

A Growing Storm: Depression Art of Seymour Fogel

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“Among many first-rate artists transplanted to Texas, Seymour Fogel (1911-1984) stood out for a wide range of distinctive styles that cohere through adroit draftsmanship, judicious use of color, and during his most celebrated period, swirling inventive geometries,” writes Katie Robinson Edwards in *Midcentury Modern Art in Texas* (2014). In 1946, Fogel joined the faculty at the University of Texas at Austin and for the next eight years was not only prolific in his own right, but was a founder of the Texas Modernist Movement. He created murals in Austin, Houston, and Waco and was the recipient of many awards and prizes. He was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, D.D. Feldman Collections of Contemporary Texas Art, Dallas and the Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum in Austin. His paintings hang in the Dallas Museum of Art, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Before Fogel became a Modernist, he was a Social Realist in the tradition of Diego Rivera.

Seymour Fogel was born in New York City on August 24, 1911, the son of Benjamin Fogel and Lillian (Juda) Fogel, recent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Lillian’s family had escaped from Russian Poland “with no more than the clothes on their backs and what few possessions they could carry. Lillian Juda recalled shooting in the streets, looting----terror. Her father escaped to Paris with his six motherless children, leaving behind a fine home and a prosperous millinery business, Lillian was probably eight at the time. They stayed in Paris for seven while he recouped enough to book first class passage to New York (B. Fogel, *Fogel---An*

Artist).”Fogel’s father Benjamin had left Warsaw at about the same time that Lillian’s had, and under similar circumstances. Thus, early on, the theme of the dispossessed and persecuted was imprinted on Fogel’s mind.

Born with a talent for art, his first works appeared in his high school publication *The Monroe Doctrine* where he attended James Monroe High School in New York City. He studied at the Art Student League and graduated from the National Academy of Design in 1932. He later wrote of his academy years, “At my school, all the students did was copy what he saw, the more faithfully, the higher the grade. The teaching was less than negligible, it didn’t exist (S. Fogel, *Autobiographical Notes*).”

It was at this time of artistic dissatisfaction that he met the great Mexican muralist Diego Rivera who was then in New York City working on his gigantic and controversial mural for the Rockefeller Center, *Man at the Crossroads*. Because of its Communist theme so boldly depicted it would soon be destroyed. This was Social realism at its most provocative and insistently political and Fogel had cut his teeth helping to paint it. Barbara Clark Fogel observes the following about the mural:

I have no desire to go into the Radio City ruckus. It’s a bit late in the day for that. But, that Diego was a radical was common knowledge. I can’t speak with any authority on the matter, but I rather imagine he was a very surprised man when he was awarded the contract. The puzzle in my mind, then and now, is why Diego was commissioned and by whom, in the first place...However, Diego was commissioned, and the farce was acted out in the finis-to the delight of the press.

Fogel clearly revered Rivera, and it was Rivera who would become his first true teacher. This was in 1933. Fogel would have agreed with Thomas Craven when he stated of Rivera’s work that it”...is free from the stench of the studio and niggardly polish extolled by professional art lovers (p. 151).” He recalled that he “stared in awe at the almost legendary figure with

shoulders narrow and stooped, stomach protruding, small arms resting flaccidly on his chest, great frog like eyes and protruding lips plus a shock of unruly hair black hair, creating an impression of utter unreality (S. Fogel, Autobiographical Notes).”

Fogel work as one of Rivera’s young assistants not only on this mural but on a subsequent project Rivera worked on while in New York City. It is likely that along with learning the nature of mural art from the master that he became absorbed with Rivera’s political philosophy at this time and acutely conscious of the inequalities of class distinction and the suffering of the underprivileged masses In deed it was during this period that Fogel completed a painted head of the abolitionist John Brown, eyes blazing with righteous fury, that featured a Communist sickle disguised in the high-lighted cheek bone.

Unemployed, Fogel left New York City on May 7, 1934 to begin a journey through the American South. Unlike some who recorded their observations through narratives, Fogel provides us an artist’s view of America during its greatest financial crisis. He writes: “This New York period was followed by a period of traveling around the country, riding the freights, living in hobo jungles and, in general, doing everything that could be done without money. Retuning to New York, I began to paint seriously. The W.P.A. projects having opened then, I was able to support myself and buy art materials. These paintings were of that period were still extensions of my role as observer. I painted miners, sharecroppers, lynching’s, bread lines, all facets of society (B. Fogel *Notes*).” His first day on the road was filled with youthful energy and romance. He wrote on the back of a page of small sketches on May7, 1934: “last night I looked at Union Square from the roof of my house. Tonight, I am looking at the lighted dome of the capital at Washington, while an illumined fountain plays sweet music.” This initial euphoria, however, soon gave way to a bleaker view of the life he had set out to experience: “Washington, DC---dirt,

squalor, sexual depravity, poverty, gilded by the tinsel of diplomatic and state pomp.” An ink drawing done that same day (5/7/34) entitled “Negro Section, Washington, DC.” captures this ironic juxtaposition of image and reality. In it the Capital dome rises up behind a tenement building where impoverished blacks lean out of open windows and sprawl listlessly and aimlessly in the doorway and on the step. Poverty and the African-American were representatives of the dark side of the American dream, a wrenching inequality placed literally in the shadow of the splendid Capital building and symbol of democracy. Such visions as these would haunt Fogel, not only during the course of his journey, but for years to come. He had a strong sense of sympathy for the underprivileged and this sympathy and compassion is reflected in many drawings of the people—especially African-Americans in the Deep South—that he encountered along the way.

An artist does not stand away from his/her culture, but draws from the culture the images and perceptions which lead to his/her interpretation of it. Fogel’s work reflects the violence, class struggle, and communist influences which intensified during these years. “In many of the most influential works, race and race conflict have been at the head of such representations. As indeed they have been at the head of American Social history (Sandquist, p. 181).” A speech delivered in 1935 by James Ford, communist party vice-presidential nominee, argued that the communist view of racist violence started from the assumption that violence against African-Americans was inseparable from the generally violent nature of capitalism. “American history might easily be described as a story of capitalist, violence directed at times particularly against the Negroes. Violence, the violent suppression of the exploited workers, and poor farmers and of the Negro people, is the very essence of capitalism (Ford, p. 217).”

The Lynching: The Black Man as Martyr

The conditions in the South for African-Americans were perilous even before the Depression. Since the Civil War five thousand African-Americans were lynched. "The greatest number of lynchings occurred between 1882-1903 for a total number of 3,310 of which 1,914 were blacks (Shapiro, p. 32)." During this time period the rationalization for lynching shifted from blacks planning insurrections to rape. When the facts demonstrated that conspiracies did not exist, white supremacists found that "...the new justification not only served to excuse the barbarism of the lynch mob but also supported the campaign to deny black Americans legislatively and judicially all protection under the constitution (Shapiro, p. 38)."

It was in a small Mississippi town while being befriended by, of all people, some Bible-belt Jews (who treated him to lunch and gave him two dollars from a fund for homeless wanderers raised by the small Jewish congregation) that Fogel, completely unaware, found himself in the midst of a crowd preparing for a lynching. Barbara Fogel writes of this incident:...

"the stores which had been open minutes before were closed. Maybe everyone went home for lunch? Though it was only a few minutes past noon the café was also closed and that did not make sense. Fogel knew it was not a holy day. He asked Levi about it. The reply was evasive. The previously deserted square was filling with people. Knots of men stood under the trees, the largest group gathered on the steps of the courthouse, and the sheriff mingled importantly with them to share jokes and bottles passed from hand to hand. A few women with picnic baskets sat on benches around the bandstand; farmer's pick-up trucks, horse-drawn wagons and buggies lined the curb (B. Fogel, *Notes*)."

Fogel, wanting to take part in what he could only assume was some local celebration, was nevertheless quickly whisked out of town by the local Jews who had been informed by a phone call what was about to take place. It was only after he reached New Orleans that he read in the newspaper of the lynching that had subsequently occurred in the town he had just visited; of how the jail had been stormed and a black man dragged out of his cell, lynched and his body doused with kerosene and then set afire.

Recalling this event, Fogel created an utterly remarkable drawing, apparently left unfinished and done at about the same time, is a masterpiece of design and savage caricature. In this work a naked black man just to the left of center is held in a firm head-lock by the left arm of a bald white man wearing a checked shirt. The white man's right hand grasps a nose, the other end of the rope being held by an obese, equally bald white man seen in three-quarters view who has a stub of a cigar clenched in his teeth. The terrified black man raises up his left hand in appeal to Heaven as a white man wearing a jacket and cloth cap thrusts a pitchfork into the black man's left side, perhaps an artistic allusion to the spear of Longinus used to pierce the side of Jesus on the cross. It is unlikely that this is a mere coincidence of design, as Fogel in his treatment of other oppressed and martyred minorities such as the Native American often portrayed them in Christ-like poses. From examination of preliminary sketches of this work, the white man with the pitchfork stands between the naked black man's spread legs, thrusting the implement either into his stomach or his genitals. The figures in the more formalized drawing were placed where they were not just for the sake of composition, but for symbolic resonance. In fact, the composition with the black man raising his arm to Heaven, strongly resembles several images of Jesus painted in the Renaissance, his arms raised up and his hands firmly nailed to the cross-beam that is being hoisted up to its final position on the vertical post.

The entire composition is a Yang-Yin interplay of dark and light forms. The left-hand side of the work is dominated by darker, more finished figures. While, the right-side is lighter, with figures more sketched than completed. This could well indicate the unfinished nature of the piece, but with the knowledge of Fogel's frequent and deliberate use of light and darkness in the works of art from this time period (and later) it seems that this contrast was at least in part intentional, revealing not just the interplay of opposites in life itself but the disturbing mix of

good and evil within man. Here we are not dealing with the simple use of darkness and light to represent desperation and hope, but rather we are dealing with something far more profound and disturbing. It is of great significance that the artist located his savage self-caricature on the dark, left side of this work. While utterly appalled by the savagery of the scene, he seems to have also been curiously and troublingly fascinated by it, and he had the insight to realize that even within himself, these dark horrifying forces were present. That he at some rather deep level could identify with forces his conscious mind recoiled from, is evident in its placement of this self-caricature, and is evidence of the complexity of the artist.

The combination of race relations, severe economic dislocation created by a failing capitalistic system, and the growing influence of communism all merged to produce a decade of economic and social dislocation unimaginable before or since in American history. Fogel's images of African-Americans during this time captured the plight and despair of the poor as well as the enduring qualities of the human spirit. William Faulkner in his Nobel Prize address says about mankind what Fogel was able to paint, "He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance (Oates, p. 249)."

Primitive Music: The Transcendence of the Spirit

In the mid- 1930s, Fogel received his first mural commission. It was for the Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, New York, and was based on a rather broad subject of "music." He was awarded this mural by the New York Arts Project of the newly formed W.P.A. and was given the opportunity, in part, by the influence of Burgoyne Diller, Head of the Mural Division (B. Fogel, *Notes*). His wife, Barbara, writes of his initial frustration with the theme: "If

he had been given a choice of themes such as 'Ellis Island' 'Bread Lines' 'Eviction' or 'The Dust Bowl' he might have produced designs in a comparatively short time. 'But music is music—sound' he puzzled. Still dominated by academy training, abstraction was beyond him." She goes on to write, "Concept after concept was discarded. Days, nights, he was absorbed with the problem. When he fell asleep a new idea would come and he got up and hunch over his drawing board to do yet another version which he discarded."

Fogel finally settled on two simple themes, classical and primitive music. Numerous preliminary studies, executed in sepia on paper (so highly acid that they are now, regrettably, one breath away from crumbling in to confetti) reveal a magnificent classicism in the drawings, a draftsmanship that clearly reflects the years of his academic training.

The two panels are very different, although obviously related in theme. The *Classical Music* panel is very formal and curiously static. At the center a woman with an open book of music resting on her lap stares off into the distance from the back of the auditorium, her right hand raised at the height of her face. The woman, whose initial nude studies reveal the model to have been the artist's wife Barbara, is apparently intended to represent some spirit or muse of music, but she is almost granitic in her formal portrayal. Surrounding her on both sides are figures that evoke the varieties of classical music: tonsured monks sing to her right above a medieval woman playing on a small pipe organ, an orchestra leader in a jacket and white bow tie wields a baton to her left, while others in the composition study musical scores or write the music itself in an open book. The composition, like classical music, is very intricate, well balanced and pleasing, but unlike the music it is intended to portray, it lacks vibrancy and life. These latter qualities, however, are very much in evidence in the *Primitive Music* panel. It was almost as if the *Classical Music* panel, with all its rigid formalism, bored the artist as much as the

classical training he received at the Academy. The *New York Times* (October 10, 1935) printed Fogel's rather vague commentary on the two panels: "The limitations (that) two panels impose on the artist using the broad subject of music can be easily understood. I had to approach the problem in as broad, yet at the same time as simple a manner as possible. To treat the subject in a purely historical way would have been awkward...pure symbolism...would not have been suitable either..." It was clear from his comment that he was attempting to reach a very uneasy agreement between the two vastly different dynamics of the two panels. He was obviously not comfortable sitting on the proverbial fence. In the *Primitive Music* mural, the vibrancy of life that he sought to experience when he set out on the road in 1934 is clearly evident. And, it should not surprise the reader to discover that the subjects in this panel are all Africans.

Yet, all did not share Fogel's celebration of the musical genius of the African and by extension, the African-American. In a review of the *Primitive Music* mural in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (November 5, 1935) Arthur Cremin, Director of the Students League wrote: "It depicts primitive music which educators have been trying to condemn for years since it incites the baser emotions and arouses the lowest form of instinct. Primitive music is the type that is being carried on in modern jazz. We have been trying to have it censored...under its sway a person can be made to do almost anything, even against his will." To the above, Cremin added, "of course persons are conscious of some music and if a man refuses to heed the impulse set by certain music, he doesn't have to, but in the case of primitive music, it is impossible." And, as if this were not enough, he concluded, "To place (this) mural on the wall of the music room at Abraham Lincoln High School is the same as if you were to write obscene language upon the school walls."

In a remarkable parallel to modern discussions over the NEA's funding of works by artists as Robert Mapplethorpe, Cremin extended his tirade against *Primitive Music* to the WPA itself: "It is a shame, too, that the country has spent its money in WPA projects to produce an artistic mural of this kind. The picture definitely shows the evil effects of primitive music when it depicts figures actually in trances under the spell of music. We have to keep such music away from our school children, surely not encourage it with paintings."

That Seymour Fogel, a white Jewish artist, should so champion the image of the African-American is not surprising. As a member of a persecuted minority himself he could greatly empathize with the suffering of other oppressed minorities. To show their unity in oppression, Fogel even incorporated a shofar-like instrument in an early ink study for *Primitive Music*. And other Jews were supportive of his controversial work. Elsa Weihl, the editor of *Young Israel*, a magazine for Jewish boys and girls wrote to Fogel on December 13, 1935: "Someone brought to my attention an article about your mural for Lincoln High School. I was amazed at the ignorance of the criticism, but glad for your sake it happened, as it is good advertising. Wouldn't it be wonderful if painting roused the emotions to the degree your critic imagines? Artists would be able to dispose of their work."

The World of the Future: The 1939 World's Fair

1939 was a remarkable year, an *annus mirabilis*, and it had good reason to be. The decade of the great Depression, and of grinding poverty, mass migrations of Americans, disastrous droughts and the Dust Bowl that were all part of it, was at last coming to a close. What the nation needed was a healthy dose of optimism, a belief in the future. It need to have its collective mind distracted, if only briefly, from a decade of abject misery and despair. It needed to be healed, and

it is no coincidence that two of the pioneering organizations focused on healing, Alcoholics Anonymous, for those suffering from destructive addictions, and Recovery, Inc. for those with emotional illnesses, were both begun in 1939. It is no coincidence that 1939 was the most brilliant year in American cinematic history, with such classic movies as *Stage Coach*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Gone with the Wind*, and arguably, the most beloved film of all time, *The Wizard of Oz*. We can read in the storyline of *The Wizard of Oz* the history of and hopes of this generation of Americans: from the black and white grimness of Dust Bowl farms and numerous climatic predations such as the tornado we are transported magically to a pristine world of dazzling color where a yellow brick road leads the characters to a wonderful wizard, dwelling in Emerald City. It does not really matter that the Wizard proved to be a fraud and a man who could not deliver on what had been hoped of him. The answer lay not in the goal but in the journey and to the extent that the Wizard provided hope necessary for the journey to take place, he lived up to his role. America was ready to go “somewhere over the rainbow” in 1939 and we should not be surprised that we have committed so many lines of that remarkable film to memory. Both the tragedy and the hope for a better future that characterized the 1930s burned deeply into the American psyche and it remains with us even today, like half-remembered images of a dream we can't quite recall.

It is no coincidence as well that 1939 was the year that the great New York World's Fair opened at Flushing Meadows. It transformed the hopes and aspirations of America into something marvelously tangible. Its theme motif bore the futuristic names of Trylon and Perisphere (“Pyramid” and “Globe” simply would not do), and in every art deco building, in every new mechanical gadget, in every model home of the future it displayed, in every mural and

sculpture, in short, in every square inch of the Fair were the dreams of Americans for a better, more comfortable and more secure life preserved for a time like exotic insects in amber.

When the New York World's Fair was in the process of soliciting artists to execute the various projects at the Fair, "there were rumors of a tug of war going on between the Chicago and New York mural projects. The national head of the Art Project (Holger Cahill) was reputed to be fond of the boys in Chicago. The New York World's Fair was already in the making out in Flushing. One of its buildings was slated to be the recipient of murals by Project artists. We heard that a move was afoot to put the Chicago muralists on it. MacMahon (head of the New York Arts Project insisted New York muralists do it (B. Fogel, *Biographical Narrative*, p. 175-176.)" Barbara Fogel continues her account "...a mere seven or eight weeks before the Fair was scheduled to open, the New York Project was put on the job. Reffigier was to do panels in a sort of tower-like entrance (the Rotunda). Ross was to do something for the interior, Phil Guston an outside vignette executed in rubber paint, Eric Mose a twenty by thirty-five mural just inside another entrance and Fogel its mate (Ibid)." All of these murals, with the exception of the exterior Guston murals, were oil on canvas works.

The title of the mural that Fogel was assigned was *The Rehabilitation of the People*, a fitting name for one of the dominant themes not only of the Fair but of the WPA and Section Art in general—the improvement of the lives of Americans through technology. Gavert gives us an alternative rather awkward title for the mural and states the following concerning its purpose: "...*The Relationship of the WPA to Rehabilitation*, by Seymour Fogel, an interior mural on the left side wall of the lobby, covering 784 square feet. It was described as 'showing how people can be raised from starvation and hopelessness to self-support and self-reliance' (O'Connor p. 256)."

The composition that Fogel created fitted the WPA theme well. Just to the left of center was depicted a seated man with his huge hands turned upward while the arms of the figure rested on his knees. Hands were the focal points of WPA art, as well as muscular arms, for these parts of the human anatomy were most associated with manual labor, and their often exaggerated size emphasized the importance of the common man, the worker, in the overall recovery and ‘rehabilitation of the people. It underscored the pronounced emphasis that Roosevelt placed in putting to work in order that both they and the country, by means of the federally sponsored work projects they engaged in, would prosper, or at least, survive. The upturned left hand of the figure bears a striking resemblance to the right hand (that bears a trowel) of the figure on the far left side of Guston’s exterior mural façade, and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that Fogel, who greatly admired Guston and his work, was influenced by Guston stylistically.

Just to right of center a hard-hatted worker stripped to the waist (again to show the muscularity of the common worker who was so important in FDR’s programs) leans on a powerful jackhammer, with a rugged rock design just behind him. Results of such governmentally sponsored work programs occupy the design of the central part of the composition—new houses, as well as food on the table symbolized by cutlery an oddly empty plate. The stylized, cubist elements that connect the figures and forms the context of the composition prefigures Fogel’s treatment of mesas in his later Safford, Arizona, submission. To the far right and left of the design are women—on the right a woman behind a partially constructed brick wall apparently examining a blue print, and to the left a Madonna-like mother and child. Women, and especially the mother and child motif, were dominant in Fogel’s work at this period as well as in his early abstract work of the beginnings to the mid- 1940s. The woman as mother on the surface represented the continuity and resilience of life even in the most

economically distressed times. And, I suspect that it had a much deeper meaning for Fogel because it is a recurring theme throughout his entire career.

At the very center of the composition is depicted an upraised hand in whose an open palm is placed various tools of construction—pick –axe, hammer and triangle—along with a specimen of what these helped create, a fragment of a brick wall signifying, by extension, the construction of new buildings and new homes for the American people. Again, this is propaganda for FDR’s WPA Projects that helped build up America and its infrastructure during these desperate times. This is propaganda, I might add, that was altogether suitable and appropriate for the building at the Fair that concentrated on FDR’s work programs.

When the mural was finished Fogel received his reward. He was given a pink slip. Due to the eighteenth month clause of WPA contracts put into effect in the Spring of 1939, all those who had been on WPA payrolls for eighteen months or more received a pink slip. Thus yet another major irony occurred in that Fogel, who had just completed one of the finest murals in his Project career, was terminated from the project because he had been supported by it for more than a year and a half. Fogel not only lost his job, but he couldn’t afford the admission price to see his own work in place once the fair was open to the public. Fortunately, at about this same time the Section of Fine Arts of the Treasury Department (popularly referred to as “The Section” as the Federal Art Project had been referred to as “The Project” promoted the “48 States Competition,” in which artists could bid for mural commissions in post offices to be built in each of the 48 states. Fogel would submit for post offices in Mercer, Pennsylvania and Safford, Arizona. He would win the Safford mural.

The 48 States Competition: Controversy in Safford, Arizona

In 1939, Edward Rowan launched the “48 States Competition,” by far the most ambitious national art project to date. It called for murals to be created for one new post office each to be constructed in the then forty-eight states. Murals would be awarded on the basis of a national competition judged by a jury consisting of Rowan and other artists. The locales of the new post offices were not major cities, but, rather small towns that were barely more than a speck on the state maps. The artists who submitted designs were advised that they should reflect some unique aspect of local history, culture, livelihood, topography, or industry, and , that above all, they must be accurate in every detail. Artists, whenever possible, were urged to visit the communities that their murals would be placed in, not only to fully absorb the local flavor but-perhaps more importantly-to become acquainted with local sensibilities and wishes so as to avoid the controversies that seemed to sprout up almost every time a mural design was made public. Not every artist could afford to make the trip, and , as a result, what they and the Section felt was a superior piece of composition was often greeted howls of protest by the local citizenry. The Safford, Arizona, Post Office mural certainly proved to be no exception to this.

Seymour Fogel, a New York artist, won the competition for the Safford Post Office. In doing so, he edged out some fifty-eight other artists who had submitted designs for Safford. Fogel, true to the Section’s insistence on composition that incorporated the unique history and culture of the area where the mural would reside, selected the theme of the American Indian.

The Apache dancers in his contest-winning design have the same quality of timelessness to them as do the equally colorful mesas that form the scenic backdrop to the dance. Native Americans, for Fogel, seemed to represent a certain vibrancy he identified with, and he was profoundly affected by their culture. Rowan loved the design submitted to him. On the back of the photograph of the composition he wrote in pencil: “Landscape preferred in this design.)I

personally prefer both landscape and figure in this design-very handsome).” It was, in the words of Karal Ann Marling, “without question, the closest thing to outright abstraction approved by the Section to date (Marling, p.223).” The winning composition was placed at the top row center of *Life* magazine’s color section of the “48 States Competition” winners in an article entitled “Mural America for Rural Americans.” The caption read: “Seymour Fogel is painting Indians of the southwest doing a traditional ceremonial dance... (*Life*, Dec.4, 1939).”

But the “rural Americans” the work was intended for had a decidedly different view of the mural that was intended to grace their new Post Office in Safford, Arizona.

The Controversy

Problems soon arose that neither the artist nor the Section had anticipated (e.g., Schamel and Haverkamp, 1995). Citizens of Safford, Arizona, were up in arms over the proposed mural. Fogel saw his work as a tribute to American Indian culture of the Southwest. Rowan saw it as an exceptional work that met the highest artistic standards. Many people in Safford, however saw only Apaches-and they hated Apaches with a vengeance. These protesters reflected the prevailing prejudice that views American Indians in Arizona as worthless degenerates, or-most dangerous to the Indians-members of a vanishing era. A widespread view asserted that “God knew what he was about in making the white man victorious on this continent (Campbell, p. 185,).” This was 1939, and many of the local citizens of Safford could remember family members or relatives lost to Apache raids. Most lacked the objectivity to view the actions of Cochise and other Apache chiefs as possible reciprocation in kind for broken treaties, incursions into their land, and atrocities committed by white settlers. A letter from the Graham County, Arizona, Chamber of Commerce to the Section read, in part, “This is strictly an agricultural community

which was settled by Mormon pioneers. In their early struggles so much trouble was encountered with the Indians, whose chief Geronimo, that any thought of depicting their chief enemy in their public building is distasteful to this generation, many of whose parents were either slain or cruelly treated by the Indians (Marling, p. 224).”

Fogel was somewhat dumbfounded. Attempts on his part to mollify the local citizens by assuring them that these were peaceful American Indians performing a nonthreatening ceremonial dance fell on deaf ears. Apaches were “the enemy,” period. The furor became so intense that Rowan, against his personal wishes and artistic sensibilities, reluctantly ordered the design scrapped. In the interest of peace, Fogel was asked to bring the mural in line with the dictum that the public was the patron of the arts. Rather than merely redesigning the existing wall space, Fogel was forced to design seven vignettes that would now adorn a long wall of the Safford Post Office (which had been redesigned). Now thoroughly sanitized of all of the offensive material, Fogel’s revised designs were ready to be painted in the Safford Post Office. The six vignettes, plus a small decoration beneath a clock, were called *The History of the Gila Valley*. Like much art reworked on orders of the Section, they represented local history, culture, and industry in the way the local community preferred to see it.

In the final analysis, what happened at Safford, Arizona, was what happened to so many Section murals throughout the country. Compositions selected for their superior artistry and classicism of design flew in the face of the very people for whom the murals were intended. Certainly not all of the problems could have been anticipated. But enough controversy was aroused to keep artists continually redoing compositions and Section spokesmen continually practicing damage control. In the end, it came down to a difference in vision: the vision of the federal government workers viewing the nation as a whole and the vision of local citizens with

their particular cultural viewpoints and social dynamics. The artist was very much caught between these two forces and had to frequently compromise his/her own vision in an attempt to please both the particular community and the federal government whose financial control carried considerable powers of persuasion.

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