⁶

George Hutchinson's 1995 study *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* has revealed that Boas' direct involvement in shaping the New Negro movement extended beyond this isolated incident. We now know that Boas wrote Columbia University colleague Felix Adler about establishing an African museum in the United States in order "to help combat racism and raise self-esteem of African Americans."²⁷ Furthermore, Hutchinson has credited Boas' focus on sub-Saharan Africa as opposed to Egypt and Ethiopia with presaging the Harlem Renaissance's focus on West African

cultural heritage. He has also elaborated on Boas' level of participation in the New Negro movement as the contributing anthropologist for *Crisis*... a position secured after he delivered a paper at the Second National Negro Conference of May 1910, through which the NAACP was founded.²⁸

Alain Locke, in his essay "The Eleventh Hour of Nordicism", paid homage to Boas. He emphasized how, unlike the majority of both black and white sociologists who "side-stepped...the race question," Boas was unafraid to forge new directions:

That this situation is finally changing after nearly two decades dominated by such attitudes is due to the influence of just a few strong dissenting influences, - the most important of which has come from the militant but unquestionably scientific school of anthropologists captained by Professor Boas. They have dared, in season and out, to challenge false doctrine and conventional myths, and were the first to bring the citadel of Nordicism into range of scientific encirclement and bombardment. An essay in itself could be written on the slow but effective pressure that now has ringed the Nordic doctrines and their advocates round with an ever-tightening scientific blockade.²⁹

Hence, as Boas impacted African-American leaders who collaborated closely with Reiss, it is reasonable to surmise that Boas' philosophy was the subject of discussion.

Furthermore, there is reason to believe that Boas exerted considerable influence in shaping Reiss' process. Reiss consistently employed a fieldwork methodology in creating his paintings of other cultures. Prior to his Harlem work, he purposely traveled to the locations where his sitters resided (Montana, Mexico, Germany). We also know that Reiss took great pains to document his sitters' identities prior to creating the images. Reiss' Blackfeet portraits, for example, contrast significantly with the stylized "redskins" of the Taos and Southwestern schools. Rather than succumbing to exaggeration and stereotype, Reiss documented the history of each subject that he portrayed during his annual sojourns in Montana. He would record details such as the sitters' lineage, battle history, and initial meetings with white men.³⁰ During a recent interview, his son Tjark Reiss, recalled:

The first question he ever asked anyone posing for him, whether it was a fashionable New York society lady or somebody he'd found on the street, was their ethnic origin. It was important to him to know this background and he felt people should be proud of who they were. He had absolutely no racial prejudice. He defended every race, exalting in racial differences.³¹

Reiss continued to exercise this fieldwork approach in Harlem. We know that he traveled to Harlem from his Greenwich Village studio on a daily basis to find sitters who, as an ensemble, would provide an ethnographic survey of Harlem's diverse community.

In *Two Public Schoolteachers* (1924) Reiss employed the double portrait format to present two individuals who although neither famous nor even named are united by their work as educators, an endeavor sufficient to merit their portrait (Fig. 2). As the figures occupy the space evenly, neither one overpowers the other, but rather Reiss presents them as a team. The composition is fairly symmetrical and serves to monumentalize the teachers. Side by side, virtually cheek to cheek, the pair holds an open book between them. Our view of the women is frontal, and both gaze out from the portrait. Reiss positions the figures behind a desk, and consequently, we do not see

their full lengths. The minimal iconography that Reiss employs communicates their academic mission. Their clothing—blouses made of humble-looking fabric, devoid of appliqués or any decorative details—is sufficiently plain, so as not to distract the viewer. Instead, Reiss highlights the matching Phi Beta Kappa keys worn by both teachers in addition to the open book. Using rich blends of pastel, Reiss captures the hues of his sitters' dark complexions making no attempt to whiten or soften their ethnic features. Furthermore, his meticulous draughtsmanship makes for naturalistic renditions of their wide noses, full lips, and diverse hairstyles.

As mentioned above, Reiss' unusual faithfulness to the physiognomies and skin color of African Americans ignited political controversy within the African-American community. The May 1925 issue of *Opportunity* featured Alain Locke's biting rebuttal to Reiss' denigrators entitled "To Certain of Our Philistines" which editor Charles S. Johnson referred to as a "clean-cut and direct...snap of a whip."³² Locke believed that most artists, including too many African-American artists, acquiesced to academic traditions in order to "compensate the attitudes of prejudice."³³ He called their avoidance of "Negro" subjects and their "Nordicizing" of ethnic features, the "psychological bleach of lily-whitism."³⁴ Arguing that this situation was "threatening a truly racial art," Locke presented Reiss' work as a progressive alternative:

The work of Winold Reiss, represented in the Harlem number of the *Survey Graphic*, and more elaborately in the exhibition of the original color pastels at the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library, was deliberately conceived and executed as a pathbreaker in the inevitable direction of a racially representative type of art. In idiom, technical treatment, and social angle, it was meant to represent a new approach, and constructively to break with the current tradition.³⁵

In Reiss, Locke believed that he had found an artist-as-ethnographer who would document Harlem's populace—or in Locke's words, "...a folk-lorist of brush and palette, seeking always the folk character back of the individual, the psychology behind the physiognomy..."³⁶

Reiss fulfilled Locke's edict for black representation that was free of both stereotype and idealization. In addition, his portraits demonstrated the diversity and breadth of Harlem's community. Reiss portrayed immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean such as *The African* (1925) and *From the Tropic Islands* (c. 1924) and newcomers of the Great Migration from the South such as *Man from Virginia* (1925). Furthermore, Reiss' exhaustive fieldwork yielded a comprehensive sample of the community's everyday people, including images such as: *Mother and Child* (c. 1925) and *A Boy Scout* (c. 1925); *The Librarian* (c. 1924) and *Two Public Schoolteachers* (1924).

In addition to the breadth of individuals comprising *The New Negro* of whom Locke wrote and Reiss portrayed, another facet of the "New Negro" concept was Locke's mantra of black ancestral arts and Africa. In Locke's essay entitled, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts" which appeared in *The New Negro*, Locke called for a Black Modernism that would fuse African or diasporal iconography and form with avant-garde techniques thereby addressing a spiritual kinship with African heritage and reformulating African-American identity.³⁷ Locke believed that Reiss' African-inspired logotypes and abstract compositions which the artist termed "imaginatives" re-established a connection between modern-day African-Americans and their ancestral heritage. Merging

an Art Deco vocabulary of flat, stylized, geometric motifs and hard-edged silhouettes with West African and Egyptian forms, Reiss created an "Afro-Deco" language that visually articulated Locke's call for an African-American identity in modern art.

Mask Over City (c. 1924) for example symbolizes the cultural source or foundation that is Africa (Fig. 6). Reiss draws a congested cluster of apartment buildings. Ignoring the rules of perspective, he angles the rooftops so as to provide bird's-eye views of their Machine Age smokestacks and water towers. Above the rooftops, however, an enormous "Africanesque" mask floats over the city. Out of the mask's "forehead" sprouts an out-of-scale, black figure who arches over the skyscape with upraised hands. Rays emanate from the figure's fingertips and spawn another black figure. Reiss, in effect, depicts a diasporal chain linking modern Harlemites to their African ancestry.

Furthermore, in imaginatives such as *Interpretation of Harlem Jazz* (Fig. 7), Reiss adopts Cubism's shifting points of view, its elimination of illusionism, and its rebellion against space-time constraints to visualize an imaginary meeting of African-Americans and Africa. On the one hand, Reiss establishes the contemporaneity of the nightclub scene with iconographic elements such as a lounge table and a bottle of whiskey; on the other, a mask peering out from under the male dancer's right arm and the banjo swinging between his legs allude to jazz's roots in African rhythms. Thus, Reiss' imaginative bridges time and space in the imaginary realm; it is as if Harlem's vogue are converging with their heritage.

Alain Locke's collaborations with Winold Reiss, who in so many regards might have been perceived as an outsider to Harlem and the African-American populace, may at first seem paradoxical. However, given Reiss' anthropological focus and training in Modernism, Locke's faith in Reiss' ability to visualize the "New Negro" is not surprising. Locke believed that Reiss would serve as a model and teacher for young African-American visual artists, and in fact arranged for twenty-six-year-old Aaron Douglas, who had recently arrived from Kansas City, to receive art instruction from Reiss (Fig. 8).³⁸ Reiss challenged Douglas' early commitment to academic painting and introduced his protégé to African art and modernism. Years later, Douglas would reminisce on his two-year apprenticeship with Reiss:

I clearly recall (Reiss') impatience as he sought to urge me beyond my doubts and fears that seemed to loom so large...beneath the surface of every African masque and fetish. At last I began little by little to get the point and to take a few halting, timorous steps forward into (what was for me) the unknown.³⁹

Today Douglas' signature Afro-Deco style has become identified with the "New Negro" arts movement; however, Reiss' pioneering role has been overlooked. Thumbing through the pages of recent reprintings of *The New Negro* one in fact finds more images from the student, Douglas, than from the teacher, Reiss.⁴⁰ In Douglas, Harlem's cultural notables found the poster-child of the Renaissance. Mouthpieces of the movement such as *Opportunity* began to feature Douglas' work instead of Reiss'. Years later, Douglas described himself as the movement's "fair-haired boy"—indeed, he had assumed the role of his "fair-haired" teacher.⁴¹ In a speech entitled "The Harlem Renaissance" delivered at Fisk University in 1970, Douglas stated, "I began to feel like the missing piece that all had been looking for to complete or round out the idea of the Renaissance."⁴² Reiss was extremely supportive of this transference of commissions, and, in

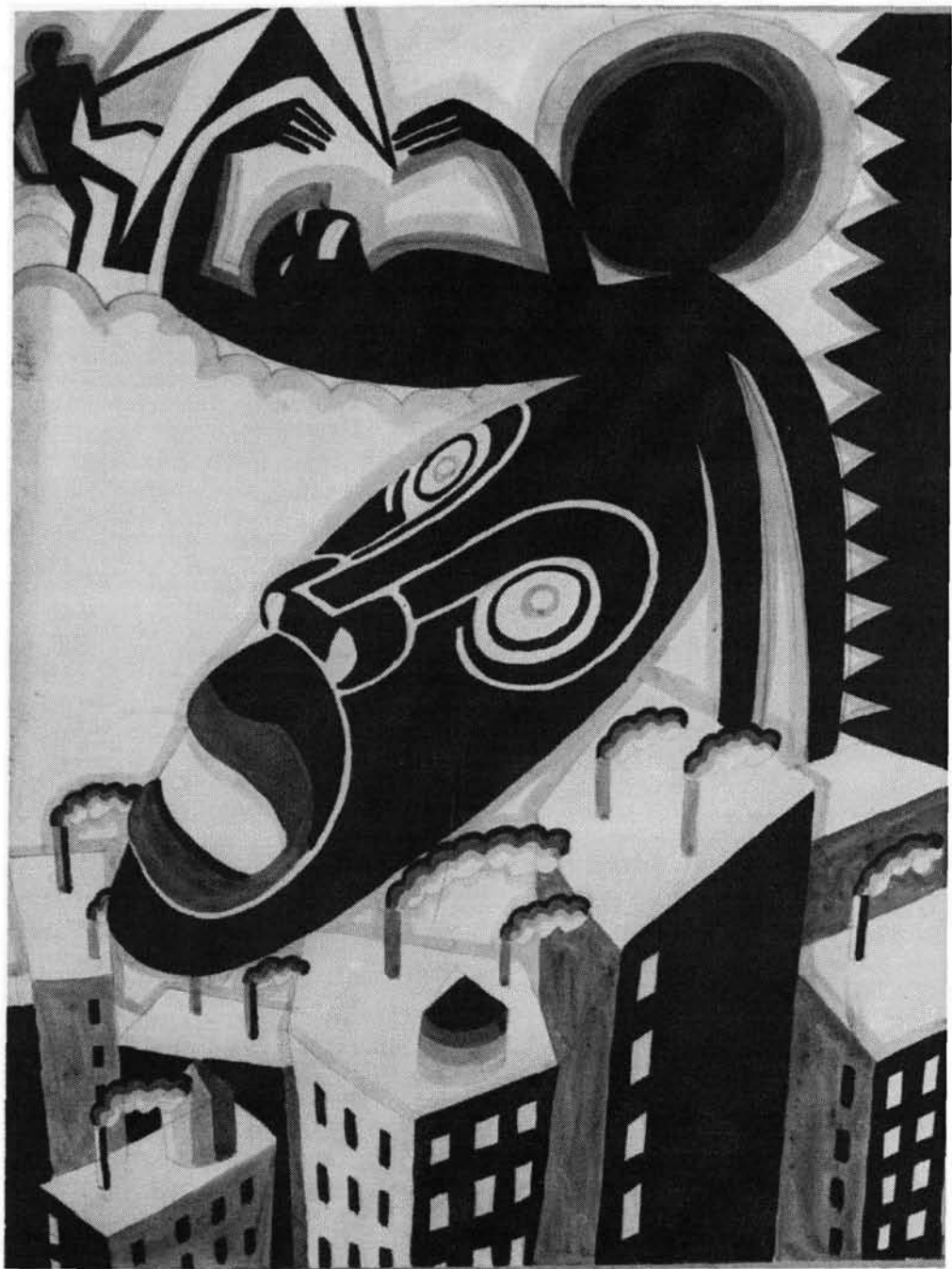


Fig. 6 Winold Reiss, *Mask Over City*, c. 1924. Ink, wash, and graphite on paper. Private collection.



Fig.7 Winold Reiss, *Interpretation of Harlem Jazz*, c. 1924. Ink and watercolor on paper. Mr. and Mrs. W. Tjark Reiss.



Fig. 8 Group portrait of Winold Reiss School class, including artist Aaron Douglas (standing in middle), c. 1925. Photograph. W. Tjark Reiss.

fact, was instrumental in passing the torch to his student. Moreover, there is no doubt that Douglas expanded upon Reiss' Afro-Deco vocabulary creating his own style of silhouetted figures overlaid with diagonal and concentric bands of color which became identified with the movement. However, art-historically, the current state of affairs is in imbalance. Only by assessing the artwork of Winold Reiss can we obtain a true measure of what should be viewed as the visual culture of the Harlem Renaissance.

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1. Elise McDougald to Alain Locke, undated letter, *Survey Graphic* Box, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Institute, Howard University. McDougald wrote that the artwork of the *Survey Graphic* had "created a furore" at a meeting at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library, and *Two Public Schoolteachers* particularly offended Harlemites including Mr. Williams who concluded that Reiss' renderings amounted to "subtle propaganda to prejudice the white reader." McDougald also revealed that one of the schoolteachers depicted by Reiss, Miss Price, attended the meeting as well and objected to Williams' opinion. McDougald wrote, "When an opportune moment arrived, she (Miss Price) stood to express her regret that she would frighten him but claimed the portrait as a 'pretty good likeness.'"
2. O. Richard Reid, "A Criticism of the Negro Pictures in the Harlem Number of the *Survey Graphic*," *New York Amsterdam News*, 15 April 1925, Sec. 2, p. 9, col. 3. In his book *Negro Art Past and Present*, Alain Locke described Richard Reid as a conservative, academic painter akin to Allan Freelon and James Porter. Locke wrote that members of this group "stress the orthodox academic canons and virtues and demonstrate a sound technical interest in traditional values and subject matter." (Alain Locke, *Negro Art Past and Present* (Albany, NY: The Associates In Negro Folk Education and The J.B. Lyon Press, 1936), 66.
3. Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), 254-267.
4. At this time, ethnographic museums existed in Munich, Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Leipzig, Frankfurt, Dresden, Cologne, Lubeck, and Darmstadt, Germany. According to Jeffrey Stewart, who curated the Reiss retrospective held at the National Portrait Gallery in 1989, Reiss visited an exhibition of Pablo Picasso's African-inspired works in Munich in 1913.
5. Although Stuck was respected by the Academy, he also challenged Munich's art establishment as a founder of the Munich Secession and a major contributor to the Jugendstil movement in the 1890s. The Munich Secession was founded in the spring of 1892 in protest against the provincialism of the Munich Artists' Society (Munchener Kunstlergenossenschaft). The Secessionists believed that the enormous size and repetitiousness of the Munich Artists' Society's annual exhibition depleted its overall artistic quality. Furthermore, the Secessionists objected to the Art Society's exhibitions, because they showcased the old guard, but rarely exhibited a representative sample of avant-garde artists. Later in the 1890s, Stuck contributed to a second type of "Secession" known as the Jugendstil [style of youth] Movement—Munich's version of the arts-and-crafts-derived Art Nouveau movement. Grounded in the concept of Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art), Jugendstil artists called for a comprehensive aesthetic environment—a new painting, a new architecture, a new decoration, a new music, a new poetry—informed by a new-found understanding of the psychological and symbolic power of color, line, and form. Principles underlying Jugendstil such as anti-historicism and a breakdown of traditional artistic hierarchies are clearly visible in Reiss' work. See Maria Makela, *The Munich Secession: Art and Artists in Turn-of-the-Century Munich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
6. In many respects, Stuck's modern style catalyzed Germany's transition from nineteenth to twentieth century art. A cursory inventory of Stuck's students—Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Josef Albers—demonstrates that many went on to play significant roles in the development of various branches of modernism such as the Blaue Reiter and Bauhaus.
7. Hans Purrmann, *Franz von Stuck, Die Stuck-Villa zu ihrer Wiedereröffnung am 9. März 1968*, ed. by J.A. Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth (Munich: Karl M. Lipp, 1968), 56. Quoted in Barbara and Eberhard Gopel, *Leben und Meinungen des Malers Hans Purrman* (Wiesbaden: unpaginated, 1961), 24f. Quoted in Peg

- Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 51.
8. According to scholar Edris Makward, between 1904 and 1935, Frobenius coordinated and led twelve expeditions for ethnographic surveys and studies in Central Africa, West Africa, North Africa, the Sahara, Egypt, Sudan, and Southern Africa. Frobenius "returned with a staggering wealth of notes, index cards, diagrams, drawings, photographs, and artifacts," and by the time of his death, he had published sixty books and hundreds of pamphlets and was considered a supreme authority on African ethnology. In 1932, his independent work resulted in an honorary professorship at the University of Frankfurt, and in 1934 he became the director of the Frankfurt African Institute and the Frankfurt Museum of Ethnography. Edris Makward, "Two 'African Travelers' from Germany: Leo Frobenius and Janheinz Jahn" in *Blacks and German Culture*, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 57.
 9. Eike Haberland, ed, *Leo Frobenius 1873/1973: Une Anthologie* (Wiesbaden, 1973), vii.
 10. Reiss sailed from Hamburg, Germany on the SS *Imperator* on October 22, 1913, at the age of twenty-seven.
 11. By the summer of 1934, Reiss had established the Winold Reiss Summer School at Glacier Park, Montana where he continued to foster his relations with and document the local Blackfeet and Blood tribes. With few exceptions, Reiss made annual study trips to Glacier National Park and Browning, Montana until 1948.
 12. *The Survey Graphic* 52 (May 1, 1924).
 13. This branch of the New York Public Library would become the first home of The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
 14. Johnson received his Ph.D. in 1918 at the University of Chicago where he studied with his lifelong mentor Robert E. Park.
 15. Charles S. Johnson, "The Art of Winold Reiss," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 3 (January 1925), 5.
 16. Johnson and his readership grew to value Reiss' critical opinions so much that when *Opportunity* introduced newcomer Aaron Douglas, who was also Reiss' student, to its pages, the editor deemed it necessary to include Reiss' endorsement of the rising star, "Mr. Douglas was described by Winold Reiss as 'a young artist of great promise with a marvelous, flowing imagination.'" Aaron Douglas, *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 3 (September 1925), 285.
 17. In *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro* the title of McDougald's essay was, "The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation".
 18. Elise Johnson McDougald. "The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation" *Survey Graphic* (March 1925), 689. [McDougald's "The Task of Negro Womanhood" in *The New Negro*, aside from a different title and some minor edits, is basically the same essay.]
 19. Jeffrey C. Stewart, *To Color America: Portraits By Winold Reiss* (Washington City: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1989), 46. The Oberammergau Passion Play originated as an appeal for divine intervention. During the Middle Ages, peasants of the rural, Bavarian village of Oberammergau fell victim to the plague. In hopes of a miraculous cure, the villagers enacted the Passion Play of the death of Jesus. When a wave of recovery swept over Oberammergau, the peasants believed it to be an act of God and decided to perform the play every ten years.
 20. Alain Locke, "Harlem," *The Survey Graphic* 53 (March 1, 1925), 630.
 21. For further discussion of Boas' theories see Franz Boas, *Anthropology and Modern Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1932) and Melville Herskovits, *Franz Boas: The Science of Man in the Making* (New York: Scribner's, 1953).
 22. See Roger Sanjek, ed. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) and Roy Ellen, Ernest Gellner, Grazyna Kubica, and Janusz Mucha, eds. *Malinowski Between Two Worlds: The Polish Roots of an Anthropological Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
 23. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 3. Williams' poem is a Dada-influenced piece about an immigrant domestic servant he called Elsie and was published in *Spring & All* (1923).

24. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 9.
25. Reiss' professional relationship with Locke has been discussed above. Reiss also maintained a working relationship with Du Bois. Du Bois had so much respect for Reiss' artwork, that he asked Reiss to judge several art contests for *The Crisis*. According to Aaron Douglas, it was Reiss' recommendation that warmed up Du Bois' opinion of Douglas. Du Bois in turn invited Douglas to become a frequent contributor to *The Crisis*. In a letter to his wife, Douglas wrote, "Dr. Du Bois's little curt smile and stiff handshake have turned to an ear to ear grin and warm and sincere grip... And all because Winold Reiss has given me his unqualified stamp of approval. It all happened like this. Dr. Du Bois phoned Reiss asking him to judge the art section of their contest. When Reiss looked at the drawings he said many things and withheld a few. Dr. Du Bois told Miss Ray and she told me. Reiss told me everything himself yesterday morning some of which I censor. It amounted to this, that my work was far superior to anything in the exhibition and that in the next contest they would do well to have me entered. He was very enthusiastic over my last efforts. Between you and I dear, I have started them to talking about me." (Aaron Douglas to Alta Sawyer, n.d., Box 1, Folder, 8, Douglas Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library).
26. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now* (1939; Milwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1975), vii; quoted in Hutchinson, p. 63. For further discussion about Boas' philosophy see Marshall Hyatt, *Franz Boas Social Activist: The Dynamics of Ethnicity* (New York, Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1990) and Vernon J. Williams, Jr. *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996).
27. George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 63.
28. Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance*, 63.
29. Alain Locke, "The Eleventh Hour of Nordicism: Retrospective Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1934" (1935), in *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke*, ed. Jeffrey C. Stewart (New York: Garland, 1983), 232.
30. Several anthropologists have attested to Reiss' ethnographic contributions, authentic likenesses, and preservation of Native-American history. Reiss went to great lengths to delineate the details of traditional dress with accuracy. Furthermore, he also presented Blackfeet in modern dress as it was a common practice for Native Americans to abandon traditional garb.
31. Winold Reiss, quoted in John Heminway, "An Immigrant Artist Captured the Faces of the New World," *Smithsonian* 20 (November 1989), 176.
32. Charles S. Johnson to Alain Locke (April 28, 1925), Alain Locke papers, Moorland-Spingarn Archives, Howard University.
33. Alain Locke, "To Certain Of Our Philistines," *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925), 155.
34. Locke, "To Certain Of Our Philistines," 155.
35. Locke, "To Certain Of Our Philistines," 155.
36. Alain Locke, "Harlem Types: Portraits of Winold Reiss," *Survey Graphic* 53 (March 1, 1925), 653. This quote reappears in Locke's biographical description of Reiss in *The New Negro*.
37. Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," In *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), 254-267.
38. Other African-American artists influenced by Winold Reiss include Richmond Barthé (1901-1989) and Lois Mailou Jones (1905-1998).
39. Aaron Douglas, "The Harlem Renaissance," Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1970, 8.
40. See Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).
41. Douglas, "The Harlem Renaissance," 9.
42. Douglas, "The Harlem Renaissance," 9.