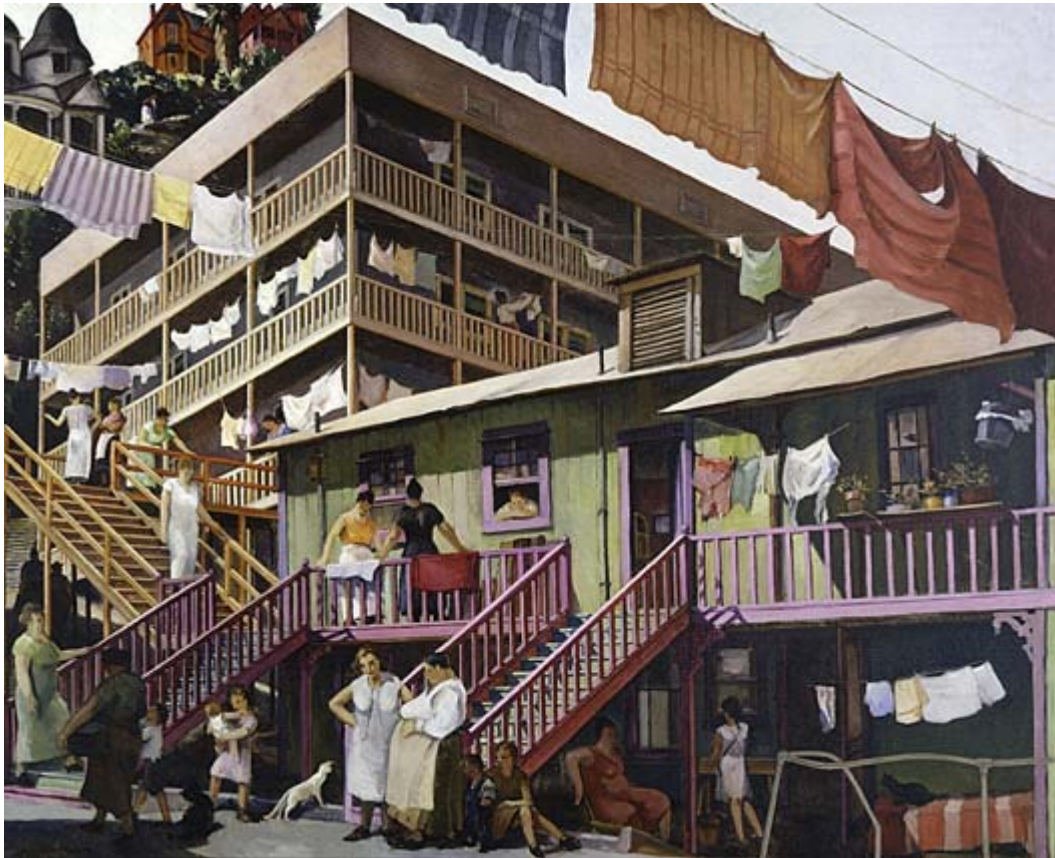




Artful Connections Teacher Guide:

Reshaping American Life: 1930s

Grades 7+



**Videoconference programs at the
Smithsonian American Art Museum are supported
by the Smithsonian Women's Committee.**



Tips for a Successful Videoconference

Before the Videoconference

- ❑ Check with your technology coordinator to ensure your school has compatible videoconferencing equipment (H.323 protocol).
- ❑ **At least four weeks prior** to your preferred dates, schedule your videoconference with the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC): <http://www.cilc.org>. Search the list of content providers for Smithsonian American Art Museum to view a list of our programs. All requests made on CILC will be routed to the museum and our staff will contact you to set up a test call.

Please note: We recommend you book early due to high demand for limited time slots.

- ❑ **At least one week prior** to your program date:
 - Staff will contact you with the assigned videoconference presenter's name and e-mail. Contact the presenter to discuss your plans for integrating this topic with your curriculum. Your videoconference presenter may suggest ways to customize the content of the videoconference to your needs.
 - Complete a successful test call at the scheduled time with the American Art Museum staff. This is a good time to practice turning the equipment on and off and locating the volume and other functions of your videoconference equipment.
 - Identify a space where all your students will be able to sit comfortably within your camera's view, see a projected PowerPoint, and hear the videoconference presenter.
 - Review videoconference rules and expectations with your students. Students should speak loudly and clearly to the presenter, one at a time. It's helpful to have students raise their hands and for you to call on them before they speak.
 - Review the pre-visit material (available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>). Encourage your students to write down questions for the videoconference presenter elicited by the pre-visit activities. Questions about the content, artwork, museum, and (within reason) the presenter are welcome!

During the Videoconference

- ❑ Make sure students are comfortably seated within view of the camera and can readily see the videoconference screen and projected PowerPoint presentation.
- ❑ Classroom-appropriate behavior is essential to a successful videoconference program. Students should listen to the presenter as well as each other and should behave respectfully.
- ❑ Encourage your students to ask and answer questions and give their opinions and ideas. Remind students to speak loudly and clearly for the presenter.
- ❑ Encourage your students to exercise the observation and interpretation skills you introduced with the pre-visit materials.



- ❑ Help the videoconference presenter maintain classroom management. Call on students to prompt them to ask and answer questions. Consider rephrasing or restating a question if you know your students have something to say but are shy or may not understand the question. If the presenter cannot hear students, repeat their answers for the presenter.

After the Videoconference

- ❑ Incorporate the appropriate videoconference post-lesson into your classroom curriculum (available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>).
- ❑ Contact the videoconference presenter with any follow-up questions from your students.
- ❑ Contact American Art staff (AmericanArtEducation@si.edu) with your comments and suggestions. Evaluation and program improvement are a priority and we welcome your comments.
- ❑ Follow the link to CILC below and complete a brief survey about your videoconference experience.
 - Reshaping American Life: 1930s <http://cilc.org/evaluation.aspx?pass=4ShsQ6a9ly>



Reshaping American Life: 1930s (Grades 7 +)

Overview

Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal provided work for artists who created murals and paintings that reflect American life including the effect of the failing economy and the Dust Bowl. After an introduction to American art of the 1930s through a pre-visit activity, participation in the videoconference, and a post-visit lesson to cement concepts, your students will be better able to:

- Understand the historical context of 1930s America, including the Great Depression and agricultural hardships
- Understand the effect the stock market crash, unemployment, and the Dust Bowl had on American life
- Discuss the role the New Deal played in providing relief, recovery, and reform during the 1930s
- Reflect upon and discuss artworks created during the 1930s and under the programs of the New Deal
- Use vocabulary to articulate observations and interpretations of artworks

National Standards

Visual Arts

K-12.3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas;

K-12.4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures;

K-12.5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others;

K-12.6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

US History

K-4.3 The history of the United States: democratic principles and values and the peoples from many cultures who contributed to its cultural, economic, and political heritage;

5-12.8 Era 8 The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945).

Civics

K-12.1 Civic life, politics, and government.



Vocabulary

US History/Civics

Dust Bowl – (n.) a period when the productivity of midwestern farm land was destroyed by dust storms and severe drought on the American prairies during the 1930s

fireside chat – (n.) radio speeches between 1933 and 1944 delivered by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in which he encouraged Americans to have faith in his New Deal programs as well as banking institutions

Great Depression – (n.) part of a worldwide economic downturn before World War II, beginning with the American stock market crash of 1929

migration – (n.) the movement of populations from one place to another. For example, the movement of humans or animals in search of new or additional resources

New Deal – (n.) a group of programs passed between 1933 and 1937 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to help relieve, recover, and reform America in response to the Great Depression

Public Works of Art Project – (n.) part of a New Deal agency, the PWAP supported artists with federal funds from December 1933 to June 1934 in exchange for the creation of public works of art

stock market – (n.) rather than a physical place, the stock market is an economic network that allows people to trade shares (units of ownership) in international companies at a fluctuating market price

urbanization – (n.) the growth of cities or other urban areas in response to loss of farming and other rural jobs

Visual Arts

composition – (n.) the arrangement of elements such as shape, line, value, and form within an artwork

interpret – (v.) to derive meaning from observed features or traits

landscape – (n.) a picture representing natural scenery

museum – (n.) an organization traditionally concerned with acquiring, conserving, studying, and exhibiting objects

observe – (v.) to note the visible features or traits of an artwork

portrait – (n.) a pictorial representation of a person, usually showing the face

subject – (n.) the principal idea conveyed by a work of art




symbol – (n.) something that stands for something else due to a relationship, association, or accidental resemblance¹

¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2004. [adapted]





Topic Related Artworks

A representative sample of the artworks in our collection that support the videoconference topic appears below. These are suggested for use during pre-videoconference activities. Images used during your videoconference may vary.

<p>TITLE: Dust Bowl DATE: 1933 ARTIST: Alexandre Hogue MEDIUM: oil on canvas DIMENSIONS: 24 x 32 5/8 in. (61 x 82.8 cm) CREDIT LINE: Gift of International Business Machines Corporation ACC. NUMBER: 1969.123 WEB LINK: http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=10614</p>	 <p>The painting depicts a desolate landscape under a dark, stormy sky. A bright sun or moon is visible on the horizon, casting a long, dark shadow across the field. In the foreground, there are several wooden posts connected by wires, suggesting a fence or a structure in a barren, dusty environment.</p>
<p>TITLE: Tenement Flats DATE: 1933-1934 ARTIST: Millard Sheets MEDIUM: oil on canvas DIMENSIONS: 40 1/4 x 50 1/4 in. (102.1 x 127.6 cm.) CREDIT LINE: Transfer from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service ACC. NUMBER: 1965.18.48 WEB LINK: http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=22262</p>	 <p>The painting shows a multi-story tenement building with several balconies. People are visible on the balconies and on the ground level, engaged in various activities. Laundry is hanging on lines, and the overall scene depicts a busy, crowded urban environment.</p>
<p>TITLE: Relief Blues DATE: ca. 1938 ARTIST: O. Louis Guglielmi MEDIUM: tempera on fiberboard DIMENSIONS: 24 x 30 in. (61.1 x 76.2 cm.) CREDIT LINE: Smithsonian American Art Museum Transfer from The Museum of Modern Art ACC. NUMBER: 1971.447.34 WEB LINK: http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=9726</p>	 <p>The painting depicts an interior scene with four people. A woman in a blue top is standing and talking on a telephone. A woman in a yellow top is sitting at a table, looking towards the viewer. A man in a white shirt is sitting at the table, looking at a book or document. Another man in a blue cap and green jacket is sitting at the table, looking towards the man in the white shirt. A small table with a lamp is in the foreground.</p>



<p>TITLE: Golden Gate Bridge DATE: 1934 ARTIST: Ray Strong MEDIUM: oil on canvas DIMENSIONS: 44 1/8 x 71 3/4 in. (112.0 x 182.3 cm.) CREDIT LINE: Smithsonian American Art Museum Transfer from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service ACC. NUMBER: 1965.18.50 WEB LINK: http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=23442</p>	 <p>A painting by Ray Strong titled 'Golden Gate Bridge' (1934). It depicts the bridge under construction in a bay, with a large crane and various buildings on the shore. The scene is set against a backdrop of red hills and a blue sky.</p>
<p>TITLE: Baseball at Night DATE: 1934 ARTIST: Morris Kantor MEDIUM: oil on linen DIMENSIONS: 37 x 47 1/4 in. (94.0 x 120.0 cm.) CREDIT LINE: Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of Mrs. Morris Kantor ACC. NUMBER: 1976.146.18 WEB LINK: http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=12930</p>	 <p>A painting by Morris Kantor titled 'Baseball at Night' (1934). It shows a baseball game in progress on a field at night, with spectators lining the stands and bright stadium lights illuminating the scene.</p>



Additional Resources

Thomas Hart Benton: Zoom It

<http://americanart.si.edu/education/insights/zoom/benton/>

Explore our vibrant 22-foot-long mural *Achelous and Hercules* using the Zoomify tool! In this mural, Benton conjures the nation's strength and energy in muscular male figures and in the surging movement of the composition. His bold colors and agricultural subject reflect the sense of abundance and opportunity that characterized postwar society.

The Great Depression

http://americanart.si.edu/education/pdf/sal_great_depression_2.pdf

This portion of the *Scenes of American Life* module looks at artwork and the American experience during the Great Depression.

Picturing the 1930s

http://americanart.si.edu/education/picturing_the_1930s/

Explore the 1930s through paintings, historical documents, music, and video in this virtual 3-d movie theater. Virginia Mecklenburg, senior curator of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, guides your visit.

Podcast: A New Deal for Artists

http://americanart.si.edu/multimedia/podcasts/exhibits/1934_a_newdeal.m4v?width=480&height=336

In our illustrated presentation, "1934: A New Deal for Artists," Co-curator Anne Wagner discusses the Public Works of Art Project and its impact on artists working during the Great Depression. She touches on the federal government and its program to support artists, the lives of artists working on the federal pay roll, and select paintings from the exhibition *1934: A New Deal For Artists*.

A New Deal for Artists

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/new_deal_for_the_arts/index.html

A unique selection of artwork, documents, and photographs highlighting Depression era Federal arts projects from the National Archives.

Dust Bowl Migration

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/dust-bowl-migration/>

Photographs, recorded music, and song lyrics from the Library of Congress document the daily ordeals of rural migrant families from the Great Plains during a decade marked by both the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression.

1934: A New Deal for Artists by Roger Kennedy and Ann Prentice Wagner (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum: 2009).

1934: A New Deal for Artists examines more than fifty paintings in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum created under the auspices of the Public Works of Art Project. With an introductory essay by Roger Kennedy, and individual entries written by Ann Wagner, the book celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the PWAP and explores the thematic concerns and artistic styles of artists who, with the nation, endured economic uncertainty and saw the first major programs of their kind that introduced government patronage for art in the United States.



Learning to Look: Pre-Visit Lesson

Grades 5 – 12

Overview

After completing these activities, students will have strengthened their visual vocabulary by making observations of and expressing their interpretations of artwork.

Discussion

Define “observation” with students. Observations are statements of fact relating to what students see, not what they think might be happening.

Define “interpretation” with students. Interpretations are statements that ascribe meaning to the artwork based on observations.

Present students with one artwork that relates to your scheduled videoconference topic. (A selection of artworks related to each tour is included in the “Tour Information” document available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>). Have students begin by sharing only their observations. When students offer interpretations, or ideas about what they think is happening in the artwork, ask: “What do you see that makes you say that?”

Questions that prompt observations:

- *Who or what do you see in this artwork?*
- *What is the largest thing you see in this picture?*
- *What is the smallest thing you see in this picture?*
- *What colors do you see in the artwork?*
- *Is the scene outside? Inside?*
- *If there are people, are their clothes similar to or different from what you are wearing? How?*
- *Is the scenery similar to or different from where you are? How?*
- *What can you tell me about the colors in this artwork? What color do you see the most?*

Next, invite students to share their interpretations about what is happening in the artwork if they haven’t already done so. It is acceptable for students to have different interpretations of the same object. Make sure students support their interpretations with direct observations about the artwork. You may notice that some observation-focused questions lead directly to interpretation-focused questions. All interpretations should be founded on answers to observation questions.



Questions that prompt interpretations:

- *What is going on in this picture?*
- *Where do you think this scene is taking place?*
- *What season is it? What time of day is it?*
- *When was this artwork made?*
- *What do the scenery and the clothing or objects tell us about when this artwork was made?*
- *Does this scene look like it could be taking place today? Why or why not?*
- *Indicate a figure in the artwork:*
 - *Who is this person?*
 - *Is s/he similar to or different from you? In what ways?*
 - *What is s/he doing?*
 - *What do you think s/he does for a living?*
 - *How does s/he feel?*
 - *Where do you think s/he is?*
 - *What do you think it sounds like where s/he is?*
 - *What do you think it smells like where s/he is?*
 - *What kind of weather is this person experiencing?*
- *How do you think the artist feels about this person or thing in the painting?*
- *How does this artwork make you feel?*
- *How do you think this artist made this artwork?*
- *What types of materials do you think the artist used? Paint? Clay? Wood?*
- *How long do you think it took to make?*
- *What kind of mood or feelings do the colors give the artwork?*
- *Do you like the colors that are in the artwork? If you were the artist, would you have used different colors?*
- *Why do you think this artist made this artwork?*
- *What do you think the artist is trying to say?*

Activity

Have students select a different artwork and complete the included Observation/Interpretation worksheet. To take the activity further, have students refer to it as they write about the work of art. Students can choose words or phrases that they think best describe the artwork and use them as material in a poem, story or podcast.

Questions to ask students:

- *Why did you choose that artwork?*
- *Who did you choose to write about and why did you choose them?*
- *What in the artwork helped you make decisions about what the subject is thinking or feeling?*
- *Did you use the title or date of the artwork to inform your decisions? If so, how did they influence what you wrote? If not, do they contradict or reinforce your interpretation?*



Student: _____

Artwork Title: _____

Artist: _____ Date: _____

Observation	Interpretation
<i>Definition: What you see?</i> <i>Example: Dark grey sky, no rain, dry ground</i>	<i>Definition: What you think based on what you see?</i> <i>Example: A storm is approaching</i>
What is the main idea of the artwork?	



Imagine yourself inside this work of art.

What do you hear?	What do you smell?
What do you taste?	What do you feel?

Imagine that the artwork is one part of a larger story.

What happened right before this moment?
What will happen next?



Post-Visit Lesson: Reshaping American Life: 1930s America

Grades 7 – 12

Overview

After completing this lesson, students will better understand the historical significance of public artwork in their community and the factors – including audience, clientele, and public opinion – that artists under the New Deal had to take into account when creating art.

Background

During the 1930s, as part of the Section of Fine Arts of the New Deal, artists were paid to create fine art murals. This federally funded artwork was made available to all people through its location in public buildings. Post offices were frequently recipients of these artworks because they were located in almost every community.

Artists for the New Deal mural projects were selected through competitions juried by a wide array of people, often including the local postmaster and other artists. Once the artist was selected, he or she worked with the community post office, the town, and the Section of Fine Arts to plan the mural's content, with genre scenes and scenes of local interest being the most popular. Local heroes were celebrated as well. Despite the fact that the mural project was initially inspired by Mexican muralists like Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueriros who often advocated for social change and depicted current events in their work, social realism was discouraged in New Deal murals².

Discussion

Have students examine *Automotive Industry (mural, Detroit Public Library)* by Marvin Beerbohm. Encourage discussion by asking the following questions:

- What's going on in this mural? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What colors repeat throughout the mural? Notice how the artist has used color to connect the auto workers and the machines.
- Do you think *Automotive Industry* was an appropriate mural for a library in Detroit? Why or why not?

Introduce students to the background information highlighted above.

- What do you think the artist had to keep in mind when working with these different groups?
- Given that *Automotive Industry* was made for an existing library, what design considerations do you think the artist had to keep in mind when creating this mural? What if there had been a door or windows on the wall where the mural would be painted?

Activity

² Raynor, Patricia. "Off the Wall: New Deal Post Office Murals." *EnRoute* 6:4 (1997). Web. 19 July 2010.

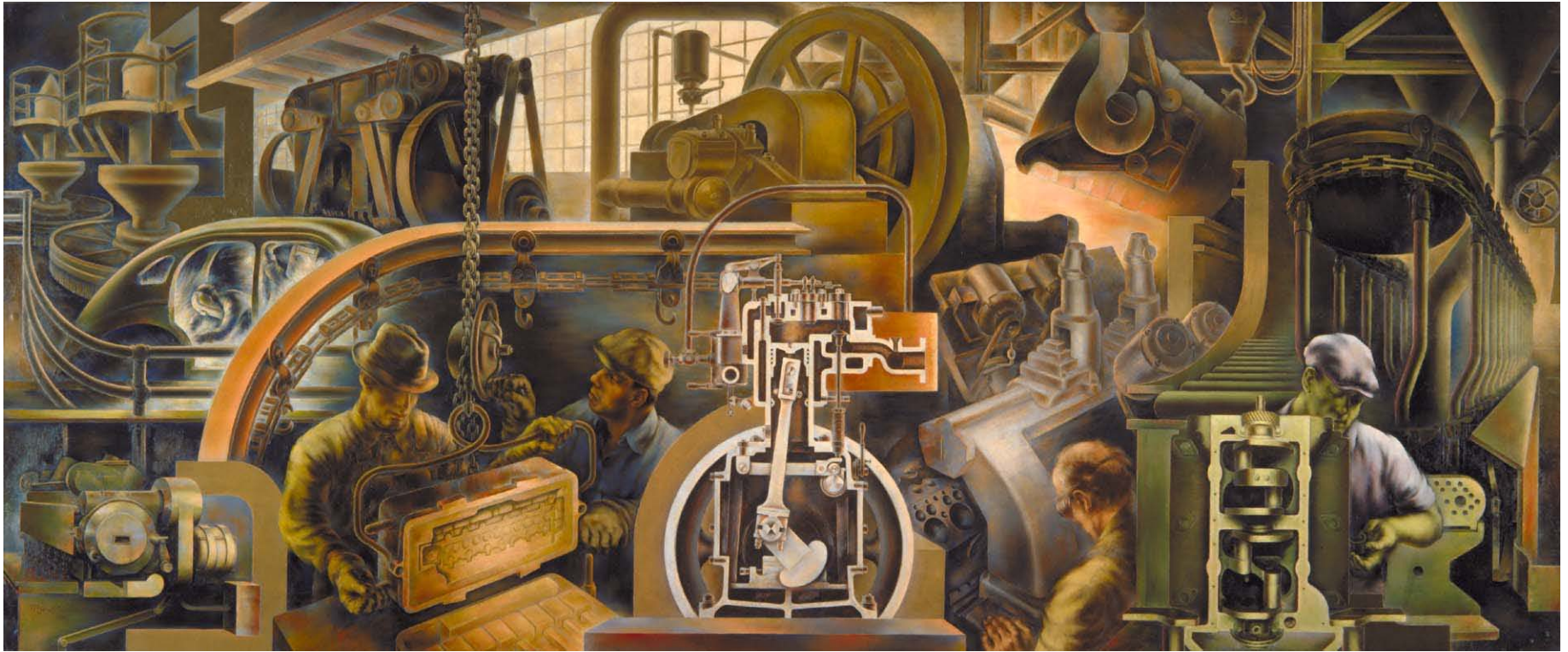


Have students research various public buildings in your community, particularly any buildings that were built during the New Deal era. What is the history of that building? Who uses this space now? Have students identify and interview members of their community about 1) the space's history and use and 2) appropriate themes for a mural.

- What local event or person would you like to see celebrated? What images come to mind when you think of that person or event?
- What do you think is the most important to the community? How can you depict that?

Have students develop a mural study for a particular space within that public building that reflects the community's history or culture. Have students consider the following questions when creating their mural study:

- Why do people come to this building? How is the space used by the public?
- What images or scenes would be appropriate for this public space?
- How can the character or concerns of the community best be reflected in a public mural?



Marvin Beerbohm, *Automotive Industry* (mural, Detroit Public Library), 1940, 1968.141