

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

The Murals of Fred Ross:
A Quest for Relevance

John Leroux

A Thesis

In

The Department

Of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 15, 2002

© John Leroux, 2002



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-68501-2

Canada

Abstract

The Murals of Fred Ross: A Quest for Relevance

John Leroux

This thesis investigates and analyses the early mural work (1946-1954) by the New Brunswick artist Frederick Joseph Ross (b. 1927).

Fred Ross studied art at the Saint John Vocational School during the early 1940s, where he was introduced by his teacher Ted Campbell to Renaissance art as well as the work and ideals of the post-revolutionary Mexican muralists and the New Deal-sponsored American W.P.A. artists. Influenced by their social content and compositional strategies, Ross produced five figurative murals over the ensuing years: *Annual School Picnic* (1946), *City Slums* (1950), and *Humanistic Education* (1954), all of which were installed at the Saint John Vocational School; *The Destruction of War and Rebuilding the World Through Education* (1948), a two-panel mural installed at Fredericton High School; and a mural at the Hotel de la Borda in Taxco, Mexico (1949). Of the six, only *City Slums*, *Humanistic Education*, and the Hotel de la Borda Mural are still extant and in situ.

Prominent realist and social artistic convictions emerged in Saint John during the pre- and post-World War II periods. Painters like Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey, among others, shared a similarly sympathetic outlook that portrayed the desperation, angst, and joys of the working class. Such models, combined with Ross's own murals, position the rise of muralism in Saint John during the 1940s, its ebb by the late 1950s, and its subsequent reevaluation and rebirth in public interest during the 1990s.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to this thesis by supplying information and assistance, or by having the patience to sit down with me for interviews. I am deeply indebted to them all and hope that this end result will be as rewarding for them to read as it was for myself to research and bring together.

I am both fortunate and grateful to have had the pleasure of Professor Sandra Paikowsky of Concordia University as my supervisor. Her insight and thorough knowledge of Canadian art and particularly Saint John art history has been invaluable to this thesis. Without her editorial feedback, friendship and patience over the past several years, this project could not have taken shape. My sincerest thanks also goes to my two readers, Professors Brian Foss and Catherine MacKenzie, both of Concordia University, for their discerning comments on content and editing.

I would like to acknowledge the help and support of Charles Hill and the staff of the National Gallery of Canada, Peter Larocque and the staff of the New Brunswick Museum, Sheila Ross, Sharon Cody, Dr. Stuart Smith, David Coughy, Meghan Peters, Fellows & Company Limited, my parents Conrad and Beth Leroux for their tremendous support, and my brother Gary Leroux for his words of wisdom and editing grace.

Finally, I wish to give my utmost thanks and respect to Fred Ross, who was always encouraging and extremely helpful to all my requests for information and interviews, and continues to be an inspiration to artists and the public alike.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	1
Introduction	5
Chapter One:	
Saint John Between the Wars: Artists, Teachers and Students Look Inward... and Outward	14
Chapter Two:	
<i>Annual School Picnic</i>	30
Chapter Three:	
<i>The Destruction of War & Rebuilding the World Through Education</i>	36
Chapter Four:	
Mexico and the “Hotel de la Borda Mural”	54
Chapter Five:	
<i>City Slums</i>	63
Chapter Six:	
<i>Humanistic Education</i>	73
Chapter Seven:	
Later Mural Work	81
Conclusion:	
Renewal & Relevance	91
Endnotes	98
Selected Bibliography	120
Illustrations	133

List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1. Fred Ross, c. 1950.
- Fig. 2. Miller Brittain, *Longshoremen*, 1940, tinted glazes on board.
- Fig. 3. Ted Campbell, [*Portrait of Norman Cody*], 1937, graphite on paper.
- Fig. 4. Front façade of the Saint John Vocational School, c. 1926.
- Fig. 5. A group of Saint John Vocational School art students at the New Brunswick Museum studying decorative art, c. 1945. Ross is the third student from the left.
- Fig. 6. The main floor auditorium doors at the Saint John Vocational School, showing the four murals by Betty Sutherland within the glazed panels (c. 1940). Fred Ross's tempera on plaster murals are on the other sides of the pilasters and above the auditorium door alcove.
- Fig. 7. Student murals on the Saint John Vocational School cafeteria walls, 1942.
- Fig. 8. Jack Humphrey, *Draped Head*, 1931, oil on board.
- Fig. 9. Pegi Nicol MacLeod, [*Fisher Vocational School Mural*], 1941, oil on canvas glued to plaster wall.
- Fig. 10. Miller Brittain working on one of the cartoons for his Saint John Tuberculosis Hospital mural, 1941, charcoal, crayon and chalk on brown paper.
- Fig. 11. Lobby of the University of New Brunswick's Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium in Fredericton, showing Miller Brittain's pendant murals depicting a boxing match on the left, and a women's volleyball game on the right, 1941, mixed media on masonite.
- Fig. 12. Jack Humphrey, *Building Ships for the Merchant Navy*, 1944, oil.
- Fig. 13. Fred Ross, cartoon for *Annual School Picnic*, 1946, graphite on paper.
- Fig. 14. Fred Ross working on the cartoon for *Annual School Picnic*, 1946.

- Fig. 15. Ted Campbell inspecting Fred Ross's *Annual School Picnic*, 1946, casein and oil washes on masonite.
- Fig. 16. Fred Ross sketching from a student model for *Annual School Picnic*, 1946.
- Fig. 17. Fred Ross and an unidentified man installing *Annual School Picnic* on the west stairwell wall of the Saint John Vocational School, 1946.
- Fig. 18. Principal of Harbourview High School (formerly Saint John Vocational School) holding the top left panel of *Annual School Picnic*.
- Fig. 19. Fred Ross, cartoon for *The Destruction of War*, 1946-47, charcoal and coloured chalk on brown paper.
- Fig. 20. Fred Ross, cartoon for *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1946-47, charcoal and coloured chalk on brown paper.
- Fig. 21. Fred Ross, *The Destruction of War*, 1948, casein tempera on masonite.
- Fig. 22. Fred Ross, *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1948, casein tempera on masonite.
- Fig. 23. Fredericton High School auditorium showing the final installation of *The Destruction of War* and *Rebuilding the World Through Education*.
- Fig. 24. Diego Rivera, *The Embrace*, 1923, fresco mixed with nopal juice.
- Fig. 25. *Fallingwater*, Frank Lloyd Wright's house for Edgar Kaufmann in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, completed in 1936.
- Fig. 26. Symeon Shimin, *Contemporary Justice and the Child*, 1939-40, tempera on canvas.
- Fig. 27. Miller Brittain, [*mural for the Lancaster Veterans' Hospital*], 1949, tempera on masonite.
- Fig. 28. Rosso Fiorentino, *Moses and the Daughters of Jethro*, c. 1520, oil on canvas.
- Fig. 29. Diego Rivera, *The History of Cardiology*, 1943-44, fresco.
- Fig. 30. Diego Rivera, *Distributing Arms*, 1928, fresco.
- Fig. 31. Diego Rivera, *Communards*, 1928, lithograph.

- Fig. 32. Fred Ross, preliminary sketch for *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1946, graphite on paper.
- Fig. 33. Fred Ross painting the final mural of *The Destruction of War*, with the small study drawing and cartoon photos in the foreground, 1947.
- Fig. 34. Fred Ross painting, with a framed panel study of the central couple in *Rebuilding the World Through Education* hanging on the rear wall, 1947.
- Fig. 35. Peter Blume, *The Rock*, 1948, oil on canvas.
- Fig. 36. Fred Ross, cartoon for *City Slums*, 1949, charcoal and coloured chalk on brown paper.
- Fig. 37. Fred Ross with Pablo O'Higgins and other students in Taxco, 1949.
- Fig. 38. Pablo O'Higgins, *Middlemen and Monopolists (Intermediarios y monopolistas)*, 1935, fresco.
- Fig. 39. Fred Ross, *Mexican Silver Miners [studies for the Hotel de la Borda Mural]*, 1949, graphite and ink on paper.
- Fig. 40. Fred Ross, *[Hotel de la Borda Mural]*, 1949, casein tempera on wall surface.
- Fig. 41. Fred Ross, *Portrait of a Young Woman, Taxco*, 1949, lithograph.
- Fig. 42. Fred Ross, *Sleeping Figures*, 1949, casein tempera on masonite.
- Fig. 43. Fred Ross, *Diego Rivera Working on the Murals at the Palacio Nacional, Mexico City (i)*, 1950, black chalk on paper.
- Fig. 44. Fred Ross preparing the final wall drawing of *City Slums*, 1950.
- Fig. 45. Nearly completed stage of *City Slums*, showing the study of the black youth on the right-hand pilaster, 1950.
- Fig. 46. Fred Ross, *City Slums*, 1950, casein tempera on plaster.
- Fig. 47. Paul Cadmus, *Sailors and Floosies*, 1938, oil and tempera on linen on pressed wood panel.
- Fig. 48. Paul Cadmus, *Playground*, 1948, egg tempera on pressed wood panel.

- Fig. 49. View of the Saint John Vocational School's main floor central hallway, showing from left to right: Fred Ross's *City Slums*, [male and female studying] (above the doors), and *Humanistic Education*.
- Fig. 50. Fred Ross, *Study for Humanistic Education*, 1953, sanguine conté on paper.
- Fig. 51. Raphael, *Parnassus*, c. 1510, fresco.
- Fig. 52. Eugene Berman, *Sentinels of the Night*, 1938.
- Fig. 53. Fred Ross, *Humanistic Education*, 1954, casein tempera on plaster.
- Fig. 54. Fred Willar, [Saint John Vocational School library mural], 1956, casein tempera on plaster.
- Fig. 55. Fred Ross, [Prince of Wales College mural], 1961.
- Fig. 56. Photos of Fred Ross's [Prince of Wales College mural], showing the later ceiling and wall alterations.
- Fig. 57. Fred Ross, [Centennial Building mural], 1967, mixed media.
- Fig. 58. Fred Ross's sixth floor mural, reproduced in a March 13, 1967 advertisement in Fredericton's *Daily Gleaner*, celebrating the opening of the Centennial Building.
- Fig. 59. Fred Ross, *Harlequin and Four Dancers*, 1955, oil and casein tempera on panel.
- Fig. 60. Cossa and Roberti, *Altarpiece of St. Lazzaro*, c. 1476-78, canvas. (destroyed in 1945).
- Fig. 61. Fred Ross, *Portrait of Sheila in Blue*, 1955, oil on masonite.
- Fig. 62. Diego Rivera, *Portrait of Ruth Rivera*, 1949, oil on canvas.
- Fig. 63. Fred Ross, *Still Life*, c. 1980, mixed media.
- Fig. 64. Paul Cadmus, *Apple Peeler*, 1959, egg tempera on board.

Introduction

A tremendous creative aura in the arts enveloped Saint John from the 1930s to the 1950s, a time when the artists of New Brunswick's largest city produced an impressive body of paintings and drawings, many of which have secured a substantial position in the history of Canadian art. Through the continued financial hardships following the Great Depression to the tumultuous events surrounding World War II and beyond, the artists of Saint John found visual inspiration in their circumstances and locality, creating a body of work that is exceptional for a city of its size. Avery Shaw (1907-1957), former Curator of Art at the New Brunswick Museum and a respected artist in his own right, wrote the following in his 1947 *Canadian Art* article "Looking forward in Saint John":

On the writer's first visit to Saint John, some years ago, the impression of especial activity in art was remarkably strong, and has remained so. The problem: why should this city, deplorable in its economic and physical conditions, produce so much creative vitality is still unanswered, but the fact of this vitality remains as obvious as ever. Painting is accepted as a lifetime pursuit.¹

Frederick Joseph Ross (b. May 12, 1927, Fig. 1) is generally viewed as the youngest painter associated with this era's artistic prosperity, and is clearly a product of, and

devoted to, his native city of Saint John. His first major works, which brought him nationwide attention while still in his teens, were large figurative murals located in Saint John and Fredericton: murals that inspired public testimony to the extensive “golden age” painting activity of pre and post-War Saint John. The principal murals, executed between 1946 and 1954, are *Annual School Picnic* (Saint John, 1946), *The Destruction of War & Rebuilding the World Through Education* (two panels, Fredericton, 1948), *City Slums* (Saint John, 1950) and *Humanistic Education* (Saint John, 1954). Another mural was painted in Mexico at the Hotel de la Borda (Taxco, 1949). Of the six murals, only *City Slums*, *Humanistic Education*, and the Hotel de la Borda mural are extant and in situ. *Annual School Picnic* was removed from the Vocational School walls in 1985 and was thought to be lost until its rediscovery in 1997. *The Destruction of War & Rebuilding the World Through Education* were similarly removed from view in 1954 and lost by the 1970s.

After *Humanistic Education*, Ross would paint three more murals over the next fifteen years, but these are isolated deviations from his principal painting focus of representational figuration. Where Ross’s figurative murals of 1946-1954 are critical to understanding his visual development and his probing of external sources, the post-1954 murals are secondary to his overall body of work, being somewhat loose experiments in semi-abstraction, a method with which Ross admits he was not at ease.

Fred Ross’s early mural work is a multi-layered hybrid of sources, inspired by Renaissance and American Works Progress Administration murals, and most significantly, by Diego

Rivera (1886-1957) and the Mexican mural movement. One must recognize that Ross's murals discussed in this thesis were completed when he was between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, when developing artists are typically reaching out to newly-discovered sources, techniques and relevant ideologies. Hence, the plurality of associations in his murals, ranging from modern Mexico and America to Renaissance Italy, should come as no surprise. This extended framework however, would remain emotionally tied to Saint John, with all the issues, hardships and human potential that the city harboured. While it would be safe to say that Ross's early murals were generated at a time when what was regarded as the "golden age" of Saint John painting was waning, as new currents of aesthetic modernism became the norm in central Canada during the late 1940s and early 1950s, a privileging of figuration and social interests was not easily relinquished by the artists of the Port City.

To this day, the Atlantic provinces maintain a strong reputation of adherence to figuration and realist painting. Notwithstanding the fertile artistic output of Saint John from the early 1930s onward which nurtured Ross, Alex Colville's role as a teacher at Mount Allison University's art department in Sackville, New Brunswick from 1946 to 1963 helped foster an entire generation of Canada's most respected realist painters, including Christopher Pratt, Mary Pratt and Tom Forrestall. Although a full discussion of these circumstances goes beyond the specific limitations of the thesis, J. Russell Harper asserts in *Painting in Canada: a history* that "the strength of figurative painting in eastern Canada should cause no surprise. Traditionalism dies slowly when an artist works in a milieu far removed from the Great cities. Eastern galleries, particularly the Beaverbrook

Art Gallery in Fredericton, have promoted local artistic interest but until recently have been particularly partial to traditional painting.’’²

The eminent Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye’s principle that “the most specific settings (for artists) have the best chance of becoming universal in their appeal”³ could find no better relevance than within the lives of Ross and other artists intimately tied to Saint John. Ross’s murals strove to represent fundamental human issues, while still maintaining a well-grounded relevance to his own community. He achieved this through his continued use of friends and the familiar local environment as models, but especially through his selection of themes; themes that he personally selected for each mural for both their appropriateness to the audience, and concerns that were pertinent to his own life at those particular moments in time.

The conflict between ‘location’ and ‘isolation,’ or ‘metropolis’ versus ‘periphery’ for the Saint John artists is a considerable issue concerning where and how they achieved artistic success. Several key figures in Canadian art advocated complete immersion in the surrounding environment at all levels as necessary to stimulate creative capacity and to create a truly “national” art. Lawren S. Harris, in his 1928 essay “Creative Art and Canada” attempted to resolve the apparent conflict between the binds of specific location and achieving artistic transcendence, maintaining that all manifestations in art result from their milieu: “Creative life commences to stir because of the stimulus of the total environment, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.... We have thus the seeming paradox that [the creative faculty] needs the stimulus of earth resonance and of a

particular place, people and time to evoke into activity a faculty that is universal and timeless.”⁴

Many artists of Saint John have often criticized the decaying economic and physical state of the city, along with their perceived insularity and disconnection from the rest of Canada, both ideologically and geographically. However, it can be argued that it was in fact these very conditions and the accompanying remoteness that permitted and encouraged the thriving of their particular view of the world around them, and their desire to look beyond the confines of Canadian borders for artistic inspiration. Dr. Stuart Smith, Curator of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery from 1964 to 1969, acknowledges that in Saint John “there was the freedom that comes from being neglected, there’s space. You’re not being pushed by what is the guy doing down the street. You can ruminate.”⁵ Alex Colville, for example, decided to establish himself in New Brunswick after his discharge from official War Artist service during World War II. Seeking a creative place and environment, he settled in the small town of Sackville, where he had lived while studying art at Mount Allison University. Embracing its setting of familiarity, meaning, and particular associations, Colville deemed that “universality comes from the particular... and by immersing oneself in the particular, it is possible to be universal.”⁶ Similarly, Nothrop Frye, who grew up in Moncton during the 1920s, asserted that painting subtly depends on roots, a restricted locale, and decentralization, where “the artist seems to draw strength from a very limited community.... They need a certain cultural coherence within their community, but the community itself is not their market.”⁷

Ross's early murals are critical to understanding his development and inclusion in the professional art circles of Saint John and beyond. In a 1955 newspaper article on Ross, the first sentence immediately identifies him as "one of the outstanding mural painters in Canada."⁸ Yet until the Beaverbrook Art Gallery's 1993 Fred Ross retrospective, *A Timeless Humanism – The Art of Fred Ross*, and its accompanying publication by the exhibition curator, Tom Smart, much post-1960 writing on Ross played down or ignored the importance of his murals and his North American travels. Paul Duval in his 1974 book *High Realism in Canada* went so far as to claim that "Ross' studies in Mexico had virtually no influence upon his style or subject matter."⁹ This completely belies the views of Ross himself, who credits his substantial Mexican and American art-related travels as being some of the most encouraging and practical aesthetic experiences he had ever undergone.

Until the Beaverbrook exhibition, the early murals usually had been examined as precursors to Ross's production of easel paintings and graphic works, pursuits for which he is best known. Smart's analysis of Ross's murals is respectful and very astute, yet still leaves many elements and avenues of influences unexplored. This is understandable considering the catalogue's mandate of covering Ross's entire professional life. However, several key aspects of Ross's mural career were left out altogether, such as his three post-1954 murals.¹⁰ Although they have been acknowledged as key to his formal and public growth as an artist, the murals are often seen as a more or less self-contained capsule that were essentially abandoned once Ross "found his way." I propose that taken as a whole and examined as a progressive linear series, they are benchmarks of his understanding of

distinct influences and techniques from artists rarely mentioned in connection with Ross, that would also prove visible and important within much of his later work. Also, by relating the murals' scope of vision (both formal and thematic) to Ross's corresponding social and work-related realm of the same time, they are intimately bound together and form an explicit pattern of maturation and growth. It was indeed the intense exploration and examination of muralism that supported and guided him to the development and command of his later work.

Ross's murals also constitute a distinct, yet largely overlooked moment in Canadian art history. Consequently, this thesis will attempt to locate the formal artistic inspiration and focus of his murals in relation to concurrent practices in New Brunswick, and will refer to the rest of North America during the years following the Great Depression up to the mid-1950s. It will examine the physical environment of Saint John, a city that cultivated a very rich sensibility towards art, along with an intimate rapport among a generally close-knit group of artists. The thesis will likewise explore Ross's motivation for withdrawing from large-scale, socially-inclined mural projects by the mid-1950s to undertake more introspective, solitary themes in his art. It will also investigate the often-cited, but debatable, perceptions that New Brunswick's artists were isolated (physically and/or ideologically) from Canada's centers of media and art production, and whether this circumstance reduced artistic and financial opportunities for painters such as Fred Ross.

Chapter One will examine the historic, physical and economic conditions of Saint John up to the 1940s, and their effect on creating a vibrant environment that encouraged the

thriving of visual art. Within this environment several key figures and institutions asserted a tremendous effect on Fred Ross and the arts in Saint John: the New Brunswick Museum and its collections, library, and art exhibitions; the artists Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey and Ted Campbell; and the Saint John Vocational School where Ross studied under these mentors and was to later become a teacher. The choice of these men to remain and establish their careers in New Brunswick is regularly cited as both a blessing and a burden to their national renown. While Ross was seldom critical of his environment, the detached setting of the artist in Saint John will be investigated. This chapter will also probe the roots of muralism in New Brunswick, including tangible precedents by professional artists, and its acceptance as a valid field of study at art schools such as the Saint John Vocational School during the 1940s.

The following chapters will each focus on an individual mural and are organized chronologically according to the murals' dates of completion. Chapter Two examines Ross's first executed large-scale mural, *Annual School Picnic*, and investigates many of the technical and compositional issues which Ross was facing for the first time. Chapter Three looks at *The Destruction of War & Rebuilding the World Through Education*, their imagery, and the distinct North American precedents and influences which began to play an extremely important role in Ross's murals and paintings. Chapter Four deals with Ross's two trips to Mexico; the first being in 1949 when he executed the Hotel de la Borda mural, and the second in 1950, where he met Diego Rivera. This chapter focuses on Ross's direct contact with the modern Mexican mural movement and its relationship to his work. Chapter Five investigates *City Slums*, its precedents and influences, and its

effect as a impassioned commentary on the urban conditions of Saint John at mid-century. Chapter Six examines *City Slums*' pendant mural, *Humanistic Education*, and their contrasting thematic relationship, Ross's heightened emphasis on Renaissance sources in his art, and his increasing artistic introspection. Chapter Seven looks at Ross's much ignored mural works from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, including the murals' ties with currents of abstraction and the reasons behind Ross's apparent abandonment of muralism. Finally, the Conclusion will explore the eventual fate of the murals, the reasons for the public's neglect and eventual renewal of interest in them, as well as the murals' collective relationship to his development as a mature artist and his later easel work.

Chapter One

Saint John Between the Wars:

Artists, Teachers and Students Look Inward... and Outward

Saint John has long been a city of high contrasts. On one hand, it is a consciously blue-collar community with visible urban poverty; yet it is also home to a conservative upper-class that includes some of the world's wealthiest individuals. Its built environment is as architecturally rich and historically significant as any city in Eastern Canada, with notable examples of Loyalist, Georgian, and Victorian buildings. Formerly Eastern Canada's industrial and economic heart, Saint John never regained its economic good fortune after the late 19th-century decline of its wooden shipbuilding industry. However, Saint John's roots go deep, and its citizens, at once victims of its state and proud advocates for its traditions, are the first to proclaim the virtues of their historic city. This fierce loyalty has either cursed or blessed its artists for generations, and for that reason, lies at the forefront of their development, their work, and their place in the history of Canadian art.

In the late 19th century Saint John was still a city of great economic promise. By 1899, it boasted a population of almost fifty thousand, an electric streetcar system, a downtown filled with architectural splendor, and a manufacturing, financial and transportation environment second to none on Canada's East Coast. In a breath of optimism and self-congratulation, its tourism pamphlets reflected this continued confidence: "Her wide, straight streets, carved through the solid Devonian rocks flanked by massive buildings of

brick and stone, are the monuments of a people who know no such word as failure... her future is assured.... St. John, which had grown reminiscent, is vibrant with the force of commercial resurrection.”¹

Thirty years after this passage was written, Saint John was paralyzed by the effects of the Great Depression. This plight, however, did little to hinder what is now regarded as Saint John's "golden age" of artistic creativity: the 1930s and 1940s. At that time, the Saint John art milieu was guided by three respected artists: Miller Brittain (1912-1968), Jack Humphrey (1901-1967), and Ted Campbell (1904-1985), who was also Art Director of the Saint John Vocational School and would become Fred Ross's most influential teacher.² Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey were both extremely significant contributors to 20th-century New Brunswick art, rising to national prominence during the 1930s and 1940s through exhibitions and publications that lauded their staunch commitment to a gritty realism stemming directly from observation of their immediate surroundings. For years they were the only members of the Canadian Group of Painters who lived east of Quebec.³ Their aesthetic vision commanded a candid depiction of blue-collar workers, the urban destitute, and impoverished members of society that populated the city, particularly downtown Saint John and its waterfront.

Jack Humphrey most vocally expressed the often contentious nature of the artist living in Saint John. Although a successful and highly respected painter, he claimed his environment and its "isolation" from the rest of the country consistently suffocated his own art: “In the 1930s it was unthinkable to choose a place as isolated and artistically

inert as Saint John then was in which to begin to build a career in painting. To return from surroundings of apparently great possibilities (in New York and Provincetown) and from many months in Europe to one's unawakened native city was not a chosen course. It was an enforced retreat.’⁴

Contrary to his convictions of being ‘ignored’ in Saint John, Humphrey received substantial critical notice and acceptance in both Montreal and Toronto. Evidence of this was his gaining admittance to the most important groups of artists in Canada, including charter membership in the Contemporary Arts Society in 1939.⁵ He was also championed early in his career by Walter Abell, Professor of Art and Aesthetics at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Abell helped establish the Maritime Art Association in Saint John in 1935,⁶ and repeatedly espoused Humphrey’s art in magazines such as *Canadian Forum*⁷ and *Maritime Art* (the first Canadian art magazine, established by Abell in October 1940 which became *Canadian Art* in 1943).⁸

Miller Brittain, although as much subject to economic and situational hard times as Humphrey, seemed to be more able to take solace in his environment. Brittain was descended from a Saint John Loyalist family and had a more conservative temperament decidedly fused to his roots. He stated that “[a] picture ought to emerge from the midst of life and be in no sense divorced from it.... And I think that artists should be rooted in their native heath, not self-consciously but naturally. And they will be so if their life and work are one and the same.”⁹ During the Depression, Brittain worked at various odd manual jobs throughout Saint John and its port, gaining both awareness and an observant

eye for the depth of ‘everyday’ people and events that surrounded him. This is the basis of his most renowned painting, the 1940 canvas *Longshoremen* (Fig. 2).

The commercial core of Saint John was centered on its port, which continued to be tied to the city’s image of itself, its potential, as well as its economic failures; it is to this day seen by many as the heart of Saint John. This vision was shared by its artists, for the harbour was a busy gateway to the rest of the world. It was the primary location for observing the vibrant activity of visiting ships, hardworking longshoremen unloading steel steamers, and the landing of new immigrants, all within a stone’s throw of nearby slums that presented notorious conditions of poverty. With its cheap downtown rents, the area created an ideal setting for Saint John’s artists to establish neighboring studios, forming what was described in 1947 by *Canadian Art* magazine as a “distinctive artists’ quarter” near the port.¹⁰ The district encompassing Prince William Street, Saint John’s original ‘business area,’ sported high-Victorian facades, prominent shops and offices, as well as upper-floor studios with abundant windows framing vistas of the harbour and sea beyond. Upon returning home after World War II, artist Norman Cody (1914-2001) opened Saint John’s first full-time commercial art gallery at nearby 20 Germain Street, where he exhibited the works of many of Saint John’s contemporary artists.¹¹

At the center of Saint John’s downtown artistic life was Ted Campbell’s loft studio, a small but elegant work and living space that fostered a vibrant social scene involving nearly everyone connected to the arts in the city.¹² These gatherings often included Fred Ross, who as a young man was thus able to socialize and share ideas with experienced

professional artists, and could explore the wealth of Campbell's extensive library of art books, music, and literature. Campbell's studio was crucial for nurturing the artistic community in Saint John from 1935 to the late 1950s, when Campbell and his wife Rosamond, also an accomplished painter, moved outside the city to Moss Glen.

It was in his role as an educator that Campbell made his primary contribution by encouraging the arts in society. He pursued this path through his teaching and by encouraging his students to formulate their work and subject matter from their daily lives and surroundings. Campbell is repeatedly celebrated for his selfless commitment to teaching and his "remarkable ability in developing the talents of others," and "the local vitality in the visual arts cannot be explained without considering his large contribution."¹³ Campbell is primarily remembered as an art instructor at Saint John Vocational School from 1934 to 1965, although he also taught art at the Provincial Normal School in Fredericton, the Rothesay Collegiate School and Netherwood School for Girls near Saint John, and the University of New Brunswick's Observatory Art Centre. He was also Curator of Art at the New Brunswick Museum from 1966 to 1969. Campbell certainly concentrated more on the pleasures of teaching than pursuing his own art practice. Ross recalls that Campbell was an extremely talented portraitist (Fig. 3) who would work for a month on his art, then generate nothing for the next six months. He felt that Campbell concentrated more on "turning his entire life into a work of art"¹⁴ through his bohemian lifestyle of studio living, entertaining and teaching at the Vocational School. It was here that Fred Ross would be introduced to the Saint John art milieu.

Fred Ross (along with his twin sister) was the youngest of five children in a working class family in Saint John. His father was a labourer at the Lantic Sugar Refinery in West Saint John, eventually becoming the union president. Although Fred showed early promise and interest in art while a student at St. Vincent's Boys' School, his parents were initially opposed to such a pursuit. An early article on Ross relates that his intent to register in the Art Programme at the Saint John Vocational School "met with real difficulty at home. His parents, alarmed that he was carrying this useless pastime too far, said he would have to learn to make a living. Finally, they were willing to compromise on draughting – a useful trade."¹⁵ Ross enrolled in the Saint John Vocational School's Art Programme in 1944 with the intention of becoming a commercial designer.

The Saint John Vocational School

Located on Douglas Avenue in West Saint John (Fig. 4), the Saint John Vocational School was a dynamic institution that played a key role in the development of artists in New Brunswick. With a faculty of twenty-three and an enrollment of 449, the Saint John Vocational School opened officially on September 7, 1926. Founded by the provincial government,¹⁶ the School was independent of the regular education system,¹⁷ and was created to develop a skilled technical workforce to support regional industries and businesses. The School offered five programmes: Home Economics, Industrial Education, Technical Education, Commercial Design, and Fine Art.¹⁸ The Art Department's mission was to satisfy both the aesthetic needs of an art education and the practical needs of finding

work within the community.¹⁹ During the early 1940s, the department stated in its syllabus that the trained artist was not a “frivolous” person, but a fully employable individual that had a useful role in society within the fields of industry, commerce, transportation, literature, dramatics, and the home: “the good designer, the creative artist, the clever cartoonist, and the effective decorator and advertiser are in constant demand. They have a big contribution to make in the life and development of our country.”²⁰ The School’s 1949-50 Calendar and Prospectus noted the following stipulations for the art programme:

A pass standing on home assignments is required each year. Summer work either in the form of sketches, drawing, etc., or a satisfactory record from an employer for whom a student has been producing art work...

In the third year the student specializes in that phase of art in which he has proved most adept...

Drawing and painting in all media is studied from the costumed model, still life and landscape. Design in relation to Fine, Commercial and Industrial Art Fields...

Projects are carried out in portraiture, mural, landscape, painting, illustration, costume design, poster and general advertising, lettering, packaging, etc...

A course in History of Art is given at and in conjunction with the Art Department of the New Brunswick Museum... (Fig. 5)

Of enormous benefit to the artists of the city was the New Brunswick Museum, founded as a natural history museum by Dr. Abraham Gesner in 1842.²¹ Incorporated in 1929 and renamed the New Brunswick Museum in 1930, it expanded its mandate in 1932 when Dr. J. Clarence Webster (1863-1950) of Shediac, N.B. donated his extensive Canadiana collection that included significant examples of historic visual art and documentary materials.²² By 1935, Dr. Webster’s wife Alice (1880-1953) had established the

Museum's Fine Art Department, which included a Gallery of Decorative Arts in the main Rotunda; and in 1941, with Edith Hudson as its first Curator, the Museum began collecting contemporary visual art, including paintings, drawings, and monotypes by New Brunswick artists.²³

Under the inaugural directorship of Violet Gillett (1898-1996), the Saint John Vocational School's Art Department offered the only outlet for serious studio art study and certification in New Brunswick outside of the BFA degree programme at Mount Allison University in Sackville. Ted Campbell became a full-time art instructor at the Vocational School in 1945, replacing Julia Crawford. He soon succeeded Gillett as Head of the Department in 1947. Ross's most influential teacher, Campbell rigorously instilled a groundwork of traditional methods and techniques of drawing, introducing his students to the drawings of Michelangelo, Raphael, Dürer, Holbein, Rembrandt, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso and Tchelitchev.²⁴ Ross recalls that "the way [Campbell] taught a great deal was by using books on painters; that's how I got to know the Mexican mural painters."²⁵ Ross remembers the Vocational School "having a small art department with a fairly small number of students, and Ted was always dashing around saying to someone 'I want to show you this thing by Rivera' or 'Let me show you this book on Raphael... and then Caravaggio,' and so on."²⁶ The Vocational School had a comprehensive art library and subscribed to most of the day's art periodicals including *Studio* and *Art News*. Furthermore, Campbell would always purchase numerous art books during his annual trips to cities such as New York or Boston, and made them fully accessible to his students and friends; these included monograph editions from Phaidon and Skira, among others.²⁷

In a 1990 interview with Karen Herring, Ross described Campbell's teaching practice as instructing drawing "in the old master Renaissance tradition from model and observation, then you could go on to do whatever you wanted. From his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago, Campbell gained an early awareness of Picasso – he was not blind to contemporary art."²⁸ From the mid-1940s onward, Ross also shared a personal and professional relationship with Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey, who was the more competitive of the two (at times to the point of extreme jealousy). Ross often received their tutelage and advice at the Vocational School where they gave guest lectures, and within the less formal setting of Campbell's studio circle.

The North American Roots of Muralism in New Brunswick

The work of Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey during Saint John's "golden age" of painting is representative of the new modernity within Canadian art during the 1930s and 1940s. Sharing similar foundations, their art is key to understanding the manifestations of murals and socially relevant art throughout North America in the eyes of young artists like Fred Ross.

By the early 1930s, the Canadian public's attention was quickly shifting from the Group of Seven's landscape focus of the past decade, to significant work being done in the fields of figure, genre, portraiture, still life, and abstract painting. This became a preoccupation of the soon-to-be-formed Federation of Canadian Artists and the Canadian Group of

Painters. The figurative direction supported by the F.C.A., the C.G.P., and the Contemporary Arts Society displayed a new desire to reflect the faces, families, workplaces and lives of all levels of Canadians, both rich and poor, but especially those in urban centres. There ensued a profound questioning of the Group of Seven's heroic landscapes which were viewed by many as the pinnacle of how we, as Canadians, should see ourselves and our "vast, unpopulated" land.²⁹ In fact, significant sections of the country were rarely, if ever painted by Group of Seven members (the only one to paint in New Brunswick was A.Y. Jackson, and long after the Group's disbanding). Rather than venturing into the wilderness, painters were increasingly looking for stimulus "closer to their own doorsteps."³⁰ In Saint John, the Great Depression's economic breakdown was being soberly captured by younger artists, exemplified in the despair within Jack Humphrey's seminal 1931 self-portrait, *Draped Head*.³¹

The effects of the Great Depression helped foster a change in emphasis of Canadian artists, but also made it difficult to make a living as a full-time artist. The Canadian government offered no financial support to artists at this time, although under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" relief programs, the American government subsidized artists³² through the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. Supported by the W.P.A.'s mandate to actively integrate the artist and society, thousands of new murals, paintings and sculptures were created between 1934 and 1943.³³

The establishment of the New Deal Art Projects (a programme firmly supporting public art and art education) was, in part, a direct consequence of the success of the "Mexican

mural Renaissance” that flourished with the return to Mexico of Diego Rivera from Europe in July, 1921.³⁴ Arriving after the tentative end of the ten-year Mexican Revolution, Rivera was commissioned by the recently appointed Minister of Education, Jose Vasconcelos, to paint murals in public buildings in and around Mexico City.³⁵ Francis V. O’Connor, in his catalogue essay “The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of The United States during the 1930s and After,” maintains that by 1934 Rivera had “virtually single-handedly, forged a strong mural tradition. He was the best, and certainly the most famous, muralist in the Americas, and his walls had become the standard against which all those who aspired to be muralists were judged.”³⁶ The nationwide success of Vasconcelos’ programme furnished muralism with a new legitimacy and popular acceptance, propelling the Mexican mural movement to international acclaim through its three major practitioners: Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1973). In 1929, Orozco succinctly expressed his regard for the capacity of murals to reach humanity, advocating that “the highest, the most logical, the purest and strongest form of painting is the mural. It is, too, the most disinterested form, for it cannot be hidden away for the benefit of a certain privileged few. It is for the people. It is for ALL.”³⁷ In his 1934 book *Portrait of America*, Rivera stated that murals were one of the few permissible kinds of embellishment that harmonized with the modern age.³⁸

Mural painting was becoming more widespread in Canada after World War One, but with understandably less lofty or political motivations than in post-Revolutionary Mexico. The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts held a mural competition in 1926 “to encourage this form of painting and to show to the public that it could be done successfully by Canadian

artists.”³⁹ At the same time, McGill University’s MacDonald Professor of Architecture, Ramsay Traquair, stated that:

mural painting should be a part of everyday life. It should meet us in the railroad station, the bank, the church and the stock exchange, the school and the city hall. Even the finest art is none the worse for being useful or for being part of something larger than its frame. The day may come when no great building will be complete without its paintings and when it does come it will mark a stage of advance in our civilization.⁴⁰

In 1933 Arthur Lismer wrote an article, “Mural Painting,” in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, in which he discussed Rivera’s work, stating that murals were “undoubtedly the most important form of artistic expression and of great social significance.”⁴¹ The text included illustrations of several prominent murals in Ontario, including C.W. Jefferys’ Chateau Laurier panels in Ottawa (1930), and Charles Comfort’s North American Life Building mural (1932), George Reid’s auditorium murals for Jarvis Collegiate Institute (1929-1930), and Lismer’s own murals at Humberside Collegiate (1927-1931), all in Toronto. A few years later Comfort would paint one of Canada’s most celebrated murals of the 1930s: the twenty-foot-long *Romance of Nickel*, commissioned by the Canadian Government for its pavilion at the Paris Exposition of 1937, as well as his multiple panel installation of Canadian industrial scenes at the art deco Toronto Stock Exchange. By 1940, an exhibition of W.P.A. mural studies had toured Canada,⁴² and Edward Rowan, Chief of the Fine Arts Section for the U.S. Public Building Administration, had lectured in Montreal and Ottawa.

The convergence of Canadian artists and society, although never officially supported in any way by a programme similar in scope to the American W.P.A., occurred at a seminal

event in Canada's cultural history: the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists. Its aim was to discuss the place of the artist in society and to investigate the technical concerns of the painter. The meeting also resulted in a resolution to form the Federation of Canadian Artists that would unite all Canadian artists in a common cause, advance the role of the artist in society, yet still respect regional identity.⁴³ Saint John was well represented at the Kingston Conference by four of the seven participating Maritime artists: Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Ted Campbell and Julia Crawford.⁴⁴

In addition to sessions on methods and materials for artists, the Kingston Conference presented several American speakers involved in the W.P.A., such as Edward Rowan and the painter Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975), who delivered the keynote address. Rowan gave a lecture entitled "You Can Do It Here" in which he deliberated at length on the W.P.A.'s mural programme, and showed reproductions of recently-completed murals by Ben Shahn, Ila McAfee, William Gropper, Boardman Robinson, and Wendell Jones among others; and lantern slides of works that featured a mural entitled *Contemporary Justice and the Child* by Symeon Shimin (b. 1902).

The encouraging atmosphere of the Kingston Conference and the new artistic vitality in America coincided with several significant mural projects in New Brunswick. In 1941, Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904-1949), who had begun teaching summer art classes that same year at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, worked on a multi-wall mural for the Fisher Vocational School in Woodstock, incorporating images of manual labour and technical training (Fig. 9).⁴⁵ That same year, Miller Brittain received a private

commission to produce a massive mural for the Saint John Tuberculosis Hospital. The full-scale cartoons, consisting of a prodigious eleven-panel composition on brown Kraft paper illustrating the social causes and remedies of tuberculosis (Fig. 10), have been called "the major monument of social realism in Canadian Art" by Barry Lord;⁴⁶ yet the murals were never completed, to Brittain's great disappointment, as the hospital administration cancelled the project in 1942, most likely due to lack of available funds.⁴⁷

It must be noted that Brittain's first public mural was completed several months before the Kingston Conference: a diptych for the lobby of the Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton (Fig. 11). The two 34" x 47" painted masonite panels, which are still in place, depict a boxing match on the left, and a women's volleyball game on the right panel.⁴⁸ In January 1941 the President of the University, Dr. Norman MacKenzie, awarded Brittain the commission and expressed his pleasure in a letter to the artist: "I am glad that this has been approved and I hope you find it possible to carry it out for I would like very much to have something worth while done by a New Brunswick artist in this building."⁴⁹

Although Humphrey did not undertake any murals during this period, his World War II series of drawings and paintings of workers at the Saint John dry dock can be seen as inspired by the same spirit of collective and socially-responsible art (Fig. 12). In June 1943 Humphrey wrote to H.O. McCurry, Director of the National Gallery, suggesting that it would be of value to the recording of the war effort if he could "have some sort of permission to explore the scenes of ship-building or other work where groups of men are

in action. Besides space and colour I am interested in developing interpretation of the character of human activity...."⁵⁰ In an exhibition essay on Humphrey, Ian Lumsden, then Director of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, stated:

the series of drawings and paintings of workers at the Saint John Dry Dock which occupied much of his time in 1944, was surely inspired, in part, anyway, by the burgeoning of this nationalistic art in the United States.... These charcoal studies, many of which were executed on brown wrapping paper, reflect the same spirit embodied in the mural commissions completed by Ben Shahn, Thomas Hart Benton and William Gropper in the 1930s.⁵¹

During the 1940s the Saint John Vocational School placed a good deal of emphasis on muralism, evident through its monthly advertisements in *Canadian Art* magazine which cite "mural painting" and "old master techniques" as the sole non-craft-related fields of visual art study.⁵² In 1940 the four glazed doors to the school's auditorium were decorated with murals depicting industry and labour, painted by Elizabeth Sutherland, who studied at the Vocational School from 1936 to 1940 (Fig. 6).⁵³ Sara Johnson, a former student at the School during the 1940s, described several instances during her studies of creating large-scale murals throughout Saint John. These included spending many Saturdays painting Navy-themed murals in Saint John's Main Base Naval Veterans Club,⁵⁴ and assisting with a fifteen-panel installation on the School's cafeteria walls on the history of Saint John (Fig. 7).⁵⁵

Ross remembers Campbell having a genuine esteem for both contemporary and historical muralists in his classes at the Vocational School: "[Ted] was a real promoter of the Mexican and Renaissance artists. He felt that the Mexican mural paintings were the

greatest murals since the Renaissance, so he was encouraging [us] to going down [to Mexico] to look at them [in the future]. Ted also talked a lot about the Stanley Spencer chapel murals in England.⁵⁶ They're very Rivera-esque, much like his chapel at Chapingo."⁵⁷ With such resources at hand, Ross resolved to "not become too involved with commercial art techniques but would concentrate on drawing and figure composition with the idea of eventually becoming a mural painter."⁵⁸ Ross's association with the Vocational School provided him with the technical foundation and confidence to design and paint murals, but also the requisite physical space to carry them out.

Chapter Two

Annual School Picnic

In 1945, Ted Campbell asked his students to design a sketch layout of “something you know” for a hypothetical mural to surround a large vertical west-facing arched window at the Vocational School. Through the use of books, magazines, and reproductions, he showed his students how to correctly render the figure and infer perspective within the confines of the two-dimensional wall plane.¹ Campbell was so impressed by the eighteen-year-old Fred Ross's design, entitled *Annual School Picnic* (Figs. 13-14), that he encouraged him to produce a permanent, full-scale mural based on the drawing.² Campbell would be instrumental in helping Ross solve the compositional difficulties of structuring such a large artwork, as he was well aware of the Florentine Renaissance masters,³ Mexican muralists,⁴ and such American W.P.A. muralists as Symeon Shimin and Thomas Hart Benton. Ross would spend much of the ensuing year transferring his initial drawing ideas into full-scale preparatory cartoons on brown kraft paper.⁵

Annual School Picnic surrounded both sides and the top of the four-foot wide by twelve-foot high window within one of the main stairwells of the school (Fig. 15). The mural is fundamentally a study in figure painting, portraying a group of adolescents and several young children on a summer day, sitting, standing, and lounging on the grass. Befitting such an occasion, many of the figures are placed together as couples, with the males usually appearing shirtless, while the females are either in short-sleeves or bathing suits.

Interspersed with the often overlapping figures are objects ranging from picnic basket to cooking pan, dog, tree, flower, newspaper, and various bits of food that are strategically placed to fill the voids between the figures, imparting a sense of varied activity within a tight social crowd and serving as deliberate counterpoints to a carefully plotted matrix of bodies.

The thematic choice of a pastoral setting of students was altogether Ross's:⁶

It just seemed to be the logical thing to do. It was a problem, as it was in the Renaissance, of being given a certain shape and then using the human figure to fill the composition in the most pleasing way. In fact [*Annual School Picnic*] is all figures; the landscape, if there is any, is minor. Looking at the overall design ... I can see the American influence of [artists] like Reginald Marsh and those people that did beach things ... the way the drapery is curved on the figure.⁷

Consistent with his advocating incorporation of the environment at hand, Campbell encouraged Ross to use his friends and classmates as models (Fig. 16),⁸ a process that accounts for the portrait-like sensibility and immediacy of many of the figures. The models are at once innocent in this simple setting, yet possess a burgeoning youthful sexuality in their half-clothed state, a theme that would manifest itself repeatedly in Ross' later murals (particularly within *Humanistic Education*) and his easel portrayals of adolescents. Of note in the upper left-hand corner, Ross placed his self-portrait, a practice he would repeat in most of his murals that followed. The siting of the mural within a space bathed in light and filled with students during much of the day, enhances and harmonizes with the depicted atmosphere of an out-of-doors social setting. The chosen theme can also be considered as a critique of the urban environment visible beyond the

window that included industrial plants, polluting mills, and the provincial mental asylum.

Although *Annual School Picnic* attempts to characterize a social 'group', Ross's models behave essentially as a collection of introspective individuals. None of the figures looks at each other; rather they stare outwards with smiling, but fairly serious gazes, with the exception of the wailing baby at the centre right of the mural. The context helps position the mural as an extension of Campbell's figure study classes, where the posed models were drawn individually, often in reclining positions that made for the daydream-like facial expressions of models having to remain immobile for over half an hour.

Due to the format of *Annual School Picnic*'s narrow vertical panels, the figures are stacked, reminiscent of the tiers of figures in early Renaissance frescoes and Mexican mural scenes. In a variation on such tradition, Ross's mural shows nearly the entire bodies of his figures, inferring that the viewer is standing above the crowd, scanning the scene at which he/she is in the center. The mural's implied spatial recession is slight and any movement in space is created through the interweaving of the bodies in a zig-zag procession vertically of two to three figures surmounted by a row of a larger group. *Annual School Picnic* appears to owe a clear debt to Rivera's mastery of projecting large crowds within the two-dimensional plane, an approach he derived from similar devices used by the Italian Quattrocento fresco painters.⁹ Rivera employed this strategy in nearly every mural he completed, from his Ministry of Education murals (1923-28) to his monumental *chef d'oeuvre* depicting the history of Mexico in the Palacio Nacional (1929-30, 1935, 1945-51). Ross's academic grounding in such devices is apparent in *Annual*

School Picnic, which adopts many of Rivera's basic compositional principles, including: the maintenance of the wall plane through Ross's placement of the horizon line above and outside the limits of the mural; the use of a rudimentary geometric system based on the principles of dynamic symmetry and proportion around the window void; the balancing of this geometric system with animation achieved through the posing of the figures and the various objects to fill each area with implied motion and activity; the simple, bold modeling of figures; and finally, the attempt to relate the content of the mural to the immediate exterior world by means of some combination of situational or directional symbolism. The latter is seen in Ross's pastoral setting relative to the urban, industrial view through the window between the mural panels, as well as by the understated placement of a newspaper in the lower left corner, whose title, although nearly hidden, is perhaps the local *The Evening Times-Globe*, as the gothic scripted "T" corresponds to the paper's actual font.

Completed in 1946, *Annual School Picnic*'s black prismacolour pencil cartoon possesses a confidence and technical draughting skill that is quite remarkable. The formal rendering of volume is comparable to Miller Brittain's contour and cross-contour line technique used in his tuberculosis mural cartoons - works of art with which Ross and Campbell were no doubt familiar. In Brittain's cartoons, volume was suggested by the chosen darkness of line weight and cross-hatching rather than a sfumato technique. Brittain was first and foremost a draughtsman who thought through a pencil,¹⁰ and to a large extent, Ross followed in that tradition of concern for the clarity of line.

After the full-scale cartoon was complete, Ross used the traditional pouncing technique to transfer the design onto the masonite panels that had been previously installed on the wall (Fig. 17).¹¹ The cartoon is the site of concept of the image, where Ross set down his real values in terms of line and shade. Once the final composition was pounced onto the prepared masonite, he filled in the delineated areas with colour. Only a few subtle changes are evident between the cartoon of *Annual School Picnic* and the finished mural. On the right side above the window arch, several flowers that almost touch the lounging girl's hair in the cartoon did not find their way into the final design. More significantly, on the left side above the arch, the female figure next to the young boy with the banana has her head facing to the right, as opposed to the cartoon version where she looks straight ahead. The revision harmonizes with the shape of the window as the modified head leads the viewer to the mural's central apex. Comparison of photographs show that this change took place sometime between the photographing of the overall "final" cartoon (Fig. 13) and when Ross placed the cartoon sections on the wall for pouncing (Fig. 17).

The final painted mural of *Annual School Picnic* (Fig. 15) is somewhat tentative, and much of the cartoon's textural subtlety and rendered volume is lost through rather flatly executed areas of colour.¹² At that time Ross had done very little painting, as Campbell "pushed the drawing more than painting" in his classes.¹³ This was Ross's first major painted and colour work. Hence, *Annual School Picnic* appears listless compared to his later murals such as *City Slums*, where he quickly became more technically adept at the nuances of painting, colour choice, and large-scale composition. When Alice Webster first saw the final painted version of the mural, Ross overheard her saying it was

“immature... but not amateurish,” which pleased him greatly and concurred with his own views of the work.¹⁴ The medium used on *Annual School Picnic* was an inexpensive form of casein with some oil washes,¹⁵ a surface treatment that has not aged well and exhibits sun damage, flaking and other signs of wear. The final mural reflects Rivera’s typical colour manipulation: a base of earth-tones with black, combined with bright accents of greens, blues, and reds (Fig. 18).

During his preparations for *Annual School Picnic*, Campbell encouraged Ross to make an art “pilgrimage” to Boston to see first-hand and for the first time original works of art by the masters, an excursion that would have been quite unusual for a man of his young age at that time. Ross remembers that Campbell told him to “see Boston first, then see New York. Don’t go to New York first then Boston” so as to be eased into the art and museum world, and not to be disappointed or let down by comparison.¹⁶ Heeding his advice, Ross traveled to Boston by bus accompanied by his parents.¹⁷ Although he did not go exclusively to see public murals, Ross nevertheless was able to observe some of the most renowned panoramas of public art in the United States, including those in the Boston Public Library, the rooms of which featured mural cycles by such artists as John Singer Sargent, Edwin Abbey, and Puvis de Chavannes.¹⁸ Ross remembers seeing other public art as well, remarking that “some of [Boston’s other public] buildings had murals in them that I admired, even early on, but they weren’t ‘great’ murals – insurance company types of things like N.C. Wyeth would have done... very beautiful but not top notch.”¹⁹

Chapter Three

The Destruction of War & Rebuilding the World Through Education

The Minutes of the Fredericton High School Student Government Association of May 13 1946 record the appointing of a committee for erecting a World War II memorial for fallen students, and contains the following list of possible 'memorial' suggestions: "scholarships, cairn, library, pictures on the wall, and pictures from the National Art Gallery."¹ At the Association's meeting of May 29th, it was moved that "a mural as a war memorial be added to the list of suggestions."² Soon after, on June 21st, the nationally circulated *Montreal Standard* rotogravure section profiled "Freddie Ross, untrained 18-year-old" in an anonymous multi-page feature that reproduced numerous photographs of Fred Ross working on *Annual School Picnic*, along with close-ups of the cartoon drawings.³ The article recounted Ross's early interest in art, and how he had arrived at achieving such acclaim with the mural: "For two years he studied design and commercial art. Then he painted the mural and everyone suddenly became interested.... His family now realizes the importance of his work, and are ready to help, but a working-man's salary simply won't stretch far from home. Freddy himself is less worried. He says 'I have so much to learn.'"⁴

Having read the article and spoken to the Vocational School's staff,⁵ members of the Student Government Association quickly commissioned and paid Ross \$700.00 to undertake a large memorial mural project which would be the focal point of the school's

auditorium (Fig. 23). Ross accepted the task that was to occupy him full-time for eighteen months from 1946 to 1948.

During this period, widespread admiration began to be voiced for Fred Ross's work. In 1947, Avery Shaw reported in *Canadian Art* magazine that "Fred Ross is working on the cartoons of his huge mural for the Fredericton High School, a labour of several years, and he displays an increasing mastery of drawing and design; it is good to see an artist of his years being permitted to develop with a really big commission to exercise his talents."⁶ Akin to that of *Annual School Picnic*, the subjects in Ross's new murals (Figs. 19 & 20) were still of high school age, but their complex treatment, grouping, and projected strength of character reflected a maturation of theme and ambition far beyond *Annual School Picnic* and his figure studies at the Vocational School. Ross here begins his life-long exploration of representing humanist issues, in this case through the use of distinct polar opposites of the human condition: war and peace.

Where *Annual School Picnic*'s gathering of adolescent figures simply inhabit and animate a vignette attempting to portray carefree youth, the Fredericton High School murals see Ross transcend the simply descriptive and venture into metaphor and symbolism. Unlike *Annual School Picnic*'s serene, somewhat private mood within the group, the Fredericton High School murals witness Ross achieving a more complex level of interaction and dynamism between the figures. Ross transcended the assemblage of solitary figure studies from his previous mural by planning the individual's action/pose to achieve a result far greater than the sum of their parts.

The contents of Ross's pendant murals, entitled *The Destruction Of War* (Fig. 21) and *Rebuilding the World Through Education* (Fig. 22), were indeed as opposite as their titles implied. The emotional impact of the large paintings solidifies his connection to the modern Mexican and W.P.A. muralists, whose mandate to delineate both meaningful historical events and social virtues often led them to depict worlds of "good" and "evil," inhabited by figures typical of their locale.⁷ Ross chose atomic energy as the unifying motif for the two panels, with the exploding mushroom cloud acting as a compositional focus across the top of each panel, symbolizing the potential deadly fate "hanging over the heads" of the disparate groups below (Fig. 23).

The scale and lofty proportions of Ross's mural was key to its authority. Like the imposing vertical lines of a Gothic cathedral that compel the viewer to stare upwards, instilling reverence through scale, the figures in Ross's panels culminate in a pointed apex akin to the Gothic arch, twenty-five feet above the eye-level of the viewer. The magnitude of the sacrifice is related to the size of the work, for a small painting could not have had the same overwhelming impact. The two murals, likely the largest paintings in New Brunswick at that time, each measured 16 feet high by 10 feet wide, and were installed on one of the main side walls of the school's auditorium, with a white pilaster separating the two halves. Beneath the panels were inscribed the names of the commemorated students, placed in no particular order and prefaced by a short dedication by the student body.

Although there existed a clear physical split between the two halves because of their architectural setting on a pilastered wall, the visual unity of the entire work is successful. While the division between the “War” and “Peace” images intensifies their contrasting symbolism, the overall geometrical layout, lines of movement, similarly proportioned foreground/background and recessing figures work together as a cohesive symmetrical unit. They act as two clear and definite options or outcomes of the same people in the same place, and the viewer is left to ponder their fate. The memorial mural acts more as a lesson or warning for the future rather than a monument to the past.

The Destruction Of War is filled with the victims and consequences of armed conflict. The scene is a horrific spectacle of suffering and fighting in the shadow of a ruined urban landscape of no conspicuous location. The panel emits a claustrophobic aura, dense with civilians dressed in rags - some emaciated from hunger, others injured or lying dead. The whole is scattered with archetypal incidents of inhumanity: in the lower right corner male and blindfolded female figures are bound to wooden poles, inferring torture; a man gazes upward in hopelessness with an open hand; a cluster of soldiers, some bandaged from head wounds, fire rifles; and a group of sunken-eyed figures at the upper right are based, according to Ross, on photographs of concentration camp victims at Bergen-Belsen.⁸ The mural’s central figure is a young ‘universal’ soldier, with no distinguishing marks, equipment or insignia to identify him as either Allied or German. Ross wanted not to stress a specific religion, race, or nation, but rather “the idea of the brotherhood of man breaking down all national barriers.”⁹ Ross carefully located the woman behind the soldier, as her round carried load becomes a metaphorical halo above him, placed like the

corona in religious art. This was a device often used by Rivera, and was familiar to Ross from such frescoes as *The Embrace* (Fig. 24) one of Rivera's Ministry of Education murals in Mexico City. Here, the wide brim of a peasant's sombrero lies vertically about his head, giving him the air of one of Giotto's religious figures as he clasps his friend in comfort.

Rebuilding the World Through Education establishes a positive and slightly less crowded panorama of young adults in settings related to school and social activities. In the lower half of the panel, young men work at a draughting table, a chemistry laboratory, and a carpentry bench, while other students gather around desks, talking and studying. The upper half is animated by a couple dancing, girls with drama paraphernalia beside Ross's self-portrait at the center left in harlequin dress,¹⁰ students focusing on an older male teacher, and male and female athletes absorbed in basketball, swimming, football and track in the shadow of a clean, modern structure surrounded by trees. The figures encircle a centrally placed static male and female couple, noticeably confident and at ease within their vigorous environment.

Familiar academic incidents and dress in *Rebuilding the World Through Education* engage the student viewers in a projection of themselves in the panel, while young soldiers in *The Destruction of War* demonstrate that it was indeed their peers who fought the war, died in it, and have now passed on the responsibility for the future. Ross chose to mirror his self-portrait on the 'Education' panel against the emotionally drained, conflict-weary faces on the 'War' panel. He depicts himself as an open-eyed youth ready to take

his rightful place in the art world, cockily adjusting his collar as he looks directly at the viewer, implying awareness of history but also confidence in his generation's ability to take society in a better direction. This optimism, however, is overshadowed by the convergence of figures toward the central atomic cloud on the horizon, symbolizing the threatening cold war that the world was entering, through which Ross would mature as a professional artist.

Within the scope of the entire double-panel composition, Ross alternates from a non-specific rendering of the crowds, to an explicit emphasis on distinct figures placed throughout the image that, through either size, demeanour, or pose, are representative of the contrary conditions imparted by each setting. Within *The Destruction of War*, they are: the old woman with children at the lower left (hopelessness, the injury to civilians), the armed soldier with the head bandage (perseverance through peril), the standing male and female figures in bondage at the right side of the panel (victims of torture), both the standing young central soldier and the figure behind him with his back to the viewer, their arms outstretched in unison (strength, both military and of the private citizen), and the dead soldier at the bottom of the mural (sacrifice). Conspicuously, his closed hand is touching the honour roll of names below, implying his association with them. In *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, the messages are more orderly, focusing on the two groups of young men and women at the bottom of the panel (socialization and discourse), the two male figures above them working (importance of study/knowledge), the group of attentive youths around the older man at the middle right-hand side (respect for elders/authority), the harlequin figure at the middle left-hand side (optimism and

culture), and the dignified, confident couple at the center of the panel (youth as the future).

In the upper left corner of *Destruction of War*, Ross's placement of ruined fluted columns is a device widespread not only in Renaissance painting as symbolic of destroyed civilization, but also in much 20th-century painting as an icon of tyrannical empires and repressive governments, as portrayed for example in *The Eternal City* (1934-37) by American artist Peter Blume (1906-1992). In Ross's mural, the column ruins could function as an especially appropriate metaphor as both the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini had expressed their imperial ideals through the use of classicism as an "official" architectural language.

Torn between representing hope and post-war nuclear anxiety, it is no coincidence that Ross included a visual reference to Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater* (Fig. 25) at the upper central section of *Rebuilding the World Through Education* as a symbol of optimism achieved through modern architecture.¹¹ Ted Campbell was an avid admirer of Wright, and shared this enthusiasm with Ross.¹² Wright's residential masterwork, begun in 1936 and completed by 1939, was seen as a spiritual communion with nature, embracing modern technology as an agent of peace. As *Fallingwater*'s former owner, Edgar Kaufmann Jr., proclaimed upon bequeathing the house to Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in 1963:

Without drawing on tradition, without relying on precedent, *Fallingwater* was created by Frank Lloyd Wright as a declaration that in nature man finds his spiritual as well as his physical energies, that a harmonious

response to nature yields the poetry and joy that nourish human living. Such a place cannot be possessed, it is a work by man for man, not by A man for A man.¹³

Fallingwater was indeed seen as emblematic of liberation from static forces, both physical and philosophical. Wright preached an entire system of design in life: that of a natural, “organic” connection with the Earth and the art of building, along with a return to a less urban, more communal, agrarian means of community. Wright also held a deep disdain for war and conflict, along with a tremendous respect for, and commitment to, mentoring young apprentices, a relationship not unlike that shared by Ross and Campbell.

The composition of *The Destruction of War and Rebuilding the World Through Education* is related to two murals familiar to Ross that demonstrate comparable strategies of representing the struggle inherent within humanity. The first is Symeon Shimin’s *Contemporary Justice and the Child* (Fig. 26), installed in 1940 in Washington, D.C.,¹⁴ and the second is a haunting apocalyptic panel for the Veterans’ Hospital in Lancaster, N.B. (near Saint John) completed by Miller Brittain in 1949 (Fig. 27). Although similar juxtapositions of the horrors of war with the blessings of peace have been used in art since the Renaissance, analysis of the two aforementioned examples is worthwhile in understanding the context and direct influences vis-à-vis Ross’s work.

The 11’-10” x 7’-4” *Contemporary Justice and the Child* presents an introspective woman supporting a young boy in her arms, positioned in the center of the work and gazing at the viewer. They are surrounded on the left by a group of poverty-stricken

children in the shadow of a bleak factory building. In contrast, the right side of the mural optimistically shows a group of bright, healthy, idyllic youths absorbed in sport and learning, upheld by two huge hands holding a draughting triangle and compass, symbols of planning and rationalism. Shimin described his mural as:

Based on the theme of the Constructive versus Destructive elements in the life of a child. The Constructive: through intelligent planning - study and sport - all that helps to build a healthy body and mind ready to cope with vital problems when coming into manhood. The Destructive: being stumped in growth - willed through toil - destroyed by it - so that within the folds of a great country there exists, perhaps, the saddest and most tragic blight.¹⁵

In his closing remarks to the Kingston Conference lecture featuring lantern slides of W.P.A. murals (which included Shimin's mural),¹⁶ the session's chairman, André Biéler, announced that he had seen *Contemporary Justice and the Child* during a previous trip to Washington, and that it "was the thing I brought back in my mind, the thing I remember with the greatest pleasure, the thing which gave me the greatest thrill. It is a great work of art."¹⁷ Campbell had attended the lecture, and as a teacher would later show Ross magazine reproductions of the mural. A black and white copy of *Contemporary Justice and the Child* was the only artwork appearing in the transcript proceedings of the Kingston Conference, published in December 1941, and a full-page image of the cartoon was published in the February 1940 issue of the American Federation of Arts's *Magazine of Art*,¹⁸ celebrating its inclusion in the Whitney Museum's *Annual Exhibition of American Art*.

In 1946, Ross spent a month at Pegi Nicol MacLeod's New York City apartment and explored the city's galleries and public art. During his stay he met Shimin and spent an afternoon in his studio, discussing techniques of painting and planning murals. Ross claims that "Shimin was an artist that I admired so much, and Ted did of course as well."¹⁹ Campbell encouraged Ross to "call up" Shimin while in New York, and Ross recalls that "I spoke to his wife and said, 'I'm a Canadian art student and I admired his mural so greatly.' She said to come up Thursday at four to see him.... In his studio he had a full-scale study of the lower left-hand corner of [*Contemporary Justice and the Child*] showing the poor; it was incredible."²⁰ Ross then traveled from New York to Washington, but was unable to see the Federal Justice Department Building and Shimin's mural there.

Shimin's thematic concern of combining two contrasting social conditions (despair and enlightenment) into a single visual frame of reference would have been of primary importance during Ross's planning of the Fredericton murals. Beyond the obvious difference of his having two panels compared to Shimin's one, Ross could have found no more appropriate model, and the ties are evident. Specifically, Ross's figures perform many identical actions in the corresponding corners to those of Shimin's mural, such as the upper right athletes in the field, the lab students at the middle right, and the masses of destitute as well as the predominance of brick architecture on the left side. The static centrality of Shimin's mother and child is echoed in both of Ross's panels by the heroically-posed soldier in the center of the left panel, and the idealized young couple in the center of the right image, each performing a similar central compositional role. Ross also adopted Shimin's motif of distinct individual vignettes of activity that are at once

isolated yet linked together through compositional tightness and partial overlapping, a device Rivera had used in most of his murals as well.

Miller Brittain's mural in the Veterans' Hospital, a second touchstone for discussion of Ross's mural, centers on an operating room scene, where a group of men and women are performing surgery below a floating caduceus. The panel is dominated by the sky, which shows a sword-wielding male figure clad in a loincloth flying above the ruined landscape on the left with three moons hovering overhead, while a vibrant sun glows over a renewing modern city on the right. Several doctors are moving forward from the center towards the sides of the mural, offering comfort to the victims of war on the left, while on the right they assist in rebuilding. Although the five foot by twenty-two foot horizontal composition of Brittain's Veterans' Hospital panel contrasts with Ross's more vertical work, Brittain's use of "stopped movement" appears in Ross's panels, stimulating a sense of tension and artifice that freezes the scene into a specific moment in time rather than attempting solely to impart a generalized mood or environment.

The representation of an ideal world mirrored in new architecture in opposition to an antiquated world of brick is present in both Brittain's and Ross's murals, where buildings have become abstract symbols – something also evident in the visual reference to *Fallingwater*. Smoldering brick ruins punctuated by single windows appear on the left (War) side, while on the right (Peace) side are presented austere, sharply rendered white cubes evocative of the post-war modern architecture that many hoped would save society. The white buildings are without reference to class, individualism, setting, or national

expression; instead they have become extracted to apply to the universal needs of mankind. In these particular instances, both artists' architectonic forms share similarities with the paintings of the American Precisionist movement of the previous decades, where depiction of architectural idioms was both robust and clear.

Ross believes that Brittain's Veterans' mural and his own Fredericton High School murals were inspired and worked out independently of each other. Ross's cartoons were almost certainly fully developed, if not completed, by the time Brittain began final execution of his Veteran's Hospital mural,²¹ making it quite possible that Brittain was influenced by the work that Ross was undertaking. However, no matter who pursued theirs first, the common threads of theme, scale, and pictorial relationships are clear, showing that the local artists dealing with the issues of the War were absorbed in the zeitgeist of shared ideas and common perspectives. Studio visits may have led them in similar directions. Brittain described his personal shift after the War as follows:

I had been thinking more and more about what went on inside the people I had been making pictures of and why they did the things they did. So while I was still interested in their outward appearance, I was more concerned with their psychological make-up. This led me to ponder the problems of good and evil. I contemplated the inner conflict that is part of every man and tried to incorporate into my work such abstract qualities as love, despair, terror and so on.²²

A hybrid of Mexican and European foundations is also evident in both of Ross's Fredericton High School panels, but stand most concretely expressed in *The Destruction of War*. The collapse and foreshortening of the lifeless lower figures are strongly reminiscent of Rosso Fiorentino's mannerist *Moses and the Daughters of Jethro* (c. 1520)

at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence (Fig. 28), a typical example of battle images of “fallen” or dead figures throughout Italian painting with which Ross was familiar.

Evidence of consideration for Rivera's murals must also be noted, with many of Rivera's pictorial strategies suitably applied. Ross continued to maintain those principles he used in *Annual School Picnic*, including the maintenance of the wall plane with a high horizon line, dynamic symmetry and proportion around the central axis, and the simple, bold modeling of figures. Like many of Rivera's own visual precedents, Ross projected the action between a tightly defined foreground and a continuous sky high up on the picture plane, leading the eye upward. Although no colour images exist of the original mural, black and white photographs reveal that Ross established a contrasting range of tones throughout, with the light and dark areas being fairly evenly distributed. Ross's monochrome neutral base containing the list of the students' names below each image, and the arrangement of figures curving inward and upward, is very similar to techniques used by Rivera in his 1943-44 *History of Cardiology* diptych at the Universidad Ibero-Americana in Tlalpan, Mexico (Fig. 29).

Elements of Rivera's fresco, *Distributing Arms*, from the Ministry of Education building in Mexico City (Fig. 30) suggest a reading throughout *The Destruction of War*. Ross's rendering of the rifles and soldiers, clear delineation of volume, and the stance of the heroic main figure are consistent with those in *Distributing Arms*. Rivera's 1928 graphic work *Communards* (Fig. 31) also bears a striking resemblance to the crouching soldiers in the *Destruction of War* panel, particularly the soldier with a head bandage, firing his

rifle. Although he doesn't recollect the influence of any one specific Mexican mural or artwork for the Fredericton High panels, Ross maintains that "from the Mexicans, I got the concept of the large idea: war and peace, and built on that. I had no experience in this type of [armed conflict] setting so I went through *Life* magazine for photos and ideas."²³

Based upon early sketches done shortly after he was awarded the memorial commission, Ross's preliminary ideas and layout for the project were to remain virtually unchanged through to the final mural. This can be seen by comparing his 24" x 36" preliminary sketch for *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, dated August 10, 1946 (Fig. 32), with each following stage. The most noticeable change is the scale of the central couple and lower figures, as in the sketch they are two to three times the size of their cartoon counterparts. Ross felt that they would dominate the image too much, so he reduced them, thereby creating space for many additional figures within episodes that were more distinct from one another.²⁴ Other than abandoning the violin player in the later design, nearly all the figures and objects go on to appear in the mural, including: the couple in the lower left corner with the female leaning over the seated male, the female business student in the lower right corner with her back to the viewer, the chemistry student's test tube experiment, the basketball players at the top left, *Fallingwater* at the top, and finally, the relationship of the central couple, although the compass in the man's hand was ultimately developed into a draughting student in his own right.

Ross established the murals' eventual composition in two small drawings that were squared off for their transfer to the full-scale cartoons (Fig. 33a).²⁵ In addition, a 30"x 36"

painting of *Rebuilding the World Through Education*'s central couple (Fig. 34) and two full-scale chalk drawings of specific figures within the murals were prepared to give the Student Government a glimpse of the anticipated final image.²⁶ The charcoal, white and sanguine chalk cartoon drawings were done over an entire year on twelve separate ten-foot long sheets of brown heavy paper at Ted Campbell's Prince William Street studio, where the space was large enough to allow the cartoon sheets to be attached to the walls and worked on simultaneously. These were then transferred to ten separate gessoed masonite panels, and the final casein tempera painting of the edited panels was done at Ross's parents' home on Mecklenburg Street in central Saint John (Fig. 33), with the aid of four large photographs of the cartoons as reference (Fig. 33b). In his speech for his 1950 "Know Your Own Artists" series at the New Brunswick Museum, Ross stated that "I like working in this medium [casein tempera] as it dries quickly and permits working over. I use powdered colors with an egg emulsion. This emulsion is made with the white and yolk of an egg, one third linseed oil and two thirds damarr varnish with a portion of water equal to the other three."

Between the completion of the cartoons and the process of painting the murals, Ross made a number of changes to the panels. The upper left corner of *The Destruction of War* and the upper right corner of *Rebuilding the World Through Education* were simplified, strengthening the upward focus of the massed figures into a triangle leading to the core of the atomic cloud. In *The Destruction of War*, the wailing young boy in the lower left corner of the drawing becomes a restrained painted figure who blankly addresses the viewer. The sparsely rendered corpse in the center is clearly face-down in the cartoon,

while he is facing up in the painting. The central male soldier's head has been changed, and his gaze is less upward than in the cartoon; the mother to his left looks down rather than to the right. The two heads leading up to the screaming man were altered and tightened to direct the movement towards the ruined building at the top, and a grouping of three heads, including a skull and a man holding bread was arranged at the centre right, replacing a single detached figure in the drawing. In *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, the couple and group of figures playing in the upper right were deleted, a brick wall and square linoleum tiles were added behind and below the central couple for emphasis, and the female figure in the couple looks forward in the final mural, as opposed to sideways in the cartoon. Ross's self-portrait became a harlequin figure, with a new female head added next to his, while the existing female head, using lipstick in the cartoon, would later hold a mask. Finally, two prominent figures were added in the open section at the cartoon to the right of the man working in the laboratory.

In the "Editorial" of the 1948 *Fredericton High Yearbook*, John W. Ward conveyed the magnitude of this prominent memorial, which was reproduced on two full pages:

With the utmost solemnity and respect we shall witness the unveiling of the mural placed in our auditorium in honour of those boys from Fredericton High School who paid the supreme sacrifice in World War II. From our high school every year come those who in some way may be responsible for what the future holds; therefore, let the striking reality of this mural be an incentive to the students of this school to endeavour to live up to the standards for which these boys gave their lives.²⁷

With great fanfare and speeches, *The Destruction of War* and *Rebuilding the World Through Education* were unveiled on the walls of the FHS auditorium (Fig. 23) to an

admiring audience of students, parents and relatives of the dead on "Empire Day," May 21, 1948.²⁸

In an uncanny parallel, a large painting by Peter Blume was unveiled several months after *The Destruction of War and Rebuilding the World Through Education* in October 1948 at the Durlacher Gallery in New York City. Now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Blume's 58"x74" allegorical canvas *The Rock* (Fig. 35) centers on a shattered Earth, surrounded by smoldering brick ruins on the right, and construction of Wright's *Fallingwater* on the left, an interesting mirroring of the same elements in Ross's murals. Inhabited by multi-ethnic manual labourers, Blume's painting expresses similar notions of global regeneration and toil after World War II. Shared aspects of death and rebirth are expressed throughout the work: the skeletal remains below the broken red earth on the left, counterpointed by flowers and grasses on the right, along with the white-smoked burning of the old wreckage offset by stonemasons carrying material to the new building site. Blume's placement of our planet on a thin plinth of soil and the teetering cantilevered formwork of *Fallingwater* articulate the precariousness of the scene, and the risks involved with reinvesting in a society that had nearly destroyed itself. The parallelism of their representations demonstrates at the very least the prevalence of Ross's chosen themes and formal elements, shared by various artists in North America at that time. Jack Shadbolt's work of the late 1940s in British Columbia, such as *The Monument* (1946) and *Dog among the Ruins* (1947), also reflects this spirit, portraying the anxiety and potential devastation inherent in the Cold War threat. Similarly, Graham Greene's screenplay to the 1949 film *The Third Man*, set in post-World War II Vienna, reflects the

optimism of Americans and the weariness of Europe after the war. Greene acknowledges the polarities in mankind, and understands that truly great heroism is only possible if there is also the chance of truly great evil.

Chapter Four

Mexico and the “Hotel de la Borda Mural”

Following the completion of the Fredericton High School murals, in the Spring of 1949 Fred Ross began preliminary drawings for his next project: *City Slums*, a mural that would be painted directly on the main corridor walls of the Saint John Vocational School where he was now employed as a part-time teacher. *City Slums*, whose theme was entirely chosen by Ross, took direct aim at the impoverished conditions of Saint John's working class (Fig. 36). However, this project would be put on hold for a year, as the success of the Fredericton High murals helped Ross win a traveling scholarship from Saint John's Alpha Chapter of the Beta Sigma Phi Sorority, an award open to anyone under twenty-one who wished to pursue studies in the cultural field. As Ross noted, considering his involvement in murals it was “only logical that I should want to visit Mexico, where the big three, Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros, had produced the greatest murals since the Renaissance.”¹

In January 1949, the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* expressed dismay at the lack of a cohesive Canadian “socio-political” mural movement. Although the proceedings of the 1941 Kingston Conference suggested a future of promise for the socially-conscious mural in Canada, the widespread successes of the well-known Mexican public art policy had not taken hold in Canada:

Mural art, the most characteristic manifestation of political art, has been especially barren. “The State and its affairs” - by which definition we accept the word “Political” - has had small part in our painters' creative

consciousness to date.... In Mexico City, one can walk into the Ministry of Education and find the peons gazing intently up at Diego Rivera's frescoes.... And what do we find in Canada? We must use every means to help them to a realization that freedom and democracy are not abstractions, but living, dynamic things which are capable of continued growth or devastating blight. And the mural can put these ideas right on democracy's doorstep in a visual form which is readily understood.²

Although never directly intent on espousing "political" aspects of public art in his murals, Ross was determined to immerse himself in the artistic environment of Mexico. The scholarship enabled Ross to travel there for the first time in the summer of 1949 and enroll in a Mexican art workshop affiliated with the University of Mexico, where he worked directly with artists intimately tied with the Mexican Mural movement.³ This span of training and direct exposure to Mexican painters aroused in Ross an unquestionable desire to voice a new sense of purpose in his work upon his return to Canada.

Ross's travel to Mexico was far from unprecedented for Canadian artists, and he was not the first Saint John artist to spend a significant amount of time in Mexico. An endowment from a friend had enabled Jack Humphrey to visit in March 1938, spending two months in the Mexican countryside where he produced over a hundred watercolours and drawings, which he exhibited at the Picture Loan Society in Toronto the following Spring.⁴ After his return, the New Brunswick Museum displayed a collection of eighty pieces of Mexican native pottery and handicrafts from Humphrey's personal holdings. Artists from elsewhere in the country had begun to travel to Mexico in increasing numbers during and after the Depression as it was exotic, fairly inexpensive compared to

European travel, and offered a balmy climate compared to the harsh Canadian winters. Furthermore, during World War II when Europe was essentially cut off to North American travelers, Mexico became the destination of choice for many Canadian painters. It was also a country where artists were accorded tremendous public respect and were held in high esteem by all ranks of society. This was a welcome change for many from Canada, where art was usually given reluctant public support. Some of those who spent time in Mexico were Leonard and Reva Brooks, Jack Nichols, Fred Taylor, Gordon Webber, and York Wilson, many of whom were centered in the Escuela de Bellas Artes in the historic town of San Miguel Allende.⁵ Stanley Cosgrove also lived in Mexico from 1939 to 1943 and worked with Orozco for a period of eight weeks on a fresco for Mexico City's Jesús de Nazareno Hospital.⁶

Making his way southward by bus from Saint John, Ross arrived in San Antonio, Texas, where he connected with a group of artists and students headed to the art workshop in the renowned artists' destination of Taxco, Mexico. The group was brought together from throughout North America by the wealthy American entrepreneur Irma Jonas who organized traveling art workshops, and students were given the opportunity to travel through various parts of Mexico, studying public murals in Mexico City, Cuernavaca, and Acolman. In the group was Ezra Shahn, the son of the American painter and W.P.A. muralist Ben Shahn.⁷ Once in Taxco, they began a month-long study under the expatriate American artist Pablo O'Higgins (1904-1983) (Fig. 37), who was visiting from Mexico City. O'Higgins was a staunch Communist who had moved to Mexico in 1924 and worked with Rivera as an assistant on many murals in and around Mexico City in the late

1920s. Acclaimed as a muralist and printmaker (Fig. 38), O'Higgins was convinced of the need to speak for social justice and human rights through his art. Rivera himself spoke eloquently of his colleague:

Way back when the so-called Mexican Mural Movement began to produce, Pablo O'Higgins arrived among us.... Pablo's love for Mexico, its people and its struggles has produced a great artist. His sensitiveness has developed as fine, clear, clean in the essential qualities of painting. It is also the solid and quiet force that impelled him to work as a laborer, embark on the uncertain, long and hazardous adventure of painting.... For the same reason his work in murals is extremely important. But it is not only a matter of an expression of purity, limpidity and finesse. Behind all this lies the deep sorrow and also the will to fight, the aspirations and the self-improvement of man, of the people.⁸

In his "Letter from Mexico," published in *Canadian Art* in 1948, Leonard Brooks declared:

If [the student of Mexican art] is fortunate enough to find Pablo O'Higgins on the premises, he will soon catch some of the enthusiasm of this tireless artist who came to Mexico from the United States.... From him, it is more likely the student will grasp some of the spirit of what real co-operative print-making means, and the deeper implications of the artist's place in his country's thought and culture.⁹

Ross's involvement in the art workshop culminated in his execution of a full-scale mural at Taxco's Hotel de la Borda, which remains in business and still features Ross's mural.¹⁰ Like Ted Campbell, O'Higgins encouraged the students to draw from life, using as models the citizens living and working locally. Ross chose to draw the working silver miners, who sustained the famed silversmithing industry of Taxco. Based on the quality of those ink and conté sketch studies (Fig. 39), O'Higgins allowed Ross to design and paint a mural, under his supervision, that continued the theme of the drawings (Fig. 40). Given only a two-week period to complete the undertaking, Ross learned to consolidate his ideas into a

simple, singular image. This "lesson" can be discerned in his figures up to the present day. Although Ross maintains that O'Higgins was "in that whole [mural] movement, considered a fairly minor person... not a superstar like Rivera,"¹¹ his vision and workshop instruction offered Ross the privilege of being one of the few Canadian artists to work in direct contact with the modern Mexican mural movement.

Set within a long, high, arched hall with a large exotic garden outside, Ross's Hotel de la Borda mural in Taxco measures twelve feet high by nine feet wide. The image focuses on a ten-foot high miner whose back is to the viewer. The figure, clad in sandals, dark pants and a short-sleeve shirt sports the typical attire of the miners: hard-hat with brim, goggles, and a carbide lamp attached to his belt, while his hand clasps the handle of a shovel. A smaller five-foot high figure stands immediately to his right, in a slightly sagging pose that suggests the end of a work shift, and looks away from the large miner. The figures are positioned outside, with the rolling hills of Taxco in the background. The whole constitutes an image that may not portray the actual act of extracting silver, but gives a sense of the robust, physical nature of the miners and their labour in the region.

As the production time for the Hotel de la Borda mural was a fraction of that for his previous murals, Ross's overall graphic is much looser and uncluttered with detail than his first two completed murals. The delineation of shadow is much sharper than before, almost to the point of being stylized. The greatest difference, however, lies in his choice of illustrating only two figures. In many ways, this mural foreshadows much of Ross's work during the 1960s: easel paintings or drawings that portray a solitary figure, sometimes

two, in an uncluttered setting, deep in thought or reverie with their bodies in relaxed, though clearly calculated poses.

Considering his unfamiliarity with fresco, the medium typically used by the Mexican muralists, and the short time allotted, Ross used the same casein tempera medium he had employed on the Fredericton High murals. Ross "liked the way casein behaved" and felt that it "also had a dull matte finish which was almost like fresco, so it appealed to me a good deal. [Traditional] fresco was technically impossible for me."¹² The fresco (Italian meaning "fresh") process of putting pure color onto wet lime so that a crystalline lime-skin forms over the color as it dries, is a medium that has been employed for thousands of years. The components of "true" fresco are lime plaster, sand, water, and pigment, all set on a prepared plaster wall surface. In *buon fresco*, or pure, wet fresco (preferred by Renaissance artists), several fresh wet layers of plaster are applied to a prepared wall surface. The pigments used in the painting are mixed with water so that they properly soak into the plaster when applied. When dry, a chemical bond forms between the paint and the wall surface and they permanently fuse together.¹³

This true, "wet" fresco process was integral to the success of the Mexican mural renaissance, as it allied the artists with the working class in several respects. Because of the technical demands, it was a publicly-conscious process more akin to daily labour and captured the imagination of the Mexican masses more than easel painting produced in the isolated studio. It was a technique that needed the assistance of many, such as scaffolders, plasterers, and general labourers, who worked daily alongside the artist. The process

could be regarded as a much more “democratic” medium than the pre-Revolutionary salon art of the overthrown Mexican upper-class and ruling elite. It also represented a return to traditional content in the arts, coinciding with a new respect for and academic study of pre-Columbian art in Mexico, a homage that was central to many of Rivera’s murals. It must be noted that this attitude towards the fresco medium was not viewed as conflicting with the modern world. On the contrary, Rivera saw it as the consummate 20th-century mural material: “In reality, the advanced, modern architecture of today has provided fresco painting as never before with its *raison d’être*. The unequalled trinity of modern construction, steel, glass, and concrete, would in itself be the best reason for the birth of fresco in our day, if fresco were not already as ancient as the first buildings in which man employed mortars on a base of lime or cement for his architectural efforts.”¹⁴ However, the fresco medium was not easily applicable in a Canadian context. New Brunswick’s climate, with its susceptibility to humidity, cold and weathering, made it an imperfect mural medium. Climatic conditions and the laborious process involved are among the reasons its use was non-existent as a mural technique in the region.

After completing the Hotel de la Borda mural, Ross traveled to Mexico City to see an exhibition of the acclaimed Mexican painter Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991),¹⁵ as well as to visit the revolutionary *Taller de Grafica Popular*, a renowned collective art workshop/studio affiliated with the University of Mexico. The *Taller*, or T.G.P., of which O’Higgins was a member, produced lithographs and woodcuts aimed at unmasking social inequality and the plight of the Mexican working class; such prints were primarily of a figurative nature so as to be readily understood and communicated to the masses. After

his own visit to the T.G.P. studio, Leonard Brooks felt that “the visiting Canadian artist, after he has had a chance to observe what is being done in the Taller, is rather warmed and impressed by the deep feeling of integrity that is so evident. He goes away inclined to question himself in regard to his own country, his own artists.”¹⁶ Ross’s experience at the T.G.P. encouraged him to create and disseminate offset prints of his Mexican drawings, such as his thoughtful figure study *Portrait of a Young Woman, Taxco* (Fig. 41), upon returning to Saint John later in the Fall of 1949.¹⁷ However, beyond the interest shown by Campbell and other Saint John artists, the prints met with indifference. Ross would not seriously pursue printmaking again until the late 1990s, working in the Sunbury Shores print shop in Saint Andrews, New Brunswick.¹⁸

The Hotel de la Borda mural was one of many artworks Ross completed during this trip which would display significant ties to Mexican and Renaissance sources. His 1949 easel painting *Sleeping Figures* (Fig. 42), based on a sketch made during the bus trip to San Antonio, is reminiscent of Rivera’s sparse figure rendering and textural technique. Ross claims that “[*Sleeping Figures*] was tied in with the murals; I love doing the huge heads. This is definitely an influence from the huge Mexican heads that you are so conscious of.”¹⁹ While Ross was accruing knowledge and technical understanding of modern Mexican murals, he was applying stylistic devices from famous works of the 15th-century Italian Renaissance as well. As Tom Smart indicates, the portrait at the left of *Sleeping Figures* appears to be based on that of Mars in Botticelli’s *Venus and Mars* panel of 1493.²⁰ Both of these paintings focus on the natural tilting back of the resting or deceased head, with open mouths and flared nostrils, a pose with which Ross dealt at length in *The*

Destruction of War. In fact, Ross's left *Sleeping* figure is a near duplicate of the central dead soldier in *The Destruction of War*, substantiating that while small drawings and paintings were used to prepare his large murals, the mural's design also influenced the subject matter of his smaller easel work. Technically, *Sleeping Figures's* subtle rendering of flesh and intricate joining of fingers of the man near the window prove that Ross was becoming far more adept at painting the human figure than during his *Annual School Picnic* mural in the stairwell of the Vocational School just three years before.

Chapter Five

City Slums

When Fred Ross was 22 years old, his mural work was featured in the sixth series of the New Brunswick Museum's "Know Your Own Artists" programme. The public event set up by the Curator of the Art Department, Avery Shaw, included Ross giving a lecture on his work the evening of January 12, 1950, and an exhibition of forty paintings, drawings, and cartoons from four of his murals: *Annual School Picnic*, both Fredericton High School murals, and his latest proposed work, *City Slums*.¹ Hailed by the local press as "his finest work to date, showing a great increase in grasp of scale, design and drawing,"² the final painting of *City Slums* would again be postponed, only be completed at the end of 1950, as another Mexican trip was about to take place.

Ross returned to Mexico in the summer of 1950, traveling with Ted Campbell to Mexico City, San Miguel de Allende and Taxco, where Ross displayed his Hotel de la Borda mural to his former teacher who was visiting the country for the first time.³ While in Mexico City, Ross was able to observe and sketch the celebrated Rivera, who was working on a mural cycle at the Palacio Nacional (Fig. 43).⁴ The black chalk on paper drawing, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, features a double profile of Rivera in the act of painting, along with facial details and an autograph of Rivera himself. Ross described this meeting, the affirmed highlight of his Mexican travels:

He was very gracious. I just had my sketchbook with me, and then I came across him working on a scaffold sitting up about eight feet, working on the murals, so I knew it was a one and only chance. When you're eighteen or nineteen, you're not afraid - not like when you get older. Anyway, I just went up and introduced myself and said that I was a Canadian art student and a great admirer of his work, and would he allow me to sketch him while he was working. He said, "May I look at the drawings when you're finished?" and I said, "Sure!". Anyway, I worked for three-quarters of an hour, making sketches, and he looked at them. We chatted a long time and that's when he talked seriously to me and said, "Canada is wonderful and has a great history, and is interesting and beautiful. Why don't you go back home and try to get walls so that you can do murals." That was really inspiring. I was interrupting his work, and he was a great man. It was very special.⁵

Rivera's counsel of depicting Canadian history and culture was echoed by many who had experienced Mexico's vibrant artistic climate, as well as by other Canadian painters who came to it through other means. Harry Mayerovitch, a Montreal artist, architect and writer who traveled to Mexico in 1939, felt a similar, lasting effect on his work.⁶ Upon viewing the major exhibition *Mexican Art Today* at Ottawa's National Gallery in 1943, Mayerovitch concluded that:

The Canadian people can be the heroes of a great artistic portrayal. A sympathetic, respectful attitude towards their feelings, hopes, experiences and problems on the part of Canadian artists would enable them to achieve such a portrayal, and would earn for them the warm acceptance of an entire nation. The experience of Mexican artists is living proof that this need not remain an idle hope.⁷

Ross's Mexican experiences and contact with Rivera gave added stimulus to his developing career as a muralist. Upon returning to Saint John in 1950, he completed the cartoon of *City Slums* and began its final painting in the main hallway of the Vocational School (Figs. 44-46). This mural was the first of a pair that would adorn both sides of the central auditorium doors on the main floor.⁸ Although Ross was not paid for the

implementation of the mural, he was given complete freedom of content and form.⁹

City Slums is Ross' most direct indictment of the despair in Saint John caused by poverty, squalor and economic uncertainty. Through both specific and generalized architectural references, Ross's "collage" assemblage of industrial building and labour demonstration, familiar Victorian houses, and view of the harbour from nearby Fort Howe, all empower *City Slums* to scenographically evoke the heart and character of Saint John. Ross illustrates the burdensome condition of youth, enveloped by a harsh, unforgiving environment, which foresees a future most likely bleak and destitute. On the mural's left side, indifferent young couples stand together in the evening, some embracing, overlooking the Saint John rooftops receding down a hill, while children grapple and fight at the feet of the immobile standing figures framed by the building facades. In the cartoon, Ross placed a Madonna and Child image at the center of his young crowd to symbolize hope within the otherwise moribund group. He replaced the Madonna in the final mural by a more conventional mother and child, as he felt the religious metaphor was somewhat gratuitous and might be misunderstood.¹⁰ The lower right corner of *City Slums* portrays three young men and a child of over life-size scale, creating a striking contrast to the rest of the figures. The blond figure holds out his palm to the viewer in a gesture of begging or seeking aid, while another young man holds his outstretched arm in dissent towards the scene behind him. Made from a separate study, the black youth at the far right was added during the installation of the final mural (Fig. 45), as can be seen by comparing the photographs of the mural's execution to the cartoon (Fig. 36), where this figure does not appear.¹¹

In the upper right corner of *City Slums*, Ross makes allusion to significant local union unrest through the portrayal of a group of workers picketing a factory in the background. The depicted structure resembles the well-known Simms Brush Factory next to the Reversing Falls in West Saint John, very near to the Saint John Vocational School. This does not necessarily imply that it is the Simms factory, as a large number of local industrial buildings were of similar appearance. Yet this similarity lends credence to Ross's attempt to set the action within a familiar local frame of reference. In the foreground of the mural's preliminary cartoon, the young child's newspaper hat, which is left blank in the final mural, presents a clearly delineated May 12, 1949 headline stating "Fishermen Predict Fear," although this was not the newspaper's actual front page headline that day.¹² This chosen date does, however, coincide with widespread labour conflicts in Saint John surrounding the Canadian Seamen's Union on Canadian merchant vessels, where events involving strikes, police, and substantial incarcerations came to a head on May 11, 1949.¹³ This political reference is somewhat unusual for Ross, who, in comparison with Brittain and Humphrey, incorporated little "social commentary." Ross, like the others, claims to have no ulterior political motives, yet one must admit that in this case the imagery tolerates such a reading; and it is worth remembering that his father was a labour organizer. Ross, however insists on doing no more than representing the reality of a certain time and place, which clearly existed in many ways as represented in the mural.

Beyond the borders of New Brunswick, in the United States during the 1930s and early 1940s, Social Realism was one of the most prevalent modes of painting. Driven by the

economic despair of the Depression, it embodied themes of social protest and at times, radical politics, and is exemplified by the work of such artists as William Gropper, Reginald Marsh and Philip Evergood. In spite of the fact that many "golden age" artists of Saint John are often labeled as social realists, their work was more concerned with representing the economic reality of their city than acting as a vehicle for social commentary or change. While both Brittain and Humphrey were championed as "top-flight exponents of the documentary school of painters,"¹⁴ Brittain explained that he simply painted the daily life in which he himself was a participant; "I was more affected by the absurdity of human antics than anything else and so I was labeled a satirist when the pictures were first exhibited. Throughout this time I desired to use no other material than that which confronted me on every side. I was interested in how people looked and acted."¹⁵ In his Maoist *History of Painting in Canada – Toward a People's Art*, Barry Lord suggests that Social Realism was an advance over Documentary Realism; beyond simple depiction, it was an attempt at depicting heroism.¹⁶ Lord postulates that the works of Brittain and Humphrey were socialist propaganda, promoting a new social order based on empowering the working class. Ross denies any connection to Communist or propagandistic ideals in Brittain and Humphrey's work,¹⁷ as well as his own work, stating that "People like Barry Lord want to see it as that. He did an article on Miller Brittain's murals which made Miller sound like a flaming Communist, and he wasn't at all. At parties or talking to Jack, it never came up."¹⁸ While *City Slums* seems to be his strongest political statement, commenting on the social and economic pressures in Saint John, Ross states that it was not done with a purely "political" motivation. He asserts that "there has to be a fundamental idea behind the concept of the mural. Great art is not just

propaganda; art can be used as a message, but in many cases it ceases to be art, it just becomes a message."¹⁹

Nonetheless, *City Slums* is Ross's most "Mexican" mural in many ways. His aspiration to fuse idea and form was becoming more successful as he became increasingly confident in his draughtsmanship, composition, and painting ability. His tempera colour becomes more alive and vibrant, while maintaining a matte finish, akin to fresco. His figures are more heroic in their size; specifically, the large youth heads in the lower right corner act in a similar way to Rivera's often-used "friezes" of heads. *City Slums*' exaggerated smothering compression of space and multiple hostile incidents within the same environment creates an almost surreal montage of conflict and blight. In this, more than any of his murals, Ross arrives closest to what Rivera had achieved in his art: the evocation of social comment through character by deliberate distortion and deliberate action through pictorial dynamics. This is visible in *City Slums*' linear directionality of arms and signs, the cartoon's use of a newsprint slogan to emphasize the thematic tone, the near caricature of the struggling figures, and the striking difference in figure size from the foreground to the upper background of the mural. This recession of figures and the correlating depth of field and illusion of architectural perspective evoke a more authentic spatial experience than in his earlier murals. Such illusory depth draws the viewer into the picture, encouraging the audience to look deeper into the mural towards the small figures clamouring about the open rail boxcar, held back as it were by the young man's outstretched arm shielding the full scene from view. It is also his most grounded mural relative to local context as it imparts a setting (Saint John) that is both familiar and

related to the mural's audience, an intention that was key to such works as Rivera's Ministry of Education murals in Mexico City that embraced the nearby scenes of agrarian and urban Mexico. Likewise, a connection must be made to Brittain's cartoons for the Tuberculosis Hospital, as both are critical of urban squalor, both present these conditions through a broad cross-section of the population, and both deal with the subject in a way that balances social criticism with optimism.

City Slums' figures are much more diverse and vigorous than those of his previous murals, while also emanating a greater individuality. As opposed to the near-total conformity of age and action in *Annual School Picnic* and the diverse but still methodical figure placement in his Fredericton High murals, *City Slums* achieves its impact by its authenticity of imagery, where the scene becomes a "window" rather than a simply a "message." Here, Ross accomplishes a viable representation of a much larger cross-section of society: the youths look and act like youths, while the young adults act and appear different from the older, working-class picketers.

City Slums' commentary on urban Saint John shares philosophies with numerous other North American muralists of the previous decades. An idealized urban/metropolitan condition with its promise of employment, a social safety-net, and improved health services was far from universally embraced by the Mexican and W.P.A. muralists. Although a certain romantic ideal was visible in many of Rivera's frescoes concerning industry and the potential of cities (one could immediately cite his Detroit and San Francisco Murals as evident proof), his colleague Orozco saw the modern city as a

horrific environment. To Orozco, modern urbanism summoned the worst vices in mankind and encouraged the population to turn their backs on collective history and traditions. In the opinion of Octavio Paz, Orozco “looked on [the city] with biblical eyes: a place of condemnation, the native land of the Great Whore, as vast as the desert and as suffocating as the cell in which prisoners live crowded on top of each other.”²⁰ The Arcadian dream of abandoning the chaos of cities appeared in England after the First World War when a rush for planned communities and garden communities began. Similarly, in early 20th-century North America, a sentiment was embraced by many that a great deal of life’s evils came from overcrowded, high density city situations. Overwhelmingly the populace thought that suburbia and every household’s patch of grass would at least make life more Eden-like again. This assessment reached an apex after the Second World War with the return of thousands of veterans and the associated baby boom, a time when Saint John suddenly became surrounded by commuter neighborhoods, while concurrently the City promoted urban planning schemes to clear and redevelop much of its aged housing stock.²¹ At the root of all this was the desire to escape what Ross portrayed in *City Slums*.

Beyond the Mexican influence, the overall composition of *City Slums* suggests a synthesis of several works by the American artist Paul Cadmus (1904-1999), with whom both Ross and Campbell were familiar and whose draughtsmanship they greatly admired. Ross admits that he was greatly attracted to Cadmus’s “obvious interest in Renaissance drawing and his irreverence.”²² Cadmus was a New York artist who, in 1933, became one of the first participants in the government-sponsored Public Works of Art Project, the

predecessor to the W.P.A. He immediately created a huge stir when his 1934 canvas *The Fleet's In!* was censored and removed by the Navy from an exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. for representing drunken American sailors on shore leave, cavorting with local women.²³ Notwithstanding such notoriety, Cadmus possessed an impeccable draughtsmanship and a satirical but direct manner of presenting urban American life and all its apprehensions. Yet it was his palpable erotic sensibility and longing of youth that would inspire Ross most candidly in *City Slums*, and subsequently in much of Ross' later work including *City Slums*' future pendant mural, *Humanistic Education* (see Chapter Six).

Two of Cadmus' best-known canvases, 1938's *Sailors and Floosies* (Fig. 47) and 1948's *Playground* (Fig. 48), particularly share the same disorderly spirit which Ross presents in *City Slums*. *Sailors and Floosies* shows three couples at sunset: military men in various states of consciousness with their heavily made-up companions in a park overlooking the water far below. The composition of *Sailors and Floosies* is spatially similar to the left-hand side of *City Slums*, in and around the group of young couples and fighting children, positioned above the city, spread in the distance. In *Playground*, a group of adolescents loiter and carouse about a small, metal fenced urban back lot, surrounded by the blight of tenements; akin to Ross's "Fishermen Predict Fear" hat (in the cartoon), discarded newspapers display headlines of global conflict. There is no sky or horizon present, evoking a claustrophobic world contained in this singular place, with its pervading discouragement and apathy. But in the top corner, Cadmus shows a smiling young man climbing the fence, his shirt worn like a cape on his bare torso with his arm outstretched

to the sky as if to take flight: an allegory of transcendence and hope. The blatant eroticism of all the figures also offers a decadent escape from the urban ennui, inferring a certain liberation all its own in the promise of sensual indulgence. This aspect of Cadmus's work is key, as Ross appears to share a similar interest in the life-giving properties of youthful sexuality in his murals and paintings. This emphasis first appeared, albeit subtly, in the budding physical maturity of Ross's teenagers in *Annual School Picnic*, and was explored in each of the New Brunswick murals: the alluring pose of the young woman bent over the young man in the lower left corner of *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, and *City Slums*' defiant tension among the standing women and their 'cool' smoking male escorts, along with the rugged, visceral nature of the bare-chested black male. However the expression of the youthful physique as central to the mural's theme would develop into a distinct metaphorical ideal through the evolution of *Humanistic Education*.

Chapter Six

Humanistic Education & Introspection

In 1953, several years after completing *City Slums*, Fred Ross began a small study for its pendant piece: his last mural commission at the Saint John Vocational School. The mural *Humanistic Education* was completed in 1954 and installed in the same main hallway as *City Slums*, on the corresponding (opposite) side of the main auditorium doors (Fig. 49). *Humanistic Education* endeavoured to show the potential positive outcome of youth within society if conditions were conscientious and civilized.

Like the enchantment Ross felt for the “huge Mexican heads” that influenced easel works such as *Sleeping Figures*, he felt *City Slums* was “like a bit of cinema, where these huge Mexicanish, dominating heads come right out at you.”¹ But unlike *City Slums*, the 1953 conté study drawing for *Humanistic Education* (Fig. 50) is much more static, differing significantly from Ross's previous murals. Three years had passed between the completion of *City Slums* and *Humanistic Education*, and the influence of the Renaissance now becomes most evident. Although it may appear that Ross's interest in Mexican art begins to wane, it is more accurate to argue that his interest in Italian Renaissance painters increased. Ross and Ted Campbell were fully aware that the inspirational roots of the Mexican mural movement lay in the muralists of 15th-century Italy, and Renaissance figurative art with its humanist content engaged the interest of Ross. As well, the Italian artists' subject matter was usually more sensual and idyllic than

much of the Mexican murals, the political and moralizing motives of which were becoming of less interest to him.² Reaching back into the history of art for inspiration, Ross was developing a stronger desire to explore individual emotions through figuration, and the Renaissance provided him with that framework. Smart feels that:

Ross's work of the 1950s embodies an inherent tension between contemporary subject matter, reflecting the immediate experience of living in Saint John, and its interpretation through the scrim of Renaissance figuration. Initially, Ross was drawn to the Ferrarese masters of the fifteenth century: Cosimo Tura and Carlo Crivelli.... Ross was also attracted to the ability of these artists to convey a broad spectrum of human emotions, which appeared to know few restraints, whether expressing grief or intense feelings almost grotesque in their violence.³

In the study drawing portraying muscular youth with the instruments of sport, art, and learning, Ross's composition becomes more controlled and symmetrically ordered, presenting a tranquil atmosphere. Twenty figures are delineated, with all but the three central figures standing. Blurring the lines between interior and exterior space, the setting recalls a classical loggia, with only the hint of clouds suggesting any measure of depth. The study figures, ranging from *Commedia dell'Arte* characters to normally clothed and semi-clothed individuals, are exclusively male; however the draped figure looking away from the viewer ambiguously appears female. The self-assured posing of the figures and robust emphasis on the rendering of their covered, but still prominent genital areas acknowledges Ross's focus on the sexual magnetism and virility of youth. This emphasis on the erogenous was shared with many 20th-century neo-romantic painters such as Cadmus, who pushed it to express unfeigned homoeroticism, yet Ross has never referred to this playing any part in his consideration of Cadmus's work. Compared to Cadmus's model, the male erotic in Ross's study may be slightly more elusive, though still

apparent, as the lithe youthful male body is offered to the viewer as both the epitome of physical perfection and an accessory to reach intellectual heights. Ross recognizes his *Humanistic Education* study as fundamentally following a 15th-century tradition, asserting that it “had to do with the Renaissance, again; where all the male figures are usually very anatomical and arrogant. They liked to show them with tights and the clothes they wore then; emphasizing that, of course.”⁴ Ross shared the Renaissance painters’ interest in expressing and depicting the sensual form of the human body through a skin of clothes, such as portrayed by the mythological figures of Giulio Romano in his Palazzo del Tè frescoes at Mantua.

The study for *Humanistic Education* is compositionally related to Raphael's fresco *Parnassus* in the Vatican, a work in a different format but similar in its central focus on three seated individuals holding a violin and other implements, as well as its near symmetrical grouping of figures (Fig. 51). These figures in the *Humanistic Education* study are clearly the focus, with the two kneeling males (one clothed formally, the other informally) arranged astride and slightly behind the seated central figure. The latter emerges more as an “ideal” male than a posing athlete, as his torsioned, semi-clad body looks away in the stance of a classical figure, the ball anchored at his fingertip less a basketball than a Euclidean sphere. Ross describes the idea of the study’s form as deriving directly from the Renaissance:

I have a wonderful book on the early Renaissance frescoes and many of the parts of the compositions are like this [study], with the great variation of the figures, but basically all in a row. That was where I got the motivation, [this central figure is] right out of Michelangelo. This figure at

the end is also very much like some of the early Italians where they pose with the weight on one foot.⁵

The mural professes Ross's desire to visually express through allegory the contrast of his Saint John surroundings between the negative conditions of urban life in *City Slums* and the more personal and positive youthful aspects he was in contact with as a teacher, expressed allegorically in *Humanistic Education*. With the planning and execution of the latter mural, Ross fulfills the polarizing effect of good and evil seen in his Fredericton murals, while continuing the influence of Cadmus. In his *Credo*, published in conjunction with his exhibition at New York's Midtown Galleries in 1937, Cadmus avowed:

I believe that art is not only more true but also more living and vital if it derives its immediate inspiration and its outward form from contemporary life. The actual contact with human beings who are living and dying, working and playing, exercising all their functions and passions, demonstrating the height and depths of man's nature, gives results of far greater significance than those gained by isolation, introspection or subjective contemplation of inanimate objects....

There are, in general, two ways to approach an expression not only of individuals' reactions to society, but also to approach society itself in all its complex inter-relations. One: to choose the finest and noblest expressions of people and society and to demonstrate them as unalloyed goodness; two: to choose the subversive, selfish and deadening expressions and to display them in all their destructive malignity. Each viewpoint, I believe, presupposes a moral germination. There is, back of every true artistic endeavour, love of life, desire for continuance of life, desire for a better life, etc., and any move toward these goals is moral....⁶

The influence of Eugene Berman (1899-1972), another American painter whom Ross greatly admired, becomes apparent in the study to *Humanistic Education*, and would become increasingly discernible in Ross's easel paintings in later years. As was the case with his knowledge of Cadmus, Ross was introduced to Berman's work through Ted

Campbell and the books and publications that were at hand in Saint John. Berman, a Russian-born émigré who eventually settled in the United States, was a well-known painter, draughtsman, and ballet scenery/costume designer in the 1930s and 1940s, whose celebrity faded with the rise of modernism and abstract art after World War II.⁷ Often cited as a “neo-romantic” or “neo-baroque” painter, Berman’s work was immersed in both surrealism and neoclassicism, frequently applying pictorial elements that can be similarly found throughout Ross’s *Humanistic Education*: exaggerated one-point perspective, harlequins and highly adorned figures (often with their backs to the viewer), settings within decaying Renaissance or Baroque Italian piazzas, and backgrounds often punctuated by a torn tarp suspended by rope (Fig. 52). Berman’s work, like that of Cadmus, described a fey-ness and undercurrent of sexuality which heightened the exoticism and potential eroticism of his figures. Although his linear draughtsmanship was much looser and coarser than Ross’s, Berman’s strategy of creating static images within a stylized, classical architectural landscape of barren panoramas would appear in much of Ross’s painting from the 1950s and 1960s, and is unmistakable in both the cartoon and final version of *Humanistic Education*. Berman painstakingly scattered his canvases with an elaborate patina of painted holes and tears, spots, pebbles, and various debris on any visible ground. To create a trompe l’oeil spatial illusion, he would paint simulated frames on the canvas surface surrounding the subject, complete with nail holes, worm holes, and cast shadows, along with simulated “tacked-on” paper nameplates, all devices Ross began to use in the late 1940s and repeatedly in the 1950s, such as in his 1955 *Harlequin and Four Dancers* (Fig. 59). Ross was not interested in Berman’s play of surrealism, but in his theatricality; the harlequin and Commedia dell’Arte outfits that were featured in many

of Ross's paintings during the 1950s and 1960s derive from Berman's art.⁸ Ross recalls that "[Berman] attracted me more for his theatrical nature. Some people feel his best work was in theatre design and costume design. He was obviously a romantic indirectly from Picasso's 'Blue Period'."⁹

Ross would not sustain the design of the 1953 study for the final *Humanistic Education* mural, choosing instead to create a more varied scene that disregarded the central seated figures and incorporated a balanced number of females to males. The mural presents an amalgam of rigid standing and sitting figures around an unobstructed area of a grid-pattern floor. The final version of *Humanistic Education* (Fig. 53) is less kindred to *Parnassus*, although Tom Smart claims that its composition was based on "preliminary drawings by Raphael for tapestries in the Vatican."¹⁰ Ross kept some compositional strategies and elements of the study, though modified, including the muscular males wearing shorts on the left side, and several Berman-like details including: the *Commedia dell'Arte* costumes, the suspended background tarp, and the exaggerated one-point perspective. Of benefit to Ross's creation of a classical panorama is the mural's pair of adjacent ionic pilasters, which seems somewhat at odds with the content and imagery of *City Slums*. *Humanistic Education*'s group of figures include (on the left side) a male standing with a long pole looking downward, a young man clutching a book, a young woman in shorts sitting on a low table, and a man in profile sitting with his arm over a pile of books. The right side has eight figures standing tightly together, with some of their heads being all that is visible. An older-looking male is sitting in front of this group on a cube,¹¹ holding a blank framed canvas upright, parallel to the mural's surface. The

mural's overall colouration is more muted than its pendant *City Slums*, with a predominance of reddish-browns and grey-blues, and little black, although Ross heightens this pale palette with periodic splashes of a highly-keyed green at each 1/3rd division of the panel in various articles of clothing. Concurrently, Ross also executed two small torso portraits which were placed above the central doors of the School's auditorium (Fig. 6). Both are students studying textbooks on wooden tables, with the female on the right, and the male on the left; the latter showing severe deterioration in the upper section that obscures much of his face.

Curiously, the Canadian country singer "Stompin' Tom" Connors recently revealed in his autobiography that he was the figure model for *Humanistic Education's* shirtless male athletes on the left side of the final panel. Connors attended the Vocational School in his youth, and had even performed in an amateur contest in the auditorium as a student. He remembers that "when the art department had been commissioned to paint [*Humanistic Education*] many years ago, it was I who had posed for all the male characters now seen holding their footballs, hockey sticks, basketballs and various other sports equipment. (The faces, however, had all been mercifully modified to give each character a semblance of good looks.)"¹²

The final mural, compared to the study, suffers from a lack of focus, whereby the rhythm of figure placement reads as somewhat arbitrary and inert. Although the anatomical and gestural rendering is much more realistic than in Ross's previous murals, a certain lifelessness permeates the scene as the figures stand around with little deviation in stance,

looking mildly bored. Ross's placement of his self-portrait (he is the fourth figure from the right, with the open collar) reinforces this apathy as he looks away from the viewer in indifference, a state much changed from *Annual School Picnic* and *Rebuilding the World Through Education* where his gazes are straight ahead, wide-eyed, and penetrating. By this point, the group dynamic seems to lose its luster as subject matter for Ross, further evidenced by his increasing emphasis on individual portraits.

By the time that Ross executed *Humanistic Education*, he was facing a dilemma concerning his interest in mural painting. He was now acknowledged as a respected, professional artist/muralist and again was not under any constraints or pressure from the School administration as to the theme of this mural, yet his enthusiasm was diminishing under the "very sparse" public interest shown for *Humanistic Education* upon its completion.¹³ Ross admits that "*City Slums* is much more worked out, in that there seems to be more conviction, more vitality than *Humanistic Education*. I really think that my interest was lagging and that I didn't have the same drive as for *City Slums*."¹⁴

Chapter Seven

Later Mural Work

In April 1957, Fred Ross won first place in a mural competition and was awarded a commission to adorn the Saint John Tourist Offices on downtown Sydney Street.¹ Measuring eight feet, six inches in height by six feet, four inches in width, the large acrylic on canvas mural was described by Ross as “semi-abstract,” displaying a central figure surrounded by images representing the theme of travel. Sharing a fate similar to the Fredericton High School murals, it was destroyed after approximately ten years to accommodate renovations.² Unfortunately, there seem to be no extant drawings or photographs of the work, and any potential descriptions based on memory are sparse at best, making it difficult to compare this work with the rest of Ross’s body of murals.

By the late 1950s, public and political support for murals was becoming passive at best, and the opportunities of local “walls” presented to Ross languished, undermining his calling as a muralist. Ross’s interest in classical figuration combined with depictions of idealized society were no longer fashionable within public art. In his 1948 article “Canadian Painting, Sculpture and Print Making,” Charles Comfort related the ties between Canadian regionalism, mural art, and society’s subsequent loss of interest in such art: “In North America regionalism and the renaissance in mural art were among the tendencies that caught and held the imagination of a continent. These movements have not survived the war to carry on effective leadership today. The Movement... represented

an enlightened effort to re-establish the contact between the artist and the larger community.”³ As society lost interest in his murals, Ross reduced his representation of society within them. Dr. Stuart Smith asserts that not only were the interests of public institutions waning, but the financial rewards were greatly reduced for artists pursuing public-sponsored murals rather than smaller “frameable” paintings:

By the middle 1950s, how much money do you need to make a living? How much time, effort, and preparation is involved in these mural projects? It is about the least cost-effective thing you could imagine. [Ross] got \$700 for [the Fredericton High School murals] and it took him two straight years. If you’re looking to make your living as a painter, these things are out of the question... they’re just not cost effective. Patrons’ mentality had changed and murals were no longer of any great interest. It was private art, private collections, private money that sponsored the art boom of the 1950s, when the big collections of Canadian art begin to be built. The reality of mural painting is that the socially motivated mural is just out of favour. You don’t have that wartime collective sense of making collective statements. So Fred, no matter what he might want to do, had to face the reality that this is not the way to ever make a living or really make an impact, because that isn’t where the market is or where the money is.⁴

Beyond the local financial limitations, the wider art world’s political enthrallment with the Mexican and W.P.A. murals was significantly waning due to the rise of the New York Abstract Expressionist movement and the McCarthy-era contempt for Communism, with which Rivera and others were associated. Mexico itself witnessed a diminished interest and production of murals during this period, beginning what has been called “La Ruptura” (The Rupture), a movement that saw many Mexican artists turn away from the traditions and didacticism of murals, and move towards the more current modes of abstraction.⁵

By the time that Ross had finished his last mural at the Saint John Vocational School in 1954, the world was a radically different place than ten years previous, at the genesis of *Annual School Picnic*. Western society and its economy was steadily improving, and confidence in the democratic ideology over the socialist systems was hardly in question, so the pedagogy of "socially conscious" murals was seen as redundant. Desmond Rochefort's view as to why the monumental political art of the Mexicans fell from grace in the United States during the post-World War II era is as follows:

With the concern during the depression for economic reform seemingly solved by the surging prosperity of the postwar era, intellectuals focused their attention on the problems of the nation's postindustrial society and the individual's desire for privacy, personal freedom, and fulfillment.... With this dramatic reversal of priorities, the profoundly anticollectivistic fervor of these years rejected what were now termed the 'smelly orthodoxies' of the 1930s, and the intellectual climate of the postwar years can be seen as hostile to the political and esthetic ideas of the Mexicans.⁶

As Octavio Paz has maintained, a clear personal moral stand and public support for this stand are absolutely necessary if public murals are to achieve any value. Paz states that "the ambition to create a public art requires at least two conditions for its fulfillment: first, a community of beliefs, feelings and images; second, a collective vision of humanity and of its place and mission in the world."⁷ Affirming the existence of these conditions in Mexico, the state of artistic, political, and religious (moral) solidarity emphasized that "[muralism] was not only a religious but a governmental and even a dynastic phenomenon.... It was an art that took its inspiration from a community of collective sentiments and images; to an equal degree it was, and still is, a testimonial to the unanimity that religious and political orthodoxies impose when they hold power. Free art has destroyed that unanimity again and again."⁸ Barry Lord's 1987 article "Reflections on

Industrial Images” agrees with Paz’s proposition, stating that public murals with an industrial or social theme have been marginalized in the post-WWII western world and that the dearth of such works in Canadian art were due to the lack of patronage:

The patronage of business and government determined the content of both Canadian murals [Comfort’s *Romance of Nickel* at the Paris International Exhibition of 1937 & the B.C. Government’s 1938 Golden Gate Exposition mural] – and helps to explain why Brittain’s Saint John mural was never painted when hospital authorities cut the appropriation for it four years later.... For it is patronage – not the artist’s intention, nor the public’s perception of a work – that determines its content. Just as the significance of any artifact of human culture is defined by those for whom it is made, so the meaning of a work of art is established by its patronage.⁹

By the end of the 1950s, as traditional figurative-based murals were declining in popularity throughout North America, the last permanent murals were painted at the Saint John Vocational School. Fred Willar, who graduated from its art course in 1957, completed three murals in the School. Like Ross during his tenure as a promising art student at the School, Willar was regarded as an accomplished painter and in 1956 was selected by his teachers, Ross and Campbell, to execute the murals.¹⁰ Located in the cafeteria, the teachers’ staff room, and the library, Willar’s skillful murals distinctly display the guidance of Ross and Campbell in their composition, medium (casein tempera), and idyllic themes such as characters from literature (Fig. 54). The relationship had indeed come full-circle, with Ross now as the teacher and authority, along with Campbell as the elder mentor, imparting enthusiasm and insight to a new generation of Saint John painters.

Although the late 1950s to mid-1960s witnessed a moderate resurgence in murals and public art in Canada, Ross and other Maritime artists rarely benefited from its results. A surge of international-style government buildings and office towers occurred in the cities of Central and Western Canada. These, along with Expo 67 projects in Montreal, commissioned public artwork that was rarely figurative, but abstract and/or material and tectonic based, such as Jean-Paul Mousseau's ceramic tile medallions in Montreal's Peel Metro Station (1964-66). Nearly all of the murals of this period were financed by large corporations or the Federal Government, both of which would offer scant art patronage in New Brunswick until the close of the 20th-century.¹¹ Ross reiterated in a 1974 interview: "The problem with doing murals is that there aren't that many walls around that offer the opportunity, and the cost of doing murals is prohibitive. Like sculpture, it's something that has to be subsidized by governments or philanthropists."¹²

As the debate between figurative and non-figurative art in Canada ensued during the mid-1950s, Ross rigorously continued his exploration of figuration, admitting that "while there will always be artists who follow the realistic techniques, painting is not likely to revert to this form to the extent that it was known in the past."¹³ This position was often central to period critiques of Ross's work. In a *Toronto Star* review from 1956, Hugh Thomson remarks that "Fred Ross will have none of this abstruse 'doodling' that often passes as abstract art; nor is he one to get off hazy impressions of scenes and dreams. Everything he draws or paints is bright and clear."¹⁴ In fact, as non-objective art eventually became widely accepted, Ross was seen as somewhat of a dissident by critic Robert Fulford, who had remarked that the artist of today "who is also a realist is by the nature of things a rebel – art

has arrived at a point where the abstract and non-objective are the orthodox.”¹⁵ Although Ross was not an advocate for abstraction, feeling that the American action painters’ work “looked like kindergarten” compared to the Mexican mural paintings,¹⁶ he fully acknowledged abstraction’s dominance within the art world during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Ross, admitting to having modest doubts at times as to whether his artistic inclination was in the right direction, was beginning to feel pressure to experiment within his painting and be “more adventuresome.”¹⁷ He would execute two semi-abstract murals in the 1960s, murals that appear to be solitary deviations from his adherence to realism. The first was a 1961 mural measuring 40 feet by 12 feet, painted directly on the wall of an open-plan social area for Prince of Wales College’s Montgomery Hall in Charlottetown, P.E.I. (Figs. 55 & 56),¹⁸ while the second was a large, circular panel completed for the opening of Fredericton’s Provincial Centennial Building in 1967 (Figs. 57 & 58).¹⁹

The Prince of Wales College mural is primarily composed of loosely drawn black flowing lines filled with abstracted, vaguely geometrical forms of bright colour. The shape centers on a triple-faced figure whose multiple hands grip stylized elements of technical study, including a test tube, a draughting triangle, and a small, round, seed-like object. At the sides, the image transforms into stylized landscapes of craggy rock faces, fields, and dense strands of trees painted in tones of gray, brown, and green, presumably representing the countryside of the island. Although the mural is still extant, the common area it once occupied has since been subdivided into three rooms, with dividing walls

essentially separating the mural into three visual elements (ex. Fig. 56a). The mural has been further obscured by dropped ceilings that cover the top portion (Fig. 56b), along with bookcases and radiators that hide much of the lower section. Notwithstanding the visual breakup of the overall mural, some care has been taken to preserve the physical integrity of the artwork itself: the dividing walls do not physically touch the mural as a one-inch gap has been left, and the radiators have false backs so as not to be embedded in the wall. At one time there was even a false wall placed in front of the mural to protect the work from further damage.

Ross's Centennial Building mural, located on the top floor, was one of six large artworks, each stipulated for one of the structure's six stories, with each mural depicting a different theme from New Brunswick's industry or history.²⁰ Ross's work, an eight-foot diameter circular panel set in a white square, refers to the prolific literary history of New Brunswick, with particular emphasis on Fredericton's native "fathers" of Canadian poetry, Bliss Carman and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts. Painted in tones of blue and white with areas of sand added to the surface for textural effect, the mural seems to be exploring the early Synthetic Cubist forms of Picasso and Braque, resulting in a moderately cubist image that, although tighter and more jagged, closely resembled his Prince of Wales mural. While at first glance the Centennial Building mural appears completely abstract in configuration, Ross's fanciful curves within the Prince of Wales mural now become distinct attributes for book pages, letters, and envelopes (Fig. 57). The whole is made apparent by his inclusion of script throughout, including the names of Roberts and Carman in the lower right area. Sharing a fate with other of his murals, this work too was

removed from its wall during a renovation in the early 1990s, and its whereabouts are presently unknown.

By the mid-1970s, Paul Duval's *High Realism in Canada* declared that as Ross matured he became quite wholly bound to Renaissance conceptions and subjects: "[Ross] continued to paint compositions in the manner of the fifteenth-century Italian masters, particularly the Ferrarese genius, Cosimo Tura."²¹ Duval's statement is persuasive, but not completely accurate. For example, Ross's painting *Harlequin and Four Dancers* from 1955 (Fig. 59) is described by Smart as a synthesis of purely Northern Italian Renaissance sources, and appears to be directly based on Cossa and Roberti's *Altarpiece from St. Lazzaro* (Fig. 60). While this analysis is credible, it still promotes the singular view that by then the Renaissance had become dominant, leaving the Mexican and 20th-century American contributions neglected. In this case, Cossa and Roberti's bishop is transformed into what Ross describes as a character similar to "one of the Rivera murals, where there's a great peasant figure with torn white trousers,"²² while the romanticism of Berman and Cadmus is clearly apparent in the painting's execution, detailing, costumes and bric-a-brac.

The sustaining influence of Rivera's presence continued into the late 1950s, as is demonstrated by a comparison of Ross's 1955 portrait of his wife Sheila (Fig. 61), with Rivera's 1949 portrait of his daughter Ruth (Fig. 62), both of which share a distinct mutual handling of: flatness of brushwork, muted colour palette, lack of background detail, solemn but dignified facial expression, simple rendering of hanging drapery and

clothing, and Ross's placement of the flower as a symbol of femininity and earthiness (used repeatedly by Rivera in his portraits of women). Ross acknowledges that the output of this period should be read as an amalgamation of Renaissance and 20th-century sources, both occupying important spaces within the canvas. Many artists who offered significant inspiration to his early murals continued to enrich the work of Ross, including Paul Cadmus, who executed several rich still lifes during the 1950s. Similar fondness for enlivening the tactile, sensual nature of the object surfaces was shared by both men, as can be seen by comparing Ross's mixed media painting *Still Life* from c.1980 (Fig. 63) to Cadmus' *Apple Peeler* of 1959 (Fig. 64).

As the decades moved on, and Fred Ross' easel work brought him nationwide recognition and success, attention quickly faded from his murals. Time was not kind to them; *Annual School Picnic* was removed from its wall in 1985 and misplaced, only to be found in a mechanical room in 1997.²³ The Fredericton High School murals were removed in 1954 to allow classroom renovations, placed in storage, were nearly restored in the mid-1970s, but were unknowingly destroyed by maintenance staff who were unaware of their importance.²⁴ *City Slums/Humanistic Education* were left needing urgent repair as their plaster substrate began to chip and deteriorate. The cartoons to all of these murals were thought to have been long lost until, astonishingly, they were discovered at the New Brunswick Museum one year before Ross's major retrospective exhibition was to open at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in September of 1993.²⁵ The National Gallery has since purchased the cartoons for the Fredericton murals, and they were exhibited in the Canadian Galleries as the centerpiece to their exhibition commemorating the 50th

anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document draughted by Jack Humphrey's cousin, John Humphrey, a native of Hampton, N.B. who was a faculty member of McGill University's Law School. The Hotel de la Borda mural, although still extant, has not been seen by Ross in years but its condition is said to be good;²⁶ and as previously mentioned, of his two 1960s murals, one was lost (the Centennial Building mural) and the other was severely compromised (the Prince of Wales mural).

The abuse and loss of Ross's murals is an extreme misfortune, yet is now in the midst of being reevaluated. A restoration project has begun for *City Slums* and *Humanistic Education*, with catalyst funds donated by the Provincial Department of Education.²⁷ The rediscovered components of *Annual School Picnic* are in a position to be restored and reinstalled in their original location; and the administration of Fredericton High School has recently hung large-scale photographic reproductions of *The Destruction of War* and *Rebuilding the World Through Education* in the school's entrance lobby

Conclusion

Renewal & Relevance

The aftermath of World War II saw a shift in subject matter among the painters in Saint John. Jack Humphrey intensified his explorations into colour and the two-dimensional abstraction of nature, while Miller Brittain increasingly pursued the deeper reflection of humanity in his subjects along with their spiritual bearing, becoming more often referred to as a “mystical” painter. In contrast to these two mentors, Fred Ross proceeded without cutting any ties to either his figurative or naturalistic roots. His execution of large, allegorical, crowd-filled murals was supplanted by smaller works incorporating subtle narrative, often a single figure.

One tendency Ross would share by the late 1950s with Brittain’s and Humphrey’s later work however, was the avoidance of grounding his subjects within any specific local geography, Saint John or elsewhere, an attribute which was clearly present in his early murals. By the early 1980s, Ross admitted in an interview that a clear recognition of locality or place in his work, “akin to an artist like Tom Forrestall,” did not concern him at all.¹ Unlike Humphrey, he would never publicly bemoan his birthplace or hold it in contempt, claiming “I’m in Saint John, New Brunswick not because I like the rural area or the landscape or the light particularly; I’ve lived here all my life, I’m relaxed here, I like the pace and so on.”² He was fully resolved in his pursuit of a universal humanism in

his art, declaring that “because I paint people there is no regional tone, I can paint anywhere but I like it here.”³

Northrop Frye believed that for the artist in Canada, the basis of happiness lay in “a sense of freedom or unimpeded movement in society, a detachment that does not withdraw.”⁴ Saint John’s artists were supplied this freedom, although it lay more in terms of the city’s historic support of artistic exploration than in its offering of financial privilege. In terms of Frye’s rationale, Saint John’s painters were admittedly detached from the rest of Canada in terms of distance, commercial galleries and large-scale patronage, but they were anything but withdrawn in terms of support and regard from their peers. Stuart Smith felt that painting in Saint John was “accepted as a serious intellectual activity”⁵ and that the city’s wealth of artists was due to factors including “an identifiable and coherent community, supporting agencies based in that community, an intelligent and serious interest in external cultures, a standard of comparison for local creativity provided by a museum, and, above all, an extraordinary flowering of talent, in part kept there by the Depression, but even more kept by will.”⁶

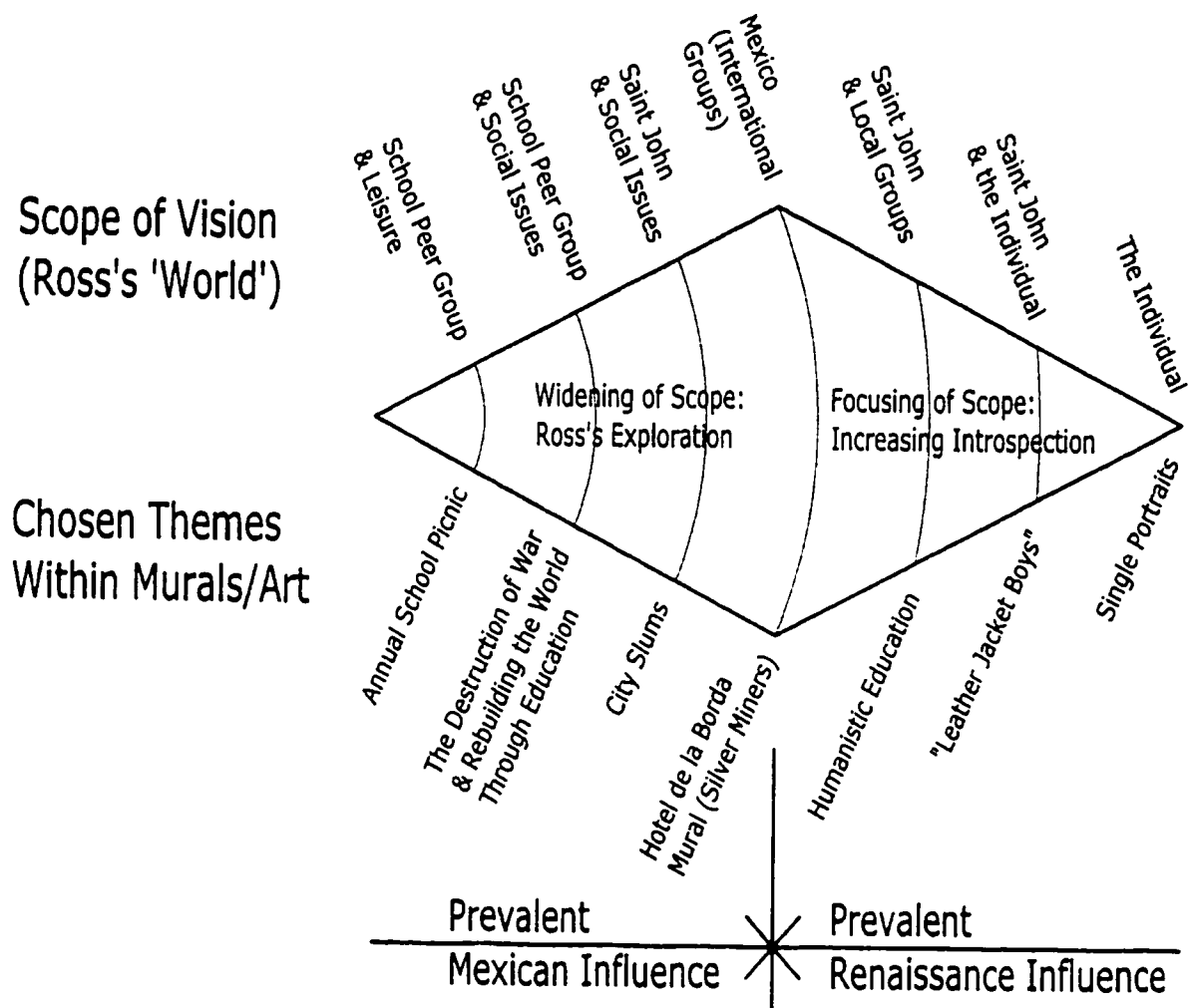
Fred Ross has acknowledged the difference in public taste and subject matter acceptance between the Maritimes and metropolitan Canada, confessing, “what I would show in Toronto I wouldn’t necessarily show in Saint John.”⁷ However, Tom Smart feels that Ross has indeed been “sustained by Saint John’s apparent insularity and the individualism at the core of its civic sensibility.”⁸ Ross has admitted that “the markets are in Toronto and Montreal but the Maritimes are where we want to be.”⁹

The early murals executed by Fred Ross in New Brunswick constitute significant events in cross-cultural exchange, empowering artists to achieve a stronger connection to both their own communities, and to the world at large. While Mexico in the 1940s and early 1950s was a popular destination for Canadian artists, few returned with such a clear sense of purpose in their work as Fred Ross. The American W.P.A. mural projects, from which the root of Miller Brittain's tuberculosis mural can be traced, also hinged on the precedents and methods of the Mexican muralists and are similarly linked to the lineage of Ross's murals. Acknowledging the importance of these diverse sources, it cannot be overstated that the basis of Ross's interest and pursuit of these models lies first and foremost with Ted Campbell, who through his teaching and friendship, opened up the potential of international art to Ross, encouraging him to travel to the United States, then further to Mexico and Europe. Norman Cody has stated that Campbell felt his greatest achievement as a teacher was the fostering and encouraging of Fred Ross's talent.¹⁰ Stuart Smith noted that "if you saw someone like Fred, with talent, with potential, there's no limit to what [Campbell] was going to offer up. I think Fred was wise enough to see it and to benefit from it."¹¹ Professionally, Campbell also instilled in his students the belief that it was possible, and indeed noble, to make a successful career of art, and that it could still be done while living in Saint John.¹² As a counterpoint to Jack Humphrey's attitude towards Saint John as an isolated centre, Ross later felt that "we were never isolated in Saint John. Jack and Miller were working here and they were people you could talk to... [Campbell, Brittain, and Humphrey] really showed you that it was possible to make art a career."¹³

The respect, admiration and attention given to the artists of Saint John grew quickly during the 1930s and 1940s, and in spite of all their perceived shortfalls, was quite remarkable. In 1948, *Canadian Art* featured an article entitled "Painter of Saint John," in which Graham McInnes stated that Saint John was a city "which, size for size, probably contains more serious artists than any other in Canada."¹⁴ Clearly, the quality and level of professionalism within the visual arts in Saint John were recognized outside of New Brunswick. This concurs with the acceptance that art comes from an identifiable community, not of a certain size but of a certain complexity and sophistication.¹⁵

His murals offer a glimpse into Ross's social world at each and every stage, first starting with school. *Annual School Picnic* was designed in school, for the school, and is about school, while its subjects/models are friends of his from school. Nothing could be more appropriate to an eighteen-year old, when high school is his/her entire world. Beginning as an artist whose curiosity and ability encourage the exploration and depiction of his own social group, each successive mural sees Ross absorb influences and kindred artistic precedents to widen this scope. He moves to the inclusion of broader social and world issues connected with school and student life (the Fredericton High School war memorial murals), growing to survey his environment of Saint John as a whole (*City Slums*), and then reaches outward to the world at large (Hotel de la Borda mural). At the point of widest international contact in Mexico with O'Higgins and Rivera, he reaches an apparent crescendo of Mexican stylistic influence and public aspiration, changing (but never abandoning) his focus from Mexican/W.P.A. work to the Renaissance (*Humanistic Education*). Using art as 'grist,' he distilled the creative movements that he deemed

pertinent, then settled to a more introspective nature of portraying the individual, disregarding hints of specific setting. The following time-line chart illustrates this relationship:



It is clear that the early figurative murals act as a paradox within Ross's career. They were the catalyst that started his public career through media attention, elevating his work to a level with that of his teachers and mentors in Saint John at a very early age. As Ross

essentially ceases their production by the mid-1950s, at a time when the socially conscious/figurative mural becomes a stillborn type in Canada, insult is added to injury as the following decades saw all of them become either lost, destroyed, or decaying with little fanfare. However, the marginalization of Ross's murals was redressed with the internationally-touring 1993 retrospective of his life's work,¹⁶ with the chance discovery of the cartoons (arguably more important works than the final murals themselves) and their exhibition, and with the esteem and enthusiasm with which they were met. This, in turn, led to the purchase of the Fredericton High School cartoons by the National Gallery of Canada, whose curator of post-Confederation Canadian art deemed them worthy of inclusion in an exhibition of widely accepted significance (U.N. Human Rights), and placed them firmly at the center. The paradox came full circle as the throwaway of a thrown-away mural ironically became one of Ross's most celebrated works, displayed in the primary museum of Canadian art.

Embracing an enduring Maritime figurative tradition, Ross's murals are a significant body of work which offer distinct expressions of a young artist experiencing both post-war optimism and angst. One could argue that the mural work supplied a necessary visible public presence to an audience that would have been much less aware of Ross's talent had they not existed. Given the ample amount of national press he received as a young man in reaction to his murals, it would be legitimate to assert that his career was established so dramatically and quickly because he pursued muralism so determinedly. Fred Ross absorbed aspects of highly respected muralists of the past and present, and made them his own. His murals are testimonials to the discipline and rigour that has made

him one of Canada's most respected figurative artists, contributing significantly to the tradition of visual art in Saint John and the pursuit of realism in the Maritime provinces.

Endnotes

Introduction

- ¹ Avery Shaw, "Looking Forward In Saint John," Canadian Art IV:4 (Summer 1947): 166.
- ² J. Russell Harper, Painting in Canada: a history (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 403-404.
- ³ Northrop Frye, "Levels of Cultural Identity," The Eternal Act of Creation. Essays, 1979-1990 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), 174.
- ⁴ Lawren S. Harris, "Creative Art and Canada," Supplement to the McGill News (December 1928): 1.
- ⁵ Dr. Stuart Smith, interview with author, 18 December 1998.
- ⁶ Alex Colville, "The Visual Arts," Canadian Art XVIII:5 (Sept./Oct. 1961): 309.
- ⁷ Northrop Frye, "Culture as Interpenetration," in Divisions on a Ground. Essays on Canadian Culture (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1982), 24.
- ⁸ "Mexican Artwork Described," Moncton Transcript, 20 March 1955.
- ⁹ Paul Duval, High Realism In Canada (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1974), 156.
- ¹⁰ Smart erroneously stated that "the commission [of *A Delancey Encampment*] allowed him the opportunity to create a mural in Saint John, one that had not been available to him since 1953, when he completed *Humanistic Education* at the Vocational School." Tom Smart, The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism (Fredericton: Goose Lane/the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1993), 82. In fact, Ross completed a competition-winning mural for the Saint John Tourist Offices on Sydney Street in 1957 (see Chapter Seven for full description).

Chapter One

¹ Saint John New Brunswick. The City of the Loyalists and Gateway to the Pleasure and Health Resorts of the Maritime Provinces (Saint John: Globe publishing/N.B. Tourist Association, 1899), 7.

² Ted Campbell and other Saint John painters such as Avery Shaw, Julia Crawford, and Violet Gillett were respected locally as artists, but their influence resided mainly within the borders of New Brunswick as educators and proponents of the arts.

³ Humphrey was also a member of the Eastern Group of Painters, founded in 1938 by John Lyman, and its successor group, the Contemporary Arts Society formed in 1939, which included such artists as Paul-Emile Borduas and Goodridge Roberts.

⁴ Jack Humphrey, "The Problems of the Artist in the Maritimes," Canadian Art XII:2 (Winter 1955): 71.

⁵ Humphrey was a member of the Eastern Group, Montreal; the Canadian Group of Painters, the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour (Director, 1944; Vice-President, 1945); the Canadian Society of Graphic Art (Regional Representative, 1946, 1956, and 1959; Eastern Vice-President, 1951); the Contemporary Arts Society, Montreal; and the Canadian Arts Council Committee of the International Association of Plastic Arts. He was in many solo and group shows throughout Canada's most important galleries, and was the subject of a retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada in 1966-67.

⁶ The Maritime Art Association was founded at a meeting of ten diverse art groups in Saint John on March 29th & 30th, 1935. Walter Abell saw a need for encouraging and facilitating communication and ideas among the various art groups that existed throughout the Maritimes, and was given a grant from the Carnegie Corporation in 1934 to survey the potential for such an organization. By 1940, the Association included 17 groups from the region, encompassing: Acadia University Fine Arts Club, Art Society of Prince Edward Island, Dalhousie University, Fredericton Art Club, Lord Amherst Chapter I.O.D.E., Amherst, N.S., Louisburg Chapter I.O.D.E., Sydney, N.S., Moncton School of Art, Nova Scotia College of Art, Netherwood School (Rothesay, N.B.), New Glasgow Arts and Letters Club, Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts, Nova Scotia Society of Artists, Provincial Normal School, Fredericton, Sackville Art Association, Saint Andrews Art Club and Study Club, Saint John Art Club, Saint John Vocational School.

⁷ Walter Abell, "Jack Humphrey - Painter," Canadian Forum (June 1936): 16-18.

⁸ In his first editorial for *Maritime Art*, Abell advocated that "We conceive 'art', not in the narrower sense which would reduce it solely to paintings and sculpture, but in the broader one which includes every effort to enrich life with beauty. We are interested in the painting of the Maritime Provinces as one of the significant forms of their art. But we are also interested in their architecture, their creative photography, their pottery and rug-making and weaving, their creative work with children, in their efforts at town planning, in the art departments of their schools and colleges, in the collections being formed by their museums and private collectors... All of them have their contribution to make to the artistic side of our culture." Walter Abell, "Editorial Comment," Maritime Art I:1 (October 1940): 6-7.

⁹ Pegi Nicol, "Miller Brittain," Maritime Art I:4 (April 1941): 18.

¹⁰ "Coast to Coast in Art: A Distinctive Artists Quarter," Canadian Art 5:2 (Christmas 1947): 85. Ted Campbell's studio was at 147 Prince William Street, which he rented and lived in from 1935 to the late 1950's, while Brittain and Humphrey both had studios at 108 Prince William Street. Many other artists had studio spaces within several blocks, including Julia Crawford (Canterbury Street), Jack Bishop (Prince William Street), Avery Shaw (42 Princess Street), while Fred Ross would later take over the former studio of noted Saint John photographer Isaac Erb on uptown's Charlotte Street.

¹¹ Using his war service veteran's gratuity of \$200, Cody opened the Norman R. Cody Art Centre at 20 Germain Street on July 4, 1946. Cody, a good friend of both Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey, hosted several exhibitions of their work, but had to close the gallery after only a few years due to buyer apathy in Saint John.

¹² For a full description of the extent of Campbell's studio within the Saint John art setting, consult: Karen Herring, "Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin: Ted Campbell and his Studio, Saint John, New Brunswick, in the 1930's and 40's." M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1993.

¹³ Mary Hashey, Maritime Artists. 1 (Fredericton: The Maritime Art Association, 1967), 21.

¹⁴ Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, 14 April 2001.

¹⁵ "Mural Artist: Freddie Ross, Untrained 18-Year-Old, Paints School Wall in Saint John, N.B.," Montreal Standard, 21 June 1946, 14.

¹⁶ In 1911, a Federal Royal Commission was appointed to study education and manufacturing abroad, with the hope it could improve the level of skilled workers in Canada. In 1913, the Commission recommended Provincial grants for the building of vocational schools. Under the Technical Education Act of 1919, the Federal Government would contribute up to 50 percent of a province's expenditure on vocational education over a ten-year period. Archival records show that the Federal contribution to the Saint John Vocational School was 50% of the \$100,000 cost of equipment and 25% of the \$400,000 cost of the new building. Saint John Vocational School Records, RS 118, no. D Promotional Material, etc. - 1926-53, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, Fredericton.

¹⁷ This independence lasted until 1963 when the Provincial Vocational programs were integrated into the regular school system.

¹⁸ Informal art instruction was available in Saint John since the 1830's, but was bolstered in 1878 by the establishment of the Saint John Academy of Art which had two hundred registered pupils by 1895. In addition, the Owens Institute was formed in 1884 by John Owens, a wealthy local merchant who died in 1867. It offered art instruction to a hundred students in its first year under the directorship of painter John Hammond. The Owens did not remain in Saint John long, however, before it closed in 1891, reopening at Sackville's Mount Allison University in 1895. Saint John also possessed a well-established Art Club, founded in 1896 as a branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada. From 1912 to 1934, above the City Market near King's Square, the Art Club supported an art school with classes taught by Mrs. Elizabeth Holt. The school was the primary outlet for serious art education in the city until the founding of the Saint John Vocational School. See Stuart A. Smith, "Saint John Painting of the 1930's," in The Proceedings of the Art and Music in New Brunswick Symposium.

Mount Allison University, ed. Margaret Fancy (Sackville: Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University/Goose Lane Editions, 1984), 79.

¹⁹ According to the 1949-50 school prospectus, the distribution of courses/subject time in hours per week for the three year art high school program was as follows:

	<u>1st Year</u>	<u>2nd Year</u>	<u>3rd Year</u>
English	4	4	2
Social Studies	4 (1/2 year)	4 (1/2 year)	2
Science	4 (1/2 year)	4 (1/2 year)	2
French	2		
Physical Education	1	1	
Library	1	1	
Art: Design, Drawing	16	18	24
Hobby	1	1	1
Assembly	1	1	1

²⁰ Saint John Vocational School Calendar and Prospectus, 1943-44.

²¹ Originally named the Gesner Institute, the New Brunswick Museum is considered to be the first 'officially founded' museum in British North America.

²² Dr. Webster maintained a significant national reputation, and was a member of the National Gallery of Canada's "Canadian Committee" that determined the policy and distribution of Carnegie Foundation Funds to Canadian museums and art organizations during the late 1930's and early 1940's.

²³ W. Austin Squires, The History and Development of the New Brunswick Museum (1842-1945) (Saint John: New Brunswick Museum, 1945), 36. The institution soon became a cornerstone for increasing public awareness of the arts, both nationally and locally, through the presentation of travelling exhibitions from the National Gallery in Ottawa (circulated by the M.A.A.), and by offering lectures and solo exhibitions of many New Brunswick artists, including Campbell, Brittain, Humphrey and Ross.

²⁴ Excerpt from Ross's opening speech of the sixth "Know Your Own Artists" series at the New Brunswick Museum. "Fred Ross Script as used by artist at official opening of show – January 12/50," New Brunswick Museum Art Department Archives, Saint John.

²⁵ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

²⁶ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Karen Herring, "Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin: Ted Campbell and his Studio, Saint John, New Brunswick, in the 1930's and 40's." M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1993, 132.

²⁹ At the height of the Group of Seven's activity, Arthur Lismer wrote in the pamphlet A Short History of Painting With a Note on Canadian Art (Toronto: Andrews Bros., 1926), that the following would contribute strongly to the development of a "distinctive type of painting in Canada": "The development of the aesthetic resources of the background of natural beauty – surpassing in grandeur and beauty of typical seasons and decorative quality of natural forms, that of other countries." That for the younger generations of Canadians "expression in Art must be derived from their own life and times, and background – 'racy of the soil.' ... There is little need to paint all these in an imported traditional manner, and little fear that until this vast background is exhausted that the painters will suffer from a soulless 'studio' decadence. In the modern phase of painting in Canada a distinct and virile tendency is emerging that harmonizes with the national character."

³⁰ Robert Ayre, "Foreword," 1937-38 Canadian Group of Painters Exhibition Catalogue.

³¹ *Draped Head*, Humphrey's most well-known work, was purchased for Hart House, University of Toronto, by the graduating class of 1937.

³² Some Canadian-born artists were included in producing works for the W.P.A., including James D. Egleson (b. Capellon, Quebec, 1907) and Henrietta Shore (b. Toronto, 1880, d. San Jose, 1963).

³³ Andre Bieler, Elizabeth Harrison, eds. The Kingston Conference Proceedings (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1991), 90.

³⁴ Laurence P. Hurlburt, "Diego Rivera (1886-1957): A Chronology of His Art, Life and Times," in Diego Rivera. A Retrospective, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Ltd./Detroit Institute of Arts, 1986), 53.

³⁵ Ibid. 50. In July of 1920, Vasconcelos initiated a vast popular education program, including a far-reaching public art/mural program to visually express the ideals of the post-Revolutionary Government and to reveal the history of Mexico.

³⁶ Francis V. O'Connor, "The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930's and After," in Diego Rivera. A Retrospective, 171-3.

³⁷ Jose Clemente Orozco, "New World, New Races, and New Art," Creative Art Magazine of Fine and Applied Art 4:1 (1929).

³⁸ "Tomorrow, architecture, the mother of all the plastic arts, will be rationalized, will slough off the leprous scales of its traditional ornamentation and vomit the useless trumperies and horrible gingerbread adornments from its walls, in order to substitute for these a rationalized dwelling whose bright walls are splendidly illuminated by great spaces of glass and light - a dwelling suitable to the cerebral functioning of civilized man who has conquered himself by means of the machines he has built and has thrown off the diseases of mystic ideologies. Only so can true mural painting grow in splendor and importance and play its part in helping mankind to traverse the road that leads to the classless society of the future." Diego Rivera, Portrait of America (New York: Covici, Friede Inc., 1934), 11.

³⁹ "Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Mural Decoration Competition," The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (September-October 1926): 182.

- ⁴⁰ Ramsay Traquair, "Mural Decoration," The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (September-October 1926): 184.
- ⁴¹ Arthur Lismer, "Mural Painting," The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (July 1933): 127-135.
- ⁴² Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings from the Section of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1940).
- ⁴³ "Foreword," in The Canadian Group of Painters Exhibition Catalogue (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto 1933).
- ⁴³ Biéler, Harrison, eds. The Kingston Conference Proceedings, iii-iv.
- ⁴⁴ The seven participating representatives from the Maritimes were: Walter Abell (Wolfville, N.S.), Francis Simmonds (Charlottetown, P.E.I.), Lucy Jarvis (Fredericton), and from Saint John: Julia Crawford, Ted Campbell, Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey.
- ⁴⁵ Pegi Nichol (sic) MacLeod, "Adventure in Murals," Maritime Art, II:2 (December 1941): 37-38. & Grace A. Caughlin, "Woodstock's Reaction to Murals," Maritime Art, II:2 (December 1941): 39.
- ⁴⁶ Barry Lord, "Miller Brittain's Saint John Hospital Cartoons (insert)," artscanada XXIV:6&7 (June/July 1967).
- ⁴⁷ For a full description of Brittain's Tuberculosis Hospital murals, consult: Brian Foss, "Spirituality and Social Consciousness in the Art of Miller Gore Brittain, c.1930-1946." M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1985. Foss elaborates on the speculation that several other underlying reasons for the project's cancellation exist, including reaction to its subject matter, composition, and even outward hostility to the mural as a whole. As the cartoons were never used as preparatory tools for the final mural, they were thought lost until they were found by Sandra Paikowsky in 1965 in the New Brunswick Museum Art Department's office cabinets.
- ⁴⁸ A reproduction of the women basketball mural was published on page 10 of Saturday Night magazine on 28 November 1941.
- ⁴⁹ Dr. Norman MacKenzie to Miller Brittain, 13 Jan. 1941. President's Papers (1930-1950). University of New Brunswick Archives and Special Collections Department, Harriet Irving Library, Fredericton.
- ⁵⁰ Jack Humphrey to H.O. McCurry, 14 June 1943. NGC Archives, 7.1 – Humphrey, Jack W. (File 1).
- ⁵¹ Ian Lumsden, Drawings by Jack Weldon Humphrey (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1977), 19.
- ⁵² The Saint John Vocational School advertised in *Maritime Art* from its beginnings, but the first advertisement worded as such began in the Summer 1945 issue of *Canadian Art* and ran until 1950-51. The Ontario College of Art had a department of Mural Painting at this period, under the directorship of Charles Comfort. While enthusiastically professing the growing interest in public murals, the College's 1942-43 prospectus acknowledged: "There has appeared during the past decade marked evidence of a revival of the ancient collaboration of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. The

most pronounced indication of this new alignment is the growing public interest in Mural Painting as applied to public, domestic and commercial building. Sensible of these developments, the Ontario College of Art has, in common with many European and American Colleges, organized a Department of Mural Painting. It will be the objective of this department to provide instruction for qualified students in the historic background of the subject, the theory of traditional methods, and their practical application under modern conditions, such as oils on canvas, True Fresco, Technical Paints on various surfaces, plaster, glass, metals, etc."

⁵³ The murals were reproduced in Saturday Night magazine on November 16, 1940. Betty Sutherland would later become the wife of noted Canadian poet Irving Layton and a well-known painter in Montreal.

⁵⁴ Sara Johnson, "The Artists of Saint John," (Spruce Grove, Alberta: 1985. Photocopy), 22.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 8. & Helen D. Beals, "Coast to Coast in Art: Maritime Provinces, Saint John," Maritime Art III:2 (December-January 1942-43): 61.

⁵⁶ The sixteen-panel interior of the Sandham Memorial Chapel at Burghclere, England, painted by Spencer (1891-1959) between 1927 and 1932, was based on Spencer's own World War I experiences in Macedonia, and is considered one of his masterworks.

⁵⁷ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

⁵⁸ Fred Ross, "Know Your Own Artists" speech.

Chapter Two

¹ Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, Saint John, 14 April 2001.

² Ross's mural drawing was completed before August 25, 1945, and was obviously well into the process of becoming a full-scale mural as Pegi Nicol MacLeod's letter of the same date from Saint John to Madge Smith in Fredericton declares: "...I saw the Ross mural – drawing only."

³ According to Paul Duval on page 152 of High Realism in Canada, "Campbell introduced Ross to the 15th-century painters, Botticelli, Crivelli and Cosimo Tura, who appealed to the boy's natural leaning toward a linear kind of composition and rendering."

⁴ Although Campbell did not visit Mexico until 1950, while accompanied by Ross, his regular visits to the United States would have provided him with numerous opportunities to see Mexican work first-hand. The following is a list of Boston and New York exhibitions which included the Mexican Muralists during the 1930's and 1940's:

- 1930-31 – The American Federation of the Arts: Mexican Art, Boston
- December 23, 1931 – January 27, 1932 – The Museum of Modern Art: Diego Rivera: A Retrospective, New York
- 1932-1934 – Orozco's mural at Dartmouth College at Hanover, New Hampshire
- 1933 – College Art Association of America: Mexican Art, New York
- October 1940 – The Museum of Modern Art: Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, New York
- 1941 – The Institute of Modern Art: Modern Mexican Painters, Boston
- 1942 – The Museum of Modern Art: Twentieth-Century Portraits, New York
- 1942 – Fogg Museum of Art: Drawings and Prints by Mexican Artists and by Pablo Picasso, Cambridge, Massachusetts

⁵ During the summers of this period, Ross worked in the Lantic Sugar Refinery, where his father was permanently employed. To allow Fred the time and freedom to paint *Annual School Picnic*, a local businessman and friend of Ted Campbell's named Howard Robinson paid him an equal wage to that he would have received working at the refinery. Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, 14 April 2001.

⁶ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ To this day, Ross only works from live models, and credits Campbell with instilling his commitment to this procedure.

⁹ Beginning in February of 1920, Rivera traveled throughout Italy for seventeen months, studying Etruscan, Byzantine, and Renaissance art. He created over three hundred sketches after various Italian masters, including the works of Giotto, Uccello, Mantegna, Tintoretto, Piero della Francesca, and Michelangelo, as well as executing landscapes and portraits. See Hurlburt, "Diego Rivera (1886-1957): A Chronology of His Art, Life and Times," 47.

¹⁰ During Britain's years studying at the Art Student's League in New York City (1930-32), he never took painting courses, enrolling only in drawing classes due to their more inexpensive materials and his lack of finances. For a full description of his courses, see Herring, 171.

¹¹ In the pouncing process, the cartoon was laid over the panel, while a series of pinholes were pushed through the cartoon paper along the individual lines. A graphite or "pounce" bag was pounded onto the cartoon, leaving small pin-sized dark imprints onto the panel surface. Once the paper was removed, a clear dotted outline of each figure was visible, which was then drawn over with a pencil or charcoal to recreate the original lines.

¹² Fred Ross admitted this during the December, 1997 interview, stating that "The painting was a little bit beyond me. I just was immature and not experienced in handling things that size."

¹³ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

¹⁴ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

¹⁵ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

¹⁶ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

¹⁷ With respect to the assumed high cost of travel for such an excursion, Ross recalled that at that time, bus travel was very inexpensive and flexible with respect to routings and schedules. Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Three

¹ Student Government Association minutes (1945-46), Fredericton High School Archives, Fredericton.

² Ibid.

³ "Mural Artist. Freddie Ross, Untrained 18-Year-Old, Paints School Wall in Saint John, N.B.," The Montreal Standard, 21 June 1946. 14-17.

⁴ Ibid. 14.

⁵ The Fredericton High School student council was given a high recommendation of the young Ross by Mary Hashey, a Fredericton native who had attended Saint John Vocational School and was familiar with its staff. She was the sister of David Coughy, a staff member of FHS who was also the advisor to the student council, and passed on her recommendation. David Coughy, interview with author, 28 December 1998.

⁶ Shaw, "Looking Forward in Saint John," 167.

⁷ Mexican examples of this include Orozco's frescos at the National Preparatory School, Mexico City (1923-26) and his Baker Library mural cycle at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire (1932), along with Rivera's Chapel at Chapingo (1924, 1926-27). American examples within the W.P.A. range from Symeon Shimin's *Contemporary Justice and the Child* (1936-40) to Ben Shahn's mural study for *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* (1932).

⁸ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

⁹ Margaret Desaulniers, "Mural: The Memorial," 1948 Fredericton High School Yearbook, 61.

¹⁰ Ross's use of the harlequin uniform here demonstrates the beginning of his interest in the work of American artist Eugene Berman (see Chapter Six). During his interview with the author on 9 March 2002, Ross said that the upper right corner of *The Destruction of War* with its strong shadows, rubble stones, and broken columns also derive from Berman's influence of decaying classical settings.

¹¹ Although Ross asserts that he chose to specifically represent *Fallingwater* in the mural, the final building represented appears to be somewhat of a hybrid of Wright's houses, including the *Robie House* (1908-10) and the *Lloyd Lewis House* (1939-41). In fact, in the original small-scale study cartoon, another "modern" building is in the place of *Fallingwater*. From the size of the image in archival photographs, it is difficult to determine what, if any, eminent building this was, or why it was changed in the final stage. Ross informed me by telephone on 14 April 2001 that he did not remember the original building, or why it was changed.

¹² Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, 14 April 2001.

¹³ Edgar Kaufmann Jr., address at the ceremony of transmission of *Fallingwater* to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Autumn 1963.

¹⁴ The mural was painted for the (then) recently completed Federal Justice Department Building at 9th & Constitution Ave. in Washington, D.C. Shimin was one of several juried artists commissioned to execute work throughout the building. According to records from the U.S. General Services Administration, the contract for the mural was dated June 25, 1936; work was completed September 15, 1939; the work was installed in 1940, with the final contract settlement dated January 29, 1940. Shimin received \$2,000 for the commission.

¹⁵ Belisario R. Contreras, Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1983), 114.

¹⁶ The 8:00 p.m. Saturday Evening Session of June 28, 1941, has Edward Rowan showing lantern slides of several exemplary W.P.A. murals, including those of Ben Shahn, William Gropper, Boardman Robinson, Wendell Jones, and Shimin. See Biéler, Harrison, eds. The Kingston Conference Proceedings, 78-97.

¹⁷ Biéler, Harrison, eds. The Kingston Conference Proceedings, 97.

¹⁸ "The Whitney's Enlarged Annual," Magazine of Art (February 1940): 128.

¹⁹ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Brittain flew his final bombing mission on February 23, 1945, and was appointed an Official War Artist in April of that same year. He returned to Canada in October, staying in Toronto to work on his drawings of Air Force scenes. He was discharged from the RCAF in June, 1946, and soon after returned to Saint John. He began what is commonly referred to as his "religious phase", painting and drawing biblical subjects. His Veterans' mural was unveiled in 1949, one year after Ross's War murals, although little exists to record when Brittain actually began the thematic planning and sketching of ideas for this work.

²² Miller Brittain Scrapbook, 1912-1968, New Brunswick Museum Archives, Saint John. Brittain's Veteran's Hospital Mural is not generally viewed as one of his most successful works. Robert Percival, former Curator of the New Brunswick Museum's Art Department felt that "war subjects failed to inspire the artist despite the tragedy and horror he was exposed to. The involvement was possibly on too large a scale to perceive as a personal experience." Robert Percival, "Miller Brittain Retrospect - Toronto", 1975, Miller Brittain File, New Brunswick Museum Art Department, Saint John. For an extended discussion of this idea, see Brian Foss, "The Road to Calvary," in God, Man and the Devil: Paintings and Drawings by Miller Gore Brittain, ed. Curtis J. Collins (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1998), X-XVI.

²³ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ There were several small figure changes and compositional changes which took place between the small, squared study of Figure 24a and the final cartoon in Figures 19 & 20; the most conspicuous of which was the building change at the top of *Rebuilding the World Through Education*.

²⁶ Both studies are from *Rebuilding the World Through Education*. The drawing of the central female figure holding a book measures 80" x 30", and is dated 3 October 1946, while the drawing of the woman leaning on the desk measures 80" x 40", and is dated 21 October 1946. A painting of the central male and female figures was also executed. The studies are presently in the collection of the New Brunswick Museum.

²⁷ John W. Ward, "Editorial," 1948 Fredericton High School Yearbook, 5.

²⁸ Ted Jones, "The Case of the Missing Mural," The Atlantic Advocate LXXVIII:10 (June 1988): 10.

Chapter Four

¹ Fred Ross, "Artist's Statement," from the exhibition pamphlet of Ross's Mexican drawings, the Art Centre Studio, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B., April 9-29, 1984.

² Paul Duval, "Murals - A Political Art," Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada XXVI:1 (January 1949): 9-11. It must be noted that much Canadian art of this era echoes a similar desire to the Mexican work, such as Charles Comfort's Montreal Central Station relief sculpture, his Toronto Stock Exchange murals, and Leonard Huchinson's lithographs and woodcuts of Hamilton's working class, all of which would be hard to imagine without the precedence of similar Mexican work during the previous decades.

³ Ross, "Know Your Own Artists" speech, 2.

⁴ Charles C. Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 98. In the May 14, 1938 issue of Saturday Night, Graham McInnes reported that Humphrey's Mexican paintings showed "the same spare and contemplative approach which marks his New Brunswick landscapes, though naturally his colours have been modified, and his canvases and charcoal studies peopled with figures." It should be noted however, that Ross gives little credit to Humphrey's 1938 visit as any sort of influence on his own Mexican interest, claiming that "the fact that Jack Humphrey had been there in 1938 had been forgotten or at least wasn't a consideration". Herring, 134.

⁵ Christine Boyanoski, The Artists' Mecca: Canadian Art and Mexico (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992), 35.

⁶ Ibid. 27.

⁷ Ezra Shahn, a photographer, became a friend of Ross's, and took the photo of Ross and Pablo O'Higgins together (Fig. 35).

⁸ Rafael A. Caririllo Mural Painting of Mexico, (Mexico City: Panorama Books, 1981), 104-106.

⁹ Leonard Brooks, "Letter From Mexico," Canadian Art VI:1 (Autumn, 1948): 23.

¹⁰ The Hotel de la Borda staff was interviewed by telephone by the author on 24 June, 2001 regarding the state and continued existence of Ross's mural.

¹¹ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

¹² Ibid. Although modern techniques other than fresco were used by Mexican muralists such as Siqueiros, who was fascinated with new synthetic auto paints such as Dupont's "Duco," they did not command as much attention, both historically and currently as did the prevalent use of traditional fresco.

¹³ *Buon Fresco's* lime-water mixture becomes calcium hydroxide plaster which during its drying process has color-binding properties. The calcium hydroxide gives off water into the air, while at the same time absorbing carbon dioxide from it. This double action forms a thin film of calcium carbonate

upon the surface of the plaster. The color or pigment, if applied before this change occurs, is locked underneath this lime-skin just as if it were sealed in glass. In another type of fresco, *fresco secco*, the paint is fused on a dry surface with adhesive binder. Although this method has the advantage of allowing more free manipulation by the painter, it is not as permanent.

¹⁴ Rivera, Portrait of America, 11.

¹⁵ A highly regarded painter, muralist, and sculptor, Tamayo is characterized by paintings and murals of intense color and partially abstract, flattened figures that derive from a number of sources, including Mexican folk art, pre-Columbian art, and the work of Picasso. Tamayo's work stands somewhat outside the mainstream of Mexican art, as he opposed the epic mural style of Rivera, Orozco, and Siquerios, feeling that these muralists put too much emphasis on political and social issues at the expense of artistic quality. Pertaining to the "Big Three" muralists, Tamayo declared that "the trouble was that the painters portrayed only a surface nationalism. They painted the facts of Mexico's history and culture, leading to the facts of the Revolution. But Revolution is not a Mexican phenomenon. It happens all over the world. I'm not opposed in theory to what they did. It was natural for them. But I myself felt something beyond that. I was a rebel, not against the Revolution, but against the Mexican mural movement which was conceived to celebrate it. It is impossible, I feel, in this time when communications are so open, to set out deliberately to make an art which is Mexican, or American, or Chinese, or Russian. I think in terms of universality." Emily Genauer, Rufino Tamayo, (New York: Abrams, 1974), 18. Although Tamayo painted numerous murals, he also pioneered a return to easel painting in Mexico. In 1943 he painted his first completely abstract mural, *Nature and the Artist* (Northampton, Massachusetts). In many paintings of the 1950s this tendency toward abstraction developed into a highly personal, emotional style. His murals include *Man* (1953, Dallas, Texas), *America* (1955, Houston, Texas), *Prometheus* (1957, San Juan, Puerto Rico), and *Prometheus Bringing Fire to Man* (1958, UNESCO building, Paris, France), as well as *The Birth of Nationality* (1952) and *Mexico Today* (1953), both at the Mexico City Palace of Fine Arts, and two murals for the National Museum of Anthropology (1938 and 1964).

¹⁶ Brooks, "Letter from Mexico," 23.

¹⁷ These were printed at the Saint John Vocational School on an offset press which was acquired by Ted Campbell. Ross's prints were drawn on a steel plate with a litho crayon, then the plate was transferred to a roller so the image was not reversed. Letter to Rosemary Tovell (NBM) from Charles Hill (NGC) re: Fred Ross Prints, 7 May 1997.

¹⁸ Alison Hughes, "An Artist's Renaissance. Acclaimed painter Fred Ross embarks on a new venture in original printmaking," New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, 26 September 1998, E1, E6.

¹⁹ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

²⁰ Smart, The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism, 35.

Chapter Five

¹ In Ross's "Know Your Own Artists" speech of 1950, he claims that he was not satisfied with his use of coloured chalks in the Fredericton High School mural cartoons, so for the *City Slums* cartoons, he instead used red and black prismacolour pencils (the brand used on *Annual School Picnic*) along with white tempera highlights.

² "Artist's Work is Exhibited," Saint John Evening Times-Globe, 13 January 1950.

³ Campbell would develop a great fondness for Mexico, and in fact moved permanently to the town of San Miguel de Allende with his wife Rosamond upon his retirement from the New Brunswick Museum in 1974. He died in San Miguel on May 28, 1985.

⁴ Ross would have seen Rivera working on either *The Totonac Civilization* or *The Huastec Civilization* at the Palacio Nacional, the two murals he completed that year in Mexico City.

⁵ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

⁶ Boyanoski, The Artists' Mecca. Canadian Art and Mexico, 19-22.

⁷ Harry Mayerovitch, "Mexican Art Today," Canadian Art I:1 (October-November 1943): 38.

⁸ These doors contained the previously mentioned Betty Sutherland murals.

⁹ Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, 14 April 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ During the April 14, 2001 interview with Fred Ross, he mentioned that the black youth was added for purely compositional reasons, to fill a gap in the image. Ross did not remember who the model was, but the New Brunswick Museum is in possession of a lithograph from 1949 entitled "Negro Study," which is of a head of a young black man posed in the same way as the *City Slums* figure, and could possibly be the same model.

¹² The lead story was related to the capture in New York of Gerhardt Eisler, an alleged Communist who was a stowaway on a Polish liner.

¹³ Jim Green, Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986), 230-2.

¹⁴ Lawrence Earl, "Hometown Artists," Montreal Standard (March 1942): 28.

¹⁵ Miller Brittain, "My Aims as an Artist," n.d. Miller Brittain Scrapbook, New Brunswick Museum Archives.

¹⁶ Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art (Toronto: NC Press, 1974), 105.

¹⁷ For a thorough analysis of Brittain's social and political views, consult chapter 1 of: Brian Foss, "Spirituality and Social Consciousness in the Art of Miller Gore Brittain, c.1930-1946." Reconciling the breach between Ross's (and many others who knew Brittain) and Barry Lord's disparate opinions of Brittain's politics, Foss positions Brittain as a man who was "leaning to the left of political centre" at times, but whose 1930s and 1940s works, oft cited by Lord, are best understood through his spiritual beliefs, rather than political.

¹⁸ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Octavio Paz, Essays on Mexican Art (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 200.

²¹ Campbell Merrett, "Planning With the People," Canadian Art III:1 (November 1945): 19-20.

²² Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

²³ Time Magazine on April 30, 1934 reported that "Secretary of Navy Swanson... [The Fleet's In!] represents a most disgraceful, sordid, disreputable, drunken brawl, wherein apparently a number of enlisted men are consorting with a party of streetwalkers and denizens of the red-light district. This is an unwarranted insult... and evidently originated in the sordid, depraved imagination of someone who has no conception of actual conditions in our service." During the telephone interview with the author on 14 April 2001, Ross admitted that he might have "lifted a few heads" from *The Fleet's In!* during preparatory groundwork for *City Slums*.

Chapter Six

¹ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

² In an undated statement from Ross, describing his influences he wrote: "I think the really strong source was the interest I had and the study of the Renaissance painters, the 15th century Italian masters such as Cosimo Tura which reinforced my natural inclination towards drawing and established a basic humanism and a strong conviction towards realism. During visits to Italy I was able to study their work first hand." (New Brunswick Museum. Art Department. Fred Ross Documentation File). Additionally, in a march 1981 interview, Ross commented that "the fact that I use the single figure so frequently has to do with my being more interested in the individual than in the crowd or in social causes or things like that. If I say something about a very simple, pure thing and can find symbols and design to put that across, that in itself will give the viewer plenty of reason to respond." In Margaret Pierce, "Fred Ross Observed," *ArtsAtlantic* III:3 (issue 11), 24. Concerning the direct Italian connection, Ross made his first trip to Italy in 1953, travelling to an art workshop in Positano, near Pompeii, which was organized by Irma Jonas, the same woman at the helm of the Taxco workshop. Smart, *The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism*, 46.

³ Smart, *The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism*, 44.

⁴ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lincoln Kirstein, *Paul Cadmus* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Art Books, 1992), 142.

⁷ Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, Saint John, 14 April 2001. Ross has also expressed significant interest in theatre design, ballet design, and costume design, three activities that he pursued quite seriously as a teacher at the Saint John Vocational School in the 1950's. In addition, Ross's wife Sheila was a trained ballet dancer who ran a ballet school in Saint John for many years. Affirming these particulars, it would appear as no surprise that Ross was attracted to Berman's oeuvre.

⁸ Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 9 March 2002.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Smart, *The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism*, 43. Smart was surely thinking of *The Death of Ananias*, c. 1515-18 which is the only one of Raphael's tapestries which share apparent features to *Humanistic Education*. It is plausible that Ross's mural is more of an amalgam of *The Death of Ananias* and Raphael's Vatican fresco adjacent to *Parnassus*, the *School of Athens* (1508-c.1511), as elements of both works can be found equally in his final mural.

¹¹ This figure's pose is in a near identical relationship to the similar foreground figure in *The School of Athens*.

¹² Stompin' Tom Connors, *Stompin' Tom and the Connors Tone* (Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, 2000), 171-2.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Interview with Fred Ross, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

Chapter Seven

- ¹ "Will Paint Mural in Tourist Office," Saint John Times-Globe, 20 April 1957.
- ² Fred Ross, telephone interview with author, Saint John, 14 April 2001.
- ³ Virginia Nixon, "The concept of 'Regionalism' in Canadian art history," The Journal of Canadian Art History X:1 (1987): 31.
- ⁴ Dr. Stuart Smith, interview with author, Fredericton, 18 December 1998.
- ⁵ Edward J. Sullivan, "From Mexico to Montparnasse--and Back," Art in America 87:11 (Nov. 1999): 106.
- ⁶ Desmond Rochfort, The Murals of Diego Rivera, (London: Journeyman Press, 1987), 249-250.
- ⁷ Paz, Essays on Mexican Art, 145.
- ⁸ Ibid. 150.
- ⁹ Barry Lord, "Reflections on Industrial Images," Vanguard 16:5 (November 1987): 69.
- ¹⁰ Fred Willar, telephone interview with author, Saint John, 16 April 2001.
- ¹¹ Beginning in the 1980's, McCain's Foods Inc. (based in Florenceville, New Brunswick), one of the largest food conglomerates in the world, began a vigorous art-sponsorship and patronage program in New Brunswick. Their involvement ranges from assisting in the creation and continued support of a biennial art exhibition of Atlantic Canadian artists at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, starting in 1987 (which has regularly featured Ross's work), funding gallery expansions in Fredericton and Florenceville, and donating artworks to the Beaverbrook's collection.
- ¹² Dorothy Dearborn, "Fred Ross: A Realist Comes Into his Own," Saint John Telegraph-Journal, 14 December 1974, 17.
- ¹³ Jean Sereisky, "Five Points of View," The Atlantic Advocate (March 1965): 38.
- ¹⁴ "Art Review: His Deathbed Drawings Led Killer to Gallows," Toronto Daily Star, 27 November 1956, 9. Curiously enough, this review barely mentions Ross's exhibition in Toronto, but expounds at length about Ross's involvement as a police 'sketch artist' for a Saint John murder investigation in which "His drawing was used in the east coast newspapers, and helped in the capture of the murderer, who was hanged a week or so ago in St. John (sic)."
- ¹⁵ Sereisky, "Five Points of View," 38.
- ¹⁶ Lynn Morgan, "Art Education in Saint John Vocational School 1927-1970," ATA Journal, Nova Scotia Art Teacher's Association VIII:1 (February 1986): 42.

¹⁷ Interview with Fred Ross, Saint John, 14 April 2001.

¹⁸ Prince of Wales College was phased out in 1969 to make way for the new University of Prince Edward Island, and its campus was gradually taken over during the 1970's by the newly formed vocational/technical training institute, Holland College.

¹⁹ Construction of the Centennial Building in Fredericton occurred in the mid-1960's. Occupying half a downtown city block, it was built to house Provincial Government departmental offices. It features a large marble-clad main foyer and modern murals in the elevator lobbies on each floor by a different New Brunswick artist (see note #18, Chapter seven).

²⁰ Six of the province's outstanding artists were chosen to execute the murals, each of a different theme and medium. The artists and their corresponding murals were listed in the article: "The Centennial Building Has A Large Mural On Each Floor," Daily Gleaner, 13 March 1967, 21. The works were as follows:

- First floor/ Lobby: John Hooper – a 50 foot by 10 foot welded bronze sculpture of 19 groupings of people representing aspects of New Brunswick's history, all surrounding a central panel depicting the fathers of Confederation.
- Second floor: Claude Roussel – a welded metal rod mural sculpture representing the logging industry.
- Third floor: Bruno Bobak – a gouged plywood relief with black paint portraying three miners.
- Fourth floor: Jack Humphrey – a mural fabricated in coloured glass mosaic tiles depicting fishermen.
- Fifth floor: Tom Forrestall – a welded and buffed sheet metal construction of farm elements.
- Sixth floor: Fred Ross's mural

²¹ Duval, High Realism In Canada, 156.

²² Fred Ross, interview with author, Saint John, 13 December 1997.

²³ Marni Weisz, "It was no picnic, but lost mural found," Saint John Telegraph Journal, 6 December 1997, D1.

²⁴ Ted Jones, "The Case of the Missing Mural," 10-13. Jones' article describes at length the time-line leading up to the destruction of the mural.

²⁵ Christina Sabat, "Visual Arts in Review," Fredericton Daily Gleaner, 11 September 1993, 5.

²⁶ The Hotel de la Borda staff was interviewed by telephone by the author on 24 June, 2001 regarding the state and continued existence of Ross's mural.

²⁷ Marni Weisz, "Artist Gets Money to Restore Murals at Local High School," Saint John Times-Globe, 17 March 1998, 7.

Conclusion

¹ Margaret Pierce, "Fred Ross Observed," ArtsAtlantic 3:3 (issue 11): 24.

² Ibid.

³ Dearborn, "Fred Ross: A Realist Comes Into his Own," 17.

⁴ Northrop Frye, The Critical Path. An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 170.

⁵ Dr. Stuart Smith, interview with author, 18 December 1998.

⁶ Stuart A. Smith, "Saint John Painting of the 1930's," 81.

⁷ Pierce, "Fred Ross Observed," 24.

⁸ Smart, The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism, 86.

⁹ Dearborn, "Fred Ross: A Realist Comes Into his Own," 17.

¹⁰ Herring, 132.

¹¹ Dr. Stuart Smith, interview with author, 18 December 1998.

¹² Mark Tunney, "Fred Ross: Drawing a Dynasty," Saint John Telegraph-Journal, 9 June 1990, 39.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Graham McInnes, "Painter of Saint John," Canadian Art V:4 (Spring-Summer 1948): 170.

¹⁵ Until the early 20th Century, Saint John was a remarkably renowned center for quality furniture makers, silversmiths, and of course, shipbuilders. There existed an aesthetic and craft-based sense that the visual is extremely important. As Stuart Smith related: "Jack Humphrey was always surrounded by good things, good furniture, good silver. They were in part inherited, in part just acquired, because it was very easy to acquire good things. If you wanted mahogany, if you wanted silver, if you wanted good old rugs, if you wanted all those things, Saint John was the place. Visual things, visual and textural. There is a texture and a kind of hand to things that turn people more to painting, than to music or other things." Dr. Stuart Smith, interview with author, 18 December, 1998.

¹⁶ The 1993 exhibition itinerary was as follows:

1. The Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, (12 September – 31 October 1993)
2. Aitken Bicentennial Exhibition Centre, Saint John (14 November – 3 January 1994)
3. Galerie d'art, Université de Moncton, Moncton (2 February – 27 February 1994)
4. Galerie Restigouche, Campbellton (7 March – 3 April 1994)
5. Robert McLaughlin Art Gallery, Oshawa (21 April – 12 June 1994)
6. Canadian Embassy, Washington (Autumn 1994)
7. Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax (10 March – 17 May 1995)

Selected Bibliography

Primary Sources:

I: Archival

- Fredericton High School Archives. Student Council File & Fred Ross File
- National Archives of Canada. National Film Board Photographic Collection. 1971-271.
- New Brunswick Museum. Miller Brittain Scrapbook, 1912-1968.
- New Brunswick Museum. Art Department. Miller Brittain Documentation File.
- , Jack Humphrey Documentation file.
- , Fred Ross Documentation file.
- New Brunswick Provincial Archives. Saint John Vocational School Records. RS 118.
- , Madge Smith Papers. MC 168.
- , Vera Daye Collection (Fred Ross). MC 2402 – MS6.
- University of New Brunswick. Archives and Special Collections Department. Harriet Irving Library, Fredericton. President's Papers (1930-1950).

II: Interviews by Author

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Coughey, David | Fredericton, 28 December 1998. |
| Ross, Fred. | Saint John, 9 March 2002. |
| Ross, Fred. | Saint John, 14 April 2001. |
| Ross, Fred. | Saint John, 13 December 1997. |
| Smith, Stuart. | Fredericton, 18 December 1998. |
| Willar, Fred | Saint John, 16 April 2001. |

III: Letters to Author

Lloyd, Simon.

Charlottetown, P.E.I., 20 June 2001.

Secondary Sources:

I: Books

Andrus, Donald F.P. Miller G. Brittain. Drawings and Pastels: c.1930-1967. Fredericton: University of New Brunswick, 1968.

Baigell, Matthew. Thomas Hart Benton. New York: Abrams, 1975.

Biéler, André, Harrison, Elizabeth, eds. The Kingston Conference Proceedings. Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1991.

Boyanoski, Christine. The Artists' Mecca. Canadian Art and Mexico. Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992.

Carrillo, Rafael A. Mural Painting of Mexico. The pre-Hispanic epoch, the Viceroyalty and the great artists of our century. Mexico: Panorama Editorial, 1981.

Cogswell, Fred, MacNutt, W. Stewart, and Tweedie, R.A. eds. Arts in New Brunswick. Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1967.

Connors, Tom. Stompin' Tom and the Connors Tone. Toronto: Penguin Books Canada, 2000.

Contreras, Belisario R. Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art. Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1983.

Duval, Paul. Four Decades. The Canadian Group of Painters and Their Contemporaries - 1930-1970. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd., 1972.

----- . High Realism in Canada. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd., 1974.

----- . Jack Humphrey. A Retrospective Exhibition. Toronto: Galerie Dresdnere, 1974.

Fancy, Margaret ed. The Proceedings of the Art and Music in New Brunswick Symposium, Mount Allison University. Sackville, New Brunswick: Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University/Goose Lane Editions, 1984.

Foss, Brian. "Spirituality and Social Consciousness in the Art of Miller Gore Brittain, c.1930-1946." M.A. Thesis, Concordia University. 1985.

Fredericton High School Yearbook, 1948

Frye, Northrop. The Critical Path. An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.

----- The Eternal Act of Creation: Essays, 1979-1990. ed. Robert D. Denham. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

----- Divisions on a Ground. Essays on Canadian Culture. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1982.

Green, Jim. Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union. Toronto: Progress Books, 1986.

Harper, J. Russell. Jack Humphrey: A Painter of the Maritimes. Fredericton: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1967.

----- Miller Brittain - Painter. Sackville, N.B.: Owens Art Gallery, 1981.

----- Painting in Canada: A History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.

Harris, Lawren. Creative Art and Canada. Supplement to the McGill News, Montreal, December 1928.

Hashey, Mary. Maritime Artists. Volume I. Fredericton: The Maritime Arts Association, 1967.

Helms, Cynthia Newman, ed. Diego Rivera. A Retrospective. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Ltd./Detroit Institute of Arts, 1986.

Herring, Karen. "Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin: Ted Campbell and his Studio, Saint John, New Brunswick, in the 1930's and 40's." M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1993.

Hill, Charles C. Canadian Painting in the Thirties. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1975.

Kaufmann, Edgar jr. Fallingwater. A Frank Lloyd Wright Country House. New York: Abbeville Press, 1986.

Kirstein, Lincoln. Paul Cadmus. San Francisco: Pomegranate Art Books, 1992.

- Levy, Julien. Eugene Berman. New York: American Studio Books, n.d.
- Lismer, Arthur. A Short History of Painting With a Note on Canadian Art (Toronto: Andrews Bros., 1926)
- Lord, Barry. The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art. Toronto: NC Press, 1974.
- Mogelon, Alex. Miller Brittain. In Focus. Toronto: Simon Dresdnere Publishers, 1981.
- Murphy, Diana, ed. Precisionism in America. 1915-1941: reordering reality. New York: Abrams, 1994.
- Murray, Joan, ed. Daffodils in Winter. The Life and Letters of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, 1904-1949. Moonbeam, Ontario: Prenumbra Press, 1984.
- Nouveau-Brunswick edifice du centenaire/ New Brunswick centennial building – official opening / inauguration officielle – Tuesday, march 7, 1967 / mardi 7 mars, 1967. Government of New Brunswick pamphlet, 1967.
- O'Connor, Francis V. The New Deal Art Projects. An Anthology of Memoirs. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972.
- Oles, James. South of the Border. Mexico in the American Imagination 1914-1947. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993.
- Paz, Octavio. Essays on Mexican Art. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993.
- Rivera, Diego. Portrait of America. New York: Covici, Friede Inc., 1934.
- Rochfort, Desmond. Mexican Muralists - Orozco, Rivera, Siquieros. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994.
- The Murals of Diego Rivera. London: Journeyman Press, 1987.
- Robertson, Heather. A Terrible Beauty. The Art of Canada at War. Toronto: James Lorimer & Co. Ltd., 1977.
- Saint John Vocational School. Saint John Vocational School – Reflections 1925-1985. Saint John, 1985.
- Smart, Tom. The Art of Fred Ross: A Timeless Humanism. Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions/Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1993.

Stacey, Robert. The Hand Holding the Brush: Self-Portraits by Canadian Artists. London: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983.

Squires, W. Austin. The History and Development of the New Brunswick Museum (1842-1945). Saint John: New Brunswick Museum, 1945.

Town, Elke. Figures and Portraits in the Thirties and Forties. A Selection of Canadian Paintings and Works on Paper. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979.

Trapp, Frank. Peter Blume. New York: Rizzoli, 1987.

Wallace, Frederick William and Ian Sclanders. The Romance of a Great Port. The Story of Saint John, New Brunswick. Saint John: Barnes Publishing, 1935.

Webster, John Clarence. The Distressed Maritimes: A Study of Educational and Cultural Conditions in Canada. Toronto: the Ryerson Press, 1926.

Wilson, Lela. York Wilson. His Life and Work. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997.

II: Articles

Abell, Walter. "Jack Humprey – Painter," The Canadian Forum (June 1936): 16-18.

-----, "Editorial Comment: To be Creative," Maritime Art I:1 (October 1940): 3-7.

-----, "Saint John Ho!." And "Conference of Canadian Artists," Maritime Art I:4 (April, 1941): 3-6.

Ballantyne, Michael. "Portraits And Symbolism," Montreal Star, 23 October 1965, 12.

Beals, Helen D. "Coast to Coast in Art: Maritime Provinces, Saint John," Maritime Art III:2 (December-January 1942-43): 61.

Beaverbrook Art Gallery Acquisitions Advisory Committee Report. "Acquisitions recommended to the Board of Governors by the Acquisitions Advisory Committee: 7 December 1992," 7 December 1992.

Bell, Andrew. "A Recent Exhibition of Contemporary Mexican Art," Canadian Art VI:1 (Autumn 1948): 14-16.

Benton, Thomas Hart. "The Artist and the War," Maritime Art II:1 (October/November 1941): 5-7.

Biéler, André. "On the Canadian Group of Painters," Maritime Art II:4 (April/May 1942): 118-123, & 136.

------. "The Kingston Conference – Ten Years Afterwards," Canadian Art VIII:4 (Summer 1951): 150-152.

Biermann, Helmer. "New Fred Ross Mural Stresses Authenticity," Saint John Telegraph-Journal, 16 November 1985.

Bloch, Lucienne. "On Location with Diego Rivera," Art in America LXXIV:2 (February 1986): 102-123.

Bobak, Molly. "Letter from the Maritimes," artscanada XXV:2 (June 1968): 48-49.

Briggs, Scott. "Successful shows banish strain, veteran Saint John artist finds," New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, 27 November 2001, A10.

Brooks, Leonard. "Letter From Mexico," Canadian Art VI:1 (Autumn, 1948): 23.

Brown, Karen, Holland, Harold. "'Of Conservation and Cartoons' Conservation of the Fred Ross Mural Drawings." Transcript of a paper given by representatives of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick at the IICCG, 1995.

Buchanan, Donald W. "Exhibition of Canadian War Art," Canadian Art II:4 (April-May 1945): 141-146.

------. "Pegi Nicol MacLeod 1904-49," Canadian Art VI:4 (Summer 1949): 158-162.

Canadian Art. "Coast to Coast in Art: A Distinctive Artists Quarter," Canadian Art V:2 (Christmas 1947): 85.

Caughlin, Grace A. "Woodstock's Reaction to Murals," Maritime Art, II:2 (December 1941): 39.

CBC Radio programme "An Unlikely Time, An Unlikely Place," transcribed in The Cormorant, IX:2 (Saint John: The University of New Brunswick at Saint John, 1992). 39-54.

Claus, Jo Anne. "Fred Ross exhibit shows off artist's brilliance," Saint John Evening Times-Globe, 13 September 1993, A10.

Colville, Alex, "The Visual Arts," Canadian Art XVIII:5 (Sept./Oct. 1961): 309.

Crawford, Julia. "Coast to Coast in Art - Saint John," Maritime Art II:1 (October/November 1941): 22.

Dearborn, Dorothy. "Fred Ross: A Realist Comes Into his Own," Saint John Telegraph-Journal, 14 December 1974, 17.

Duval, Paul. "Murals - A Political Art," Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada XXVI:1 (January 1949): 9-11.

Earl, Lawrence. "Hometown Artists," Montreal Standard, 28 March 1942.

Fairley, Barker. "What is Wrong with Canadian Art?" Canadian Art. VI:1 (Autumn 1948): 24-29.

Frank, David. "No More Walls: The Art of Fred Ross," New Maritimes XIII:2 (November/December 1994): 6-9.

Fredericton Daily Gleaner. "Memorial mural unveiled tomorrow night at high school," 20 May 1948, 16 & 9.

----- "Sacrifice of Fredericton High School Boys To Be Perpetuated By Mural On Auditorium Wall," 22 May 1948, 4.

----- "Fred Ross Exhibition Opened Today," 12 January 1965.

----- "The Centennial Building Has A Large Mural On Each Floor," 13 March 1967, 21.

Gillett, Violet. "Maritime Provinces: Maritime Art Association," Canadian Art I:1 (October-November 1943): 34.

Halavrezos, Costas. "Prince William Street: the 30s and 40s Art Scene," Horizons IV:2 (summer/autumn 1978): 43-46.

Harris, Lawren S. "Creative Art and Canada," Supplement to the McGill News (December 1928): 1.

Harris, Lawren P. "Contemporary Painting," In Arts in New Brunswick. Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1967: 163-180.

Harvor, Elizabeth. "Hell, that's swell," The New Brunswick Reader, 23 May 1998, 6-13

Hrabuk, Lisa. "The Final Portrait: The Saint John studio where 19th-century photographer Isaac Erb and other artists worked is doomed to demolition," New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, 26 November 1999, A1 & A4.

Hinds, Barbara. "Ross art gives feeling of work of a happy man," Halifax Mail Star, 24 October 1970, 12.

Hughes, Alison. "An Artist's Renaissance: Acclaimed painter Fred Ross embarks on a new venture in original printmaking," New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, 26 September 1998, E1 & E6.

Hughes, Douglas. "Fred Ross's new Renaissance takes to the international stage," The New Brunswick Reader, 10 September 1994.

-----". "Noted Artist, teacher Violet Gillett was a role model for many," New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, 23 January 1996, A4.

-----". "God, Miller Brittain and the devil," The New Brunswick Reader, 23 May 1998, 16-20.

Humphrey, Jack. "The Problems of the Artist in the Maritimes," Canadian Art XII:2 (Winter 1955): 69-72.

Jarvis, Lucy. "Notes from a benighted Maritimer," Canadian Art IV:4 (summer 1947):162-164.

Jones, Ted. "The Case of the Missing Mural," The Atlantic Advocate LXXVIII:10 (June 1988): 10-13.

The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. "Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Mural Decoration Competition," (September-October 1926): 182.

Lismer, Arthur. "Mural Painting," The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (July 1933): 127-135.

Loomer, L.S. "Painting in Saint John," The Atlantic Advocate XLVIII:7 (March 1958): 47-56.

-----". "Tribute to Two Giants: Jack Humphrey and Miller Brittain," The Atlantic Advocate LVIII:7 (March 1968): 35-37.

Lord, Barry. "Miller Brittain's Saint John Hospital Cartoons (insert)," artscanada XXIV:6&7 (June/July 1967).

-----, "Reflections on Industrial Images," Vanguard XVI:5 (November 1987): 10-13.

MacLeod, Pegi Nichol (sic). "Adventure in Murals," Maritime Art, II:2 (December 1941): 37-38.

Magazine of Art. "The Whitney's Enlarged Annual," Magazine of Art (February 1940): 128.

Maritime Art. "Canadian Artists' Conference," Maritime Art I:5 (October-November 1941).

Mayerovitch, Harry. "Mexican Art Today," Canadian Art I:1 (October-November 1943): 5-11, & 38.

McInnes, Graham. "Painter of Saint John," Canadian Art V:4 (Spring-Summer 1948): 170-173.

-----, Saturday Night, 31 December 1938.

Merrett, Campbell. "Planning With the People," Canadian Art III:1 (November 1945): 18-21.

Moncton Transcript. "Mexican Artwork Described," 20 March 1955.

Montreal Standard. "Mural Artist: Freddie Ross, Untrained 18-Year-Old, Paints School Wall in Saint John, N.B.," 21 June 1946, 14.

-----, "NB Art Centre: Ex-Soldier and Artist Norman Cody Starts Gallery with DVA Assistance," [1946], 10-11.

Morgan, Lynn. "Art Education in Saint John Vocational School 1927-1970," ATA Journal: Nova Scotia Art Teachers Association VIII:1 (February 1986): 36-49.

New Brunswick Museum. "a Brief History of the New Brunswick Museum," Journal of the New Brunswick Museum (1978): 6-9.

New Brunswick Museum Art Bulletin. "New Accessions," XI:3 (December 1967):2.

The New Brunswick Reader. "Treasure: Girl with Fur Collar, By Jack Humphrey," 23 May 1998, 14-15.

-----, "Treasure: The War Memorial by Fred Ross," 7 November 1998, 12-13.

Nicol, Pegi. "Miller Brittain," Maritime Art I:4 (April 1941): 14-18.

Nixon, Virginia. "The concept of 'Regionalism' in Canadian art history," The Journal of Canadian Art History X:1 (1987): 30-41.

Nowlan, Alden "Editorial: If Only I'd Met Miller Brittain," Saint John Telegraph-Journal, November 1968.

Orozco, Jose Clemente. "New World, New Races, and New Art," Creative Art Magazine of Fine and Applied Art 4:1 (1929).

Percival, Robert. "The Figurative Tradition in Saint John," Art Magazine VII:25 (March 1976): 46-51.

Pierce, Gretchen. "Drawing out pending suitability decision," Halifax Mail Star, 11 November 1970.

Pierce, Margaret. "Fred Ross Observed," ArtsAtlantic III:3 (issue 11): 23-25, 50.

Pinsky, Alfred. "Painting in New Brunswick, 1880-1946," In Arts in New Brunswick. Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1967: 149-161.

Rombout, Louis. "Jack Humphrey," Canadian Art XXIII:2 (April 1966): 35-37.

Rowan, Edward. "The American Renaissance," Maritime Art II:1 (October-November 1941): 15-17.

Sabat, Christina. "Visual Arts in Review," Fredericton Daily Gleaner, 11 September 1993, 5.

------. "Beaverbrook Gallery Hosting Showing Of Fred Ross Works," Fredericton Daily Gleaner, 13 September 1993, 17-18.

Saint John Evening Times-Globe. "Artist's work is exhibited," 13 January 1950.

------. "Saint John Artist Wins Award In Ontario Contest With Entry, 'The Lovers'," 21 June 1950.

------. "Will Paint Mural in Tourist Office," 20 April 1957.

------. "Fred Ross Show Opens Monday," 22 November 1967.

------. "Saint John Artist To Show In Montreal," 14 January 1969.

Saint John Telegraph-Journal. "Young New Brunswick Artist Already Well Advanced Along Road To Success," 5 November 1948.

----- "Artist's work is exhibited," 13 January 1950.

----- "Saint John Artist Will Address Group," 21 December 1950.

----- "Saint John Artist's Work In Beaverbrook Collection," 25 November 1955.

Saint John Vocational School Calendar & Prospectus: 1943-44. "Department of Fine and Applied Art," 1943.

Saturday Night. Reproduction of University of New Brunswick Gymnasium mural of women basketball players, 28 November 1941. 10.

Sereisky, Jean. "Five Points of View," The Atlantic Advocate (March 1965): 34-41.

Shaw, Avery. "Looking Forward In Saint John," Canadian Art IV:4 (Summer 1947): 166-168.

Smith, Stuart A. "Canadian Painting: Regional or National History?" Acadiensis V:2 (Spring 1976): 143-149.

----- "Saint John Painting of the 1930s," in Margaret Fancy (ed.) The Proceedings of the Art and Music in New Brunswick Symposium, Mount Allison University. Sackville, New Brunswick: Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University/Goose Lane Editions, 1984: 75-84.

Sullivan, Edward J. "From Mexico to Montparnasse--and Back," Art in America 87:11 (Nov. 1999): 106.

Sweet, Jean M. "Ted Campbell's Studio," The Atlantic Advocate (March 1969): 30-35

Thomson, Hugh. "Art Review: His Deathbed Drawings Led Killer to Gallows," Toronto Daily Star, 27 November 1956, 9.

Traquair, Ramsay. "Mural Decoration," The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (September-October 1926): 184.

Tunney, Mark. "Fred Ross: Drawing a Dynasty," Saint John Telegraph-Journal, 9 June 1990, 39.

Weisz, Marni. "Artist Gets Money to Restore Murals at Local High School," Saint John Times-Globe, 17 March 1998, 7.

-----". "It was no picnic, but lost mural found," Saint John Telegraph Journal, 6 December 1997, D1-D2.

III: Unpublished Manuscripts

Johnson, Sara. "The Artists of Saint John," Spruce Grove, Alberta, 1985.

IV: Films

Martin, Kent, dir. Miller Brittain. National Film Board of Canada, 1981.

Jones, Kirk, dir. Painting a Province. National Film Board of Canada, 1963.

V: Exhibition Catalogues & Materials

Andrus, Donald F.P. Artists of Atlantic Canada. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1966.

-----". Miller G. Brittain: Drawings and Pastels, c. 1930-1967. Fredericton: Creative Art Centre, University of New Brunswick, 1968.

Ayre, Robert. "Foreword," Canadian Group of Painters Exhibition. 1937-38.

The Canadian Group of Painters. The Canadian Group of Painters Exhibition. Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1933.

Collins, Curtis J., ed. God, Man and the Devil: Paintings and Drawings by Miller Gore Brittain. Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1998.

Evolving the Canadian Landscape Identity: Canadian Landscape Painting Between the First and Second World Wars. Toronto: Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Hart House, University of Toronto, 1998.

Figures and Portraits in the Thirties and Forties: A selection of Canadian Paintings and Works on Paper. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979.

Harper, J. Russell. Miller Brittain – Painter. Sackville: Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, 1981.

Jack Humphrey, A Retrospective Exhibition. Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1966.

Lumsden, Ian. Drawings by Jack Weldon Humphrey. Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1977.

Miller Brittain: Early Drawings. Toronto: Gallery Dresdnere, 1977.

The National Gallery of Canada. Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings from the Section of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1940.

Ross, Fred. "Artist's Statement," Fred Ross: Mexican Drawings. Fredericton: Art Centre Studio, University of New Brunswick, 1984.

----- "Fred Ross Script as used by artist at official opening of show – January 12/50," "Know Your Own Artists" Series No. VI. Saint John: The New Brunswick Museum, 1950.

Six East Coast Painters: Miller G. Brittain, D. Alexander Colville, Lawren P. Harris, Jack W. Humphrey, Frederick J. Ross, Ruth Wainwright. (travelling exhibition). Organized by the National Gallery of Canada, 1961-62.

Smart, Tom. Fred Ross: Work in progress, studio watch. Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1990.

Stacey, Robert. The Hand Holding the Brush. London: London Regional Art Gallery, 1984.

Town, Elke. Figures and Portraits in the Thirties and Forties: A selection of Canadian Paintings and Works on Paper. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979.

Illustrations



Fig. 1. Fred Ross, c. 1950.



Fig. 2. Miller Brittain, *Longshoremen*, 1940, tinted glazes on board.

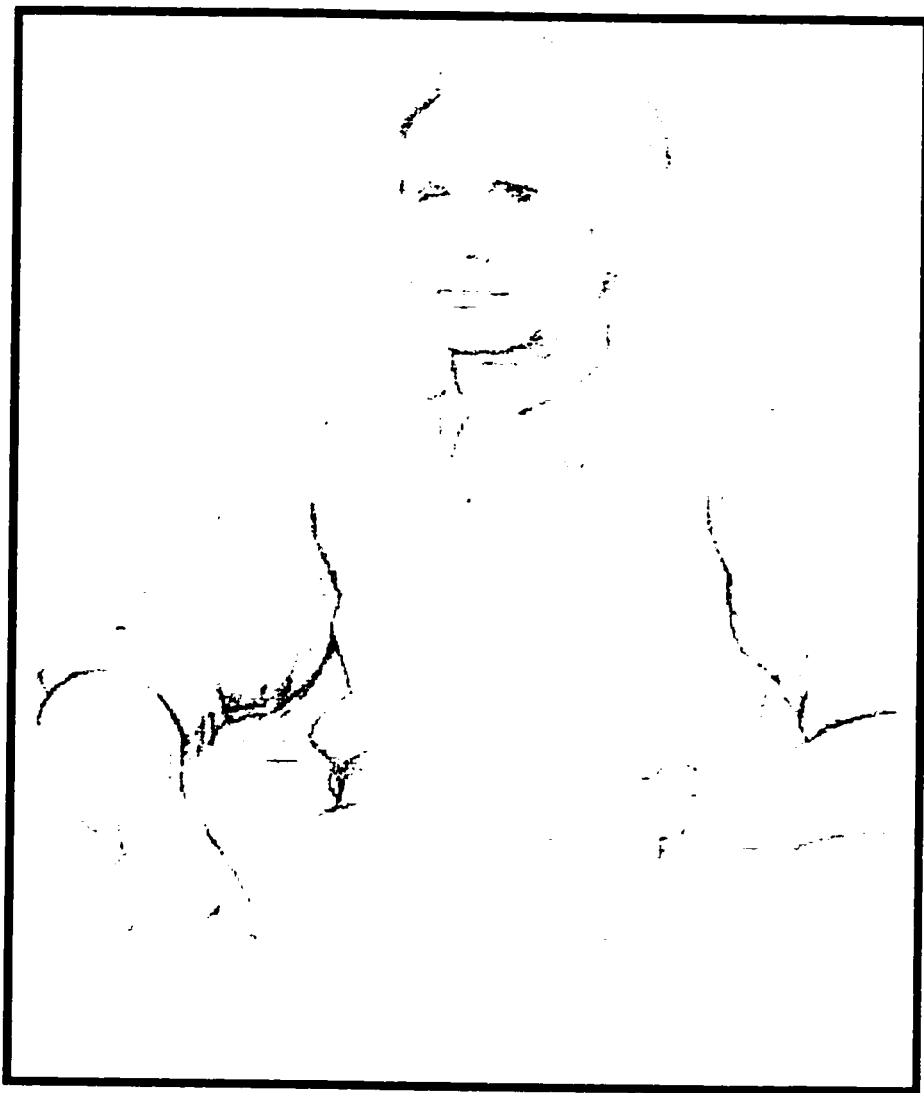


Fig. 3. Ted Campbell. *[Portrait of Norman Cody]*, 1937.
graphite on paper.

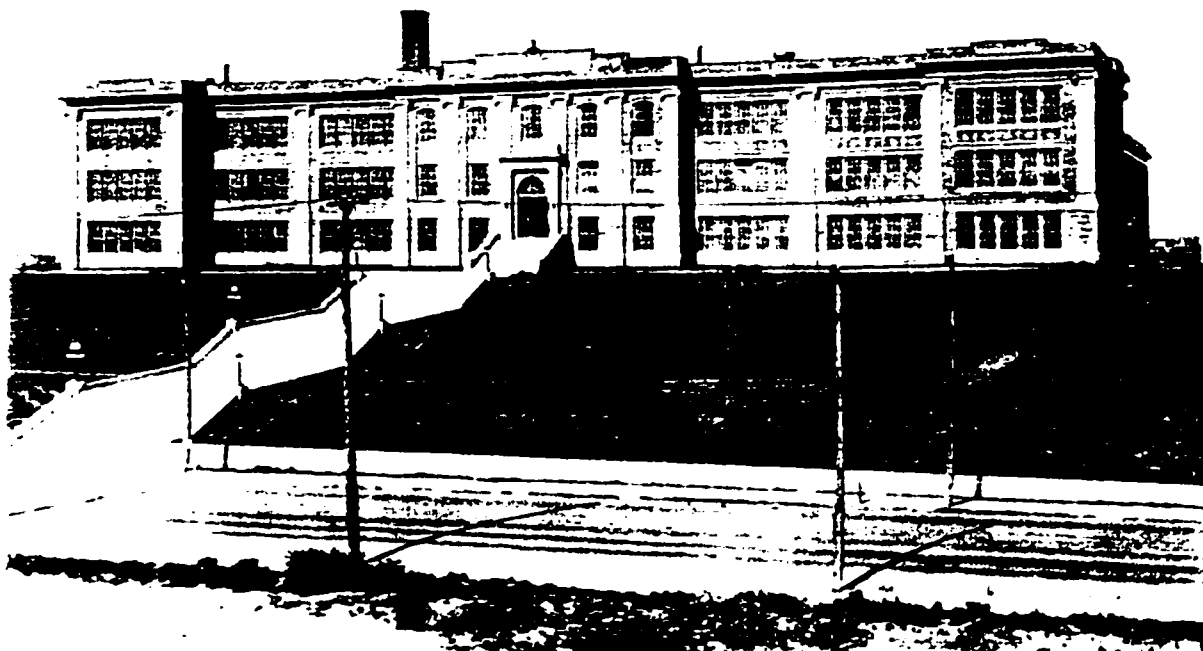


Fig. 4. Front façade of the Saint John Vocational School, c. 1926.



A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL ART CLASS

Studying Decorative Art in the Museum under the direction of their teacher

Fig. 5. A group of Saint John Vocational School art students at the New Brunswick Museum studying decorative art, c. 1945. Ross is the third student from the left.



Fig. 6. The main floor auditorium doors at the Saint John Vocational School, showing the four murals by Betty Sutherland within the glazed panels (c. 1940). Fred Ross's tempera on plaster murals are on the other sides of the pilasters and above the auditorium door alcove.



Fig. 7. Student murals on the Saint John Vocational School cafeteria walls, 1942.

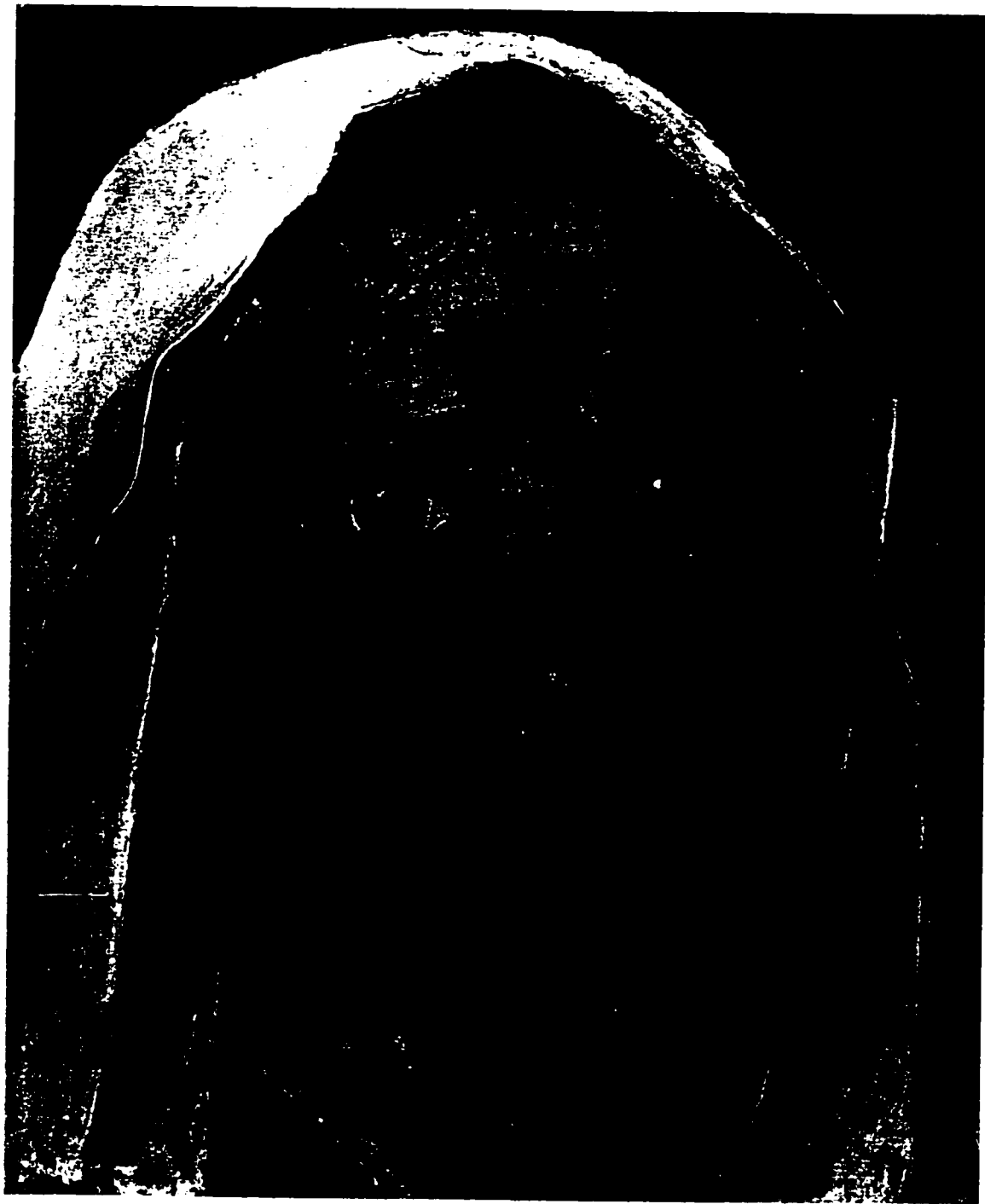


Fig. 8. Jack Humphrey. *Draped Head*, 1931, oil on board.

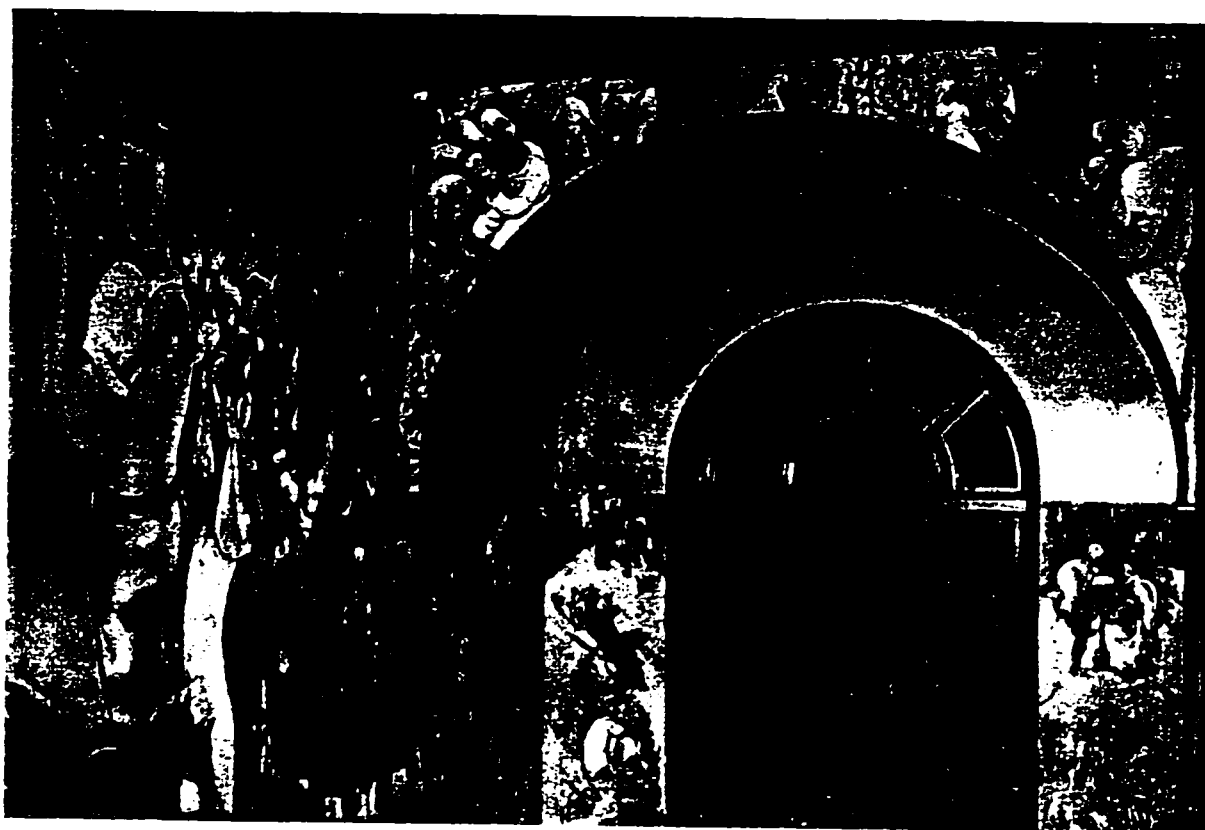


Fig. 9. Pegi Nicol MacLeod, *[Fisher Vocational School Mural]*, 1941, oil on canvas glued to plaster wall





Fig. 10. Miller Brittain working on one of the cartoons for his Saint John Tuberculosis Hospital mural, 1941, charcoal, crayon and chalk on brown paper.



Fig. 11. Lobby of the University of New Brunswick's Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium in Fredericton, showing Miller Brittain's pendant murals depicting a boxing match on the left, and a women's volleyball game on the right, 1941, mixed media on masonite.



Fig. 12. Jack Humphrey, *Building Ships for the Merchant Navy*, 1944, oil.



Fig. 13. Fred Ross, cartoon for *Annual School Picnic*, 1946. graphite on paper.



Fig. 14. Fred Ross working on the cartoon for *Annual School Picnic*, 1946.

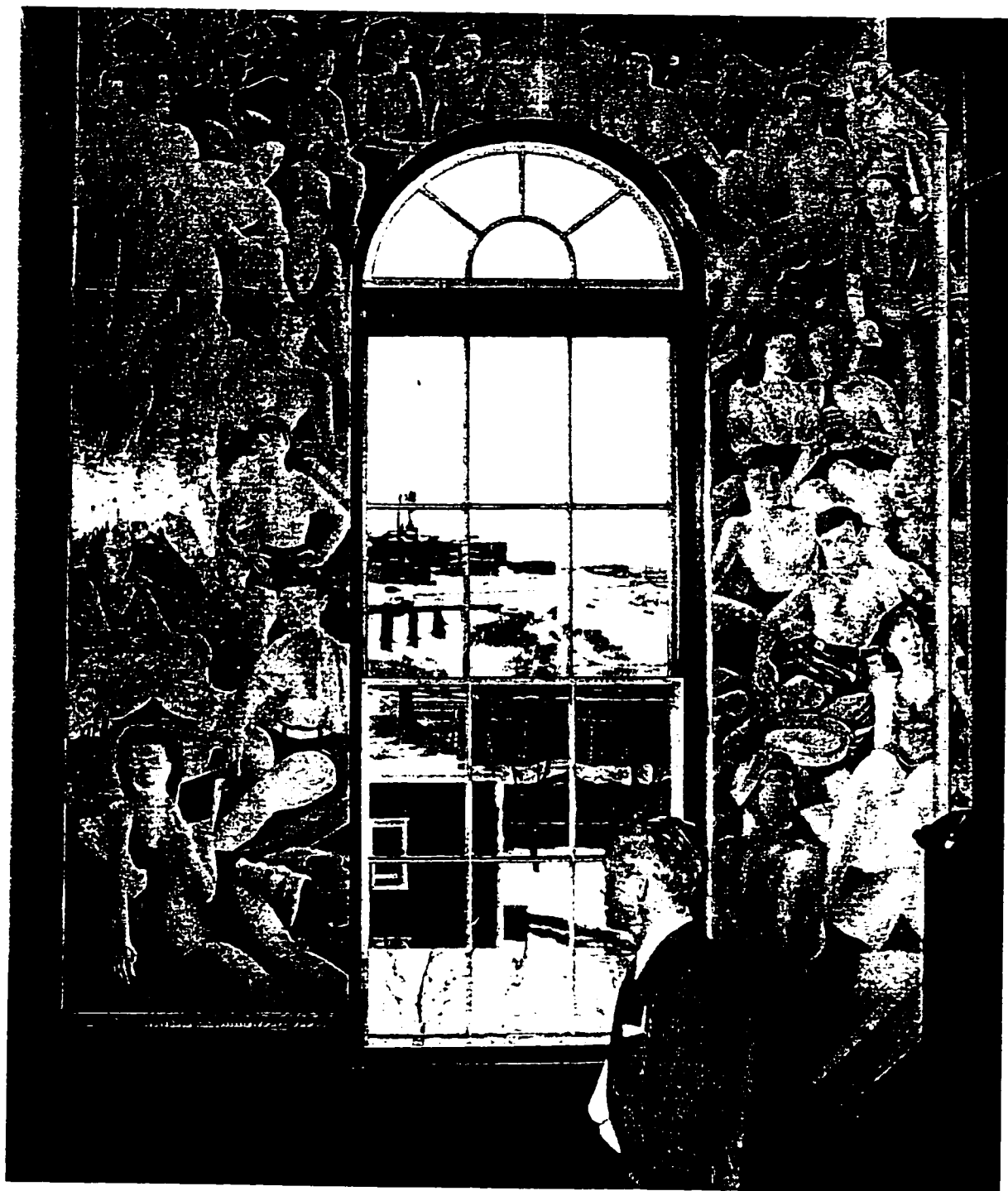


Fig. 15. Ted Campbell inspecting Fred Ross's *Annual School Picnic*, 1946, casein and oil washes on masonite.



Fig. 16. Fred Ross sketching from a student model for *Annual School Picnic*, 1946.



Fig. 17. Fred Ross and an unidentified man installing *Annual School Picnic* on the west stairwell wall of the Saint John Vocational School. 1946.



Fig. 18. Principal of Harbourview High School (formerly Saint John Vocational School) holding the top left panel of *Annual School Picnic*.



Fig. 19. Fred Ross, cartoon for *The Destruction of War*, 1946-47, charcoal and coloured chalk on brown paper.



Fig. 20. Fred Ross, cartoon for *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1946-47, charcoal and coloured chalk on brown paper.



THE DESTRUCTION OF WAR
 BY FRED ROSS
 1948
 CASEIN TEMPERA ON MASONITE

GEORGE
 JAMES
 JOHN
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES

JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES

JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES
 JAMES

Fig. 21.

Fred Ross. *The Destruction of War*, 1948.
 casein tempera on masonite.



ALICE B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN

JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN

JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN

JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN
JOHN B. BROWN

Fig. 22.

Fred Ross, *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1948, casein tempera on masonite.



Fig. 23. Fredericton High School auditorium showing the final installation of *The Destruction of War and Rebuilding the World Through Education*.



Fig. 24. Diego Rivera, *The Embrace*, 1923, fresco mixed with nopal juice.

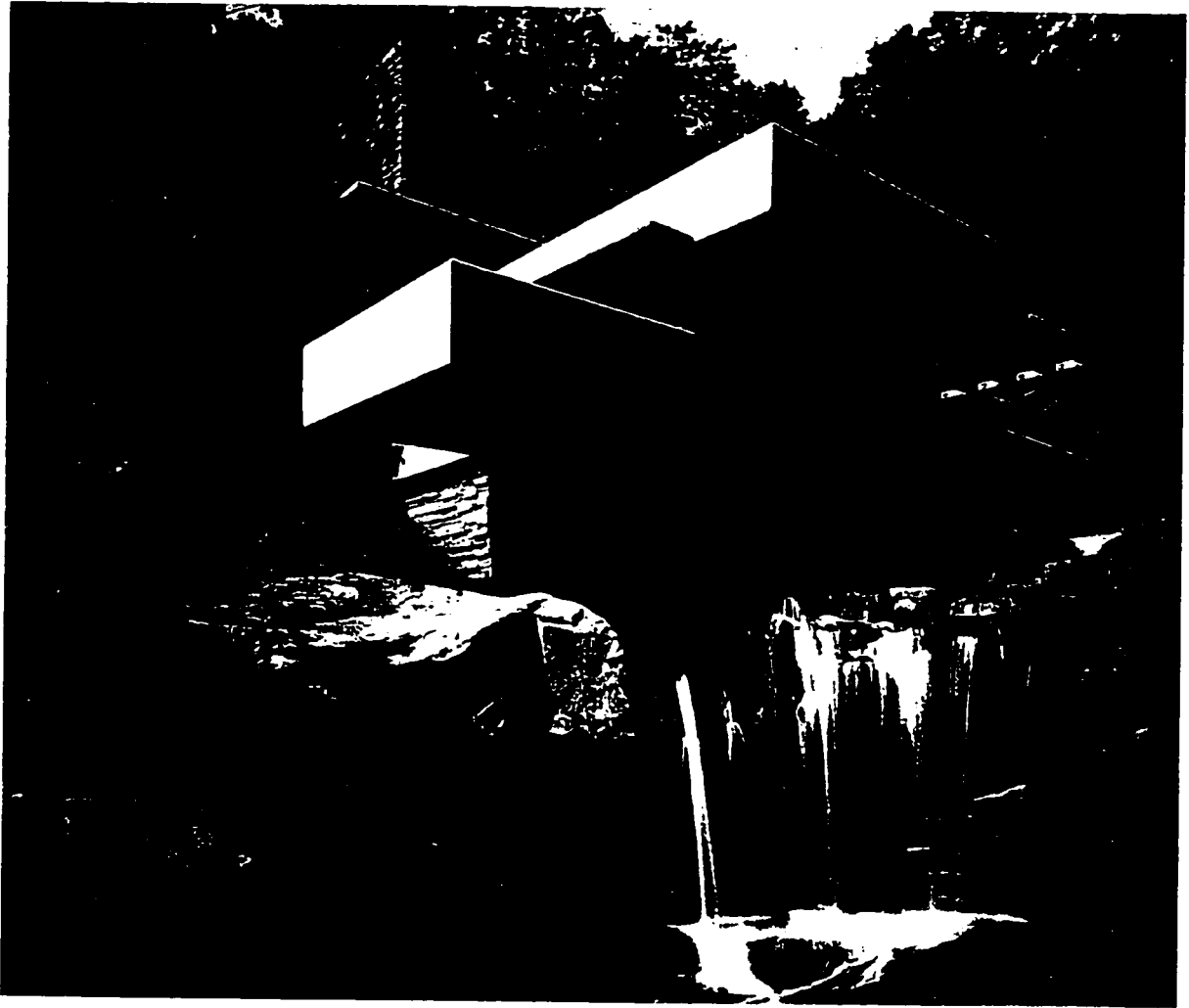


Fig. 25. *Fallingwater*, Frank Lloyd Wright's house for Edgar Kaufmann in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, completed in 1936.



Fig. 26. Symeon Shimin. *Contemporary Justice and the Child*, 1939-40, tempera on canvas.



Fig. 27. Miller Brittain. *[mural for the Lancaster Veterans' Hospital]*. 1949. tempera on masonite.



Fig. 28. Rosso Fiorentino. *Moses and the Daughters of Jethro*, c. 1520, oil on canvas.



Fig. 29. Diego Rivera. *The History of Cardiology*, 1943-44, fresco.



Fig. 30. Diego Rivera, *Distributing Arms*, 1928, fresco.

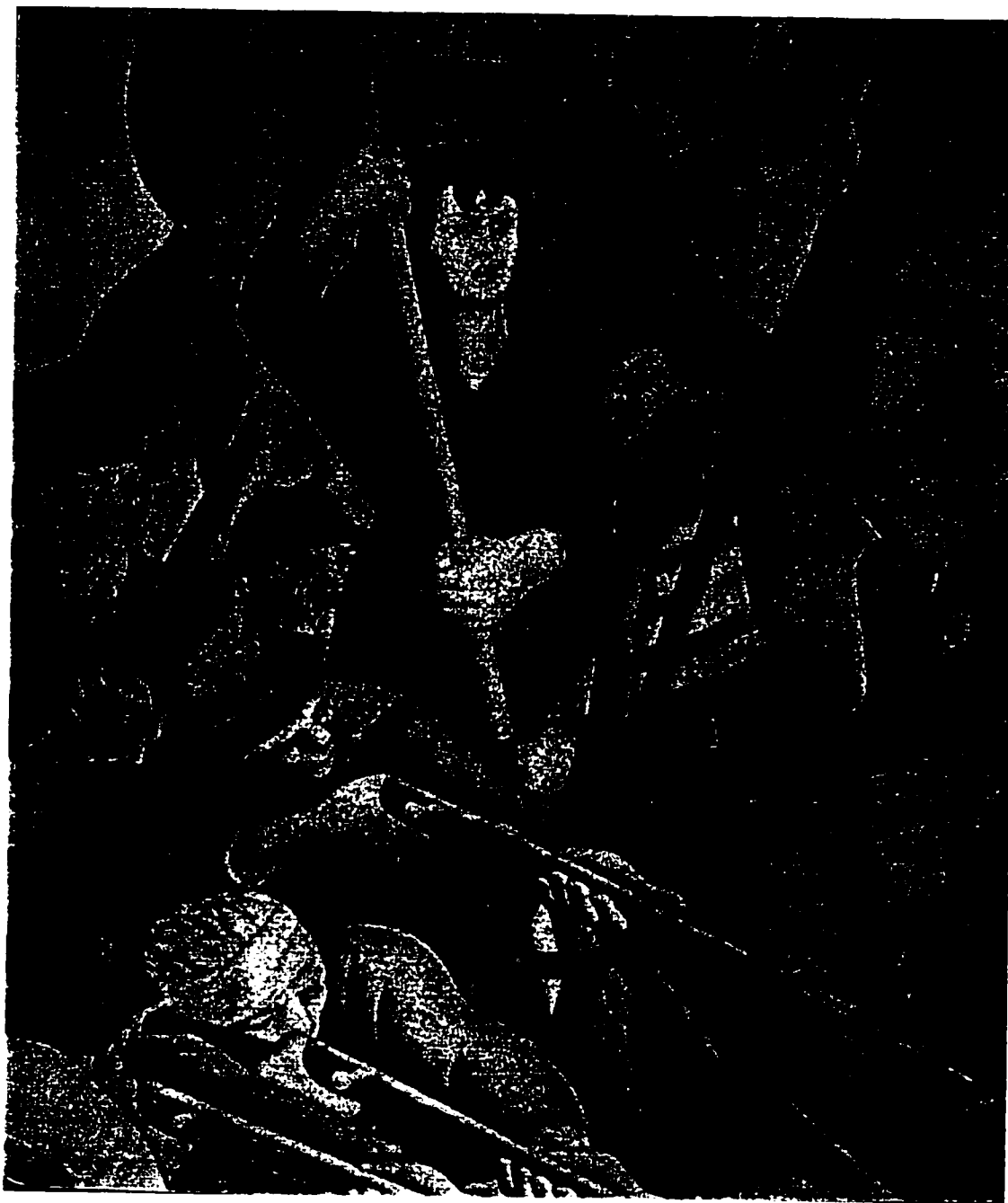


Fig. 31. Diego Rivera. *Communards*. 1928. lithograph.



Fig. 32. Fred Ross, preliminary cartoon for *Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1946, pencil on white paper.



Fig. 33. Fred Ross painting the final mural of *The Destruction of War*, with the small study drawing and cartoon photos in the foreground, 1947.



Fig. 33a.



Fig. 33b.



Fig. 34. Fred Ross painting, with a framed panel study of the central couple in *Rebuilding the World Through Education* hanging on the rear wall, 1947.

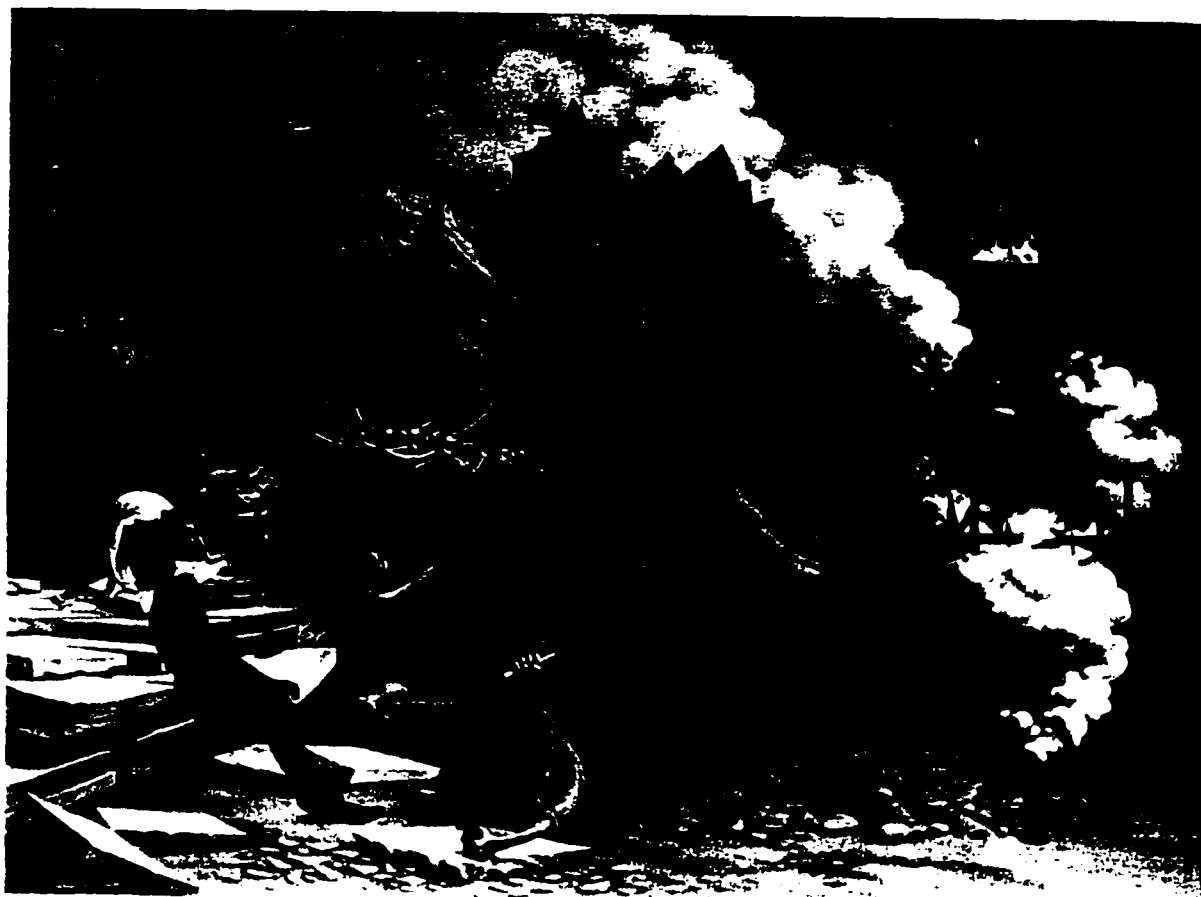


Fig. 35. Peter Blume. *The Rock*, 1948, oil on canvas.

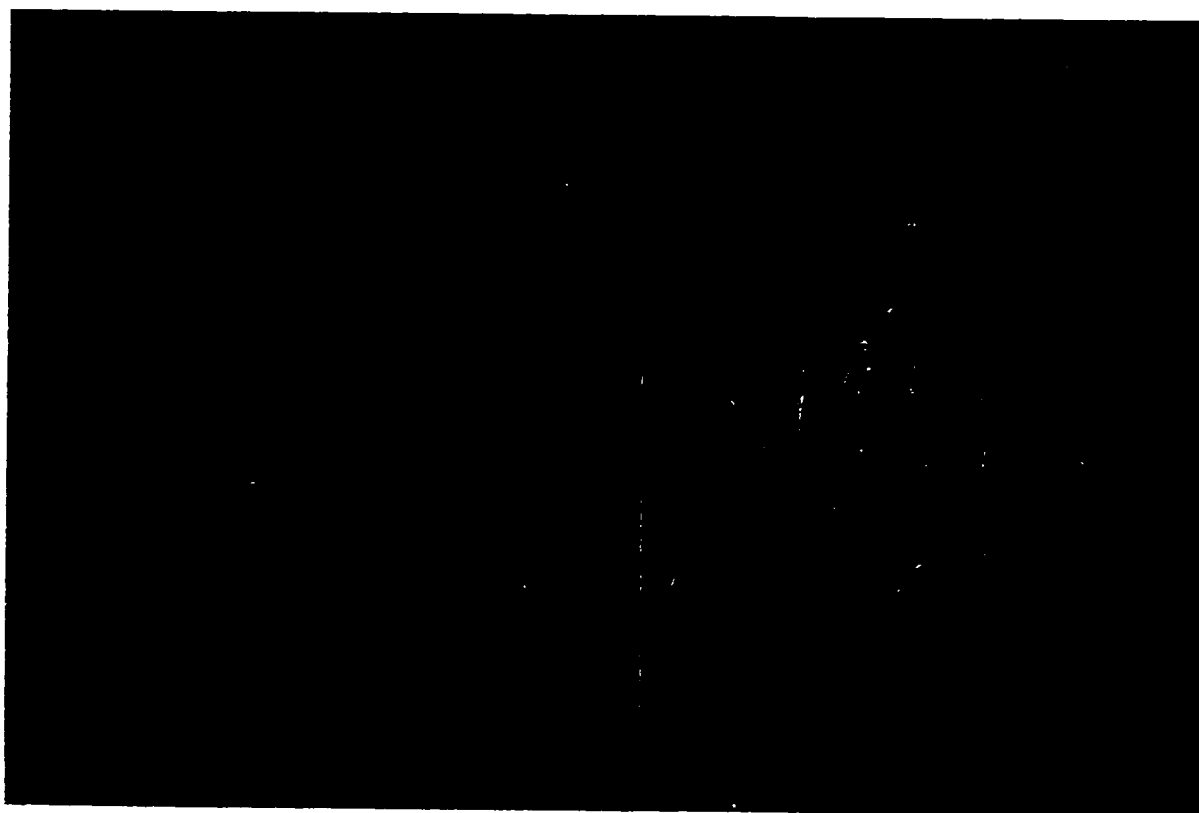


Fig. 36. Fred Ross, cartoon for *City Slums*, 1949, charcoal and coloured chalk on brown paper.



Fig. 37. Fred Ross with Pablo O'Higgins and other students in Taxco, 1949.



Fig. 38. Pablo O'Higgins, *Middlemen and Monopolists* (*Intermediarios y monopolistas*), 1935, fresco.



Fig. 39. Fred Ross, *Mexican Silver Miners* [studies for the *Hotel de la Borda Mural*]. 1949, graphite and ink on paper.



Fig. 40. Fred Ross, *[Hotel de la Borda Mural]*, 1949, casein tempera on wall surface.



Fig. 41. Fred Ross. *Portrait of a Young Woman*. Taxco, 1949, lithograph.



Fig. 42. Fred Ross. *Sleeping Figures*, 1949, casein tempera on masonite.



Fig. 43. Fred Ross, *Diego Rivera Working on the Murals at the Palacio Nacional, Mexico City (i)*, 1950, black chalk on paper.

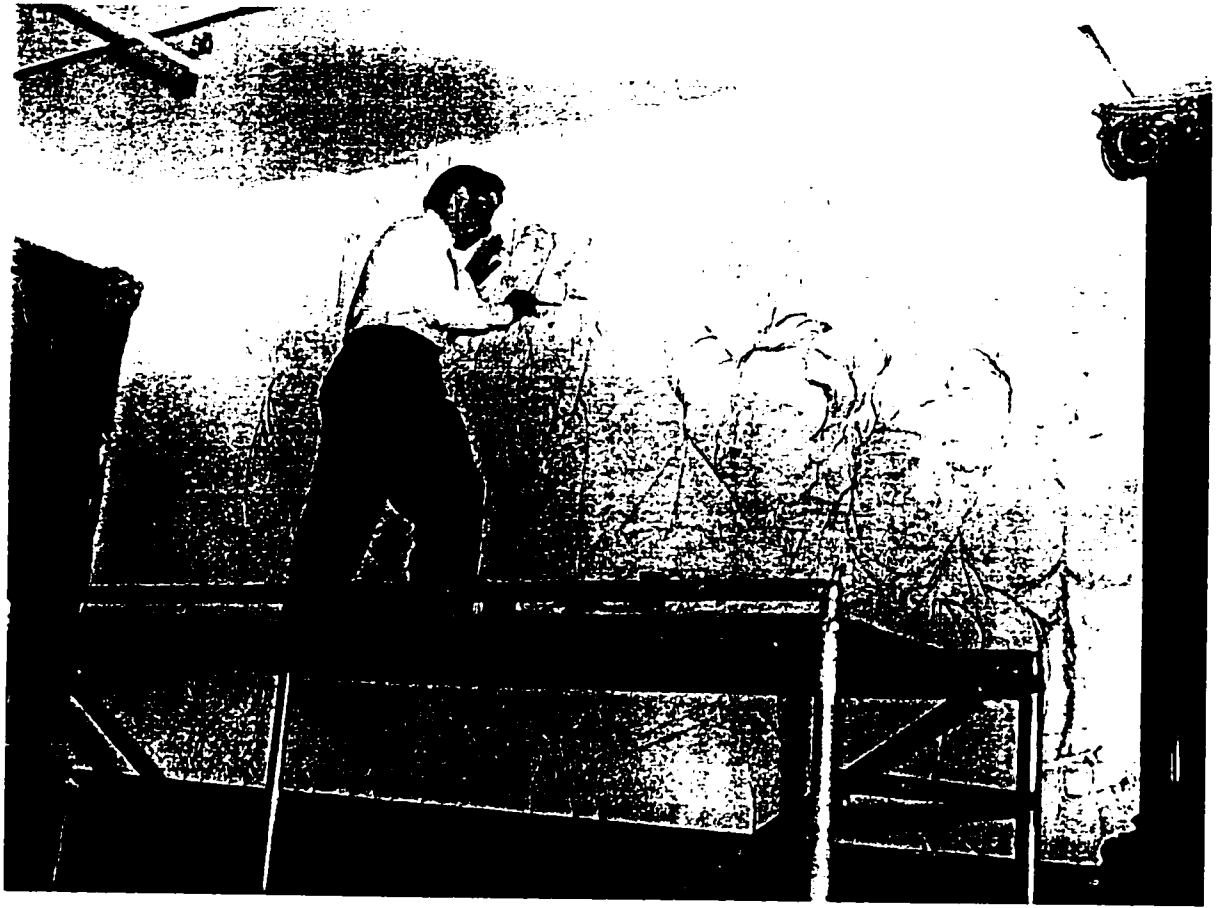


Fig. 44. Fred Ross preparing the final wall drawing of *City Slums*, 1950.



Fig. 45. Nearly completed stage of *City Slums*, showing the study of the black youth on the right-hand pilaster. 1950.



Fig. 46. Fred Ross, *City Slums*, 1950, casein tempera on plaster.



Fig. 47. Paul Cadmus, *Sailors and Floosies*, 1938, oil and tempera on linen on pressed wood panel.

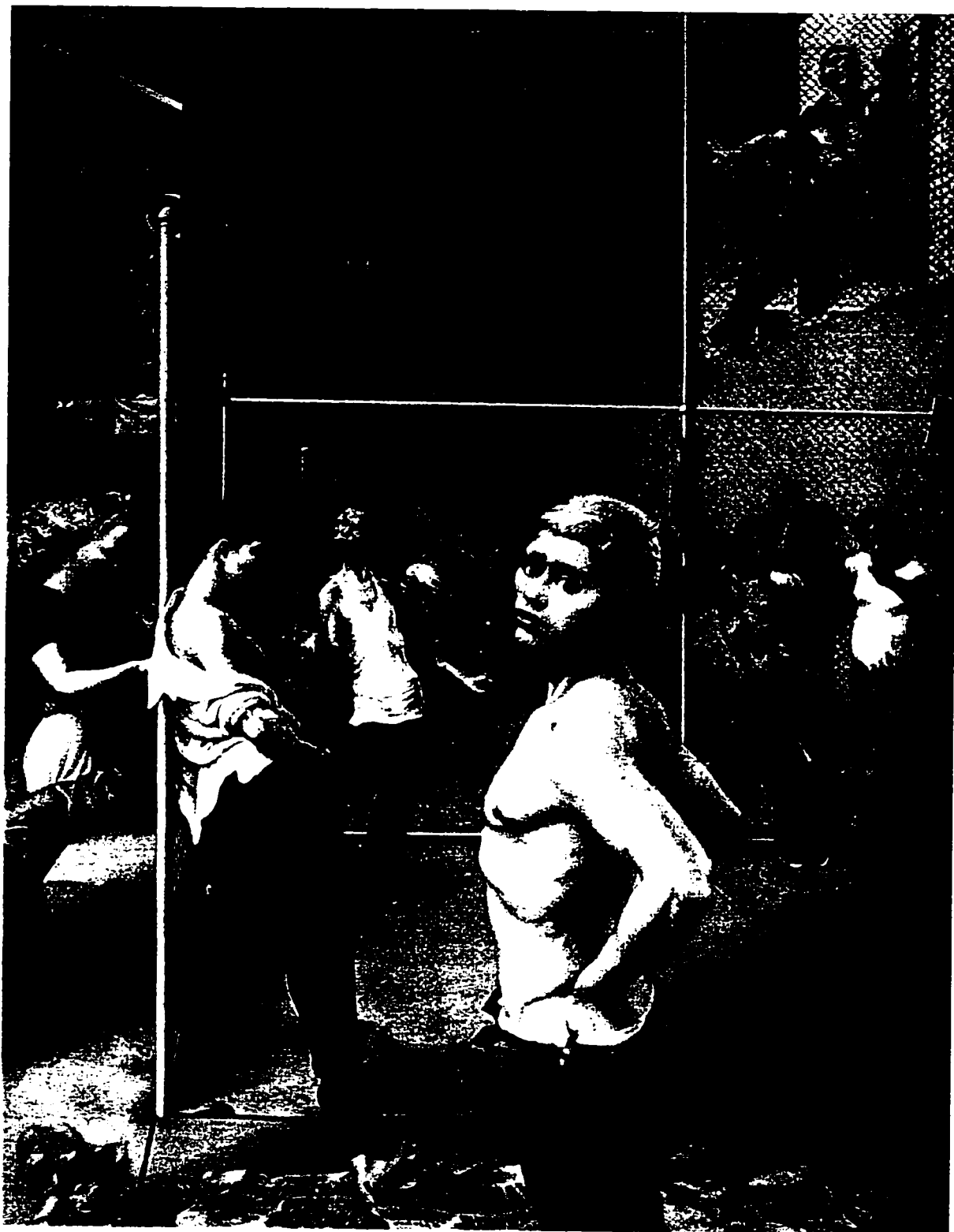


Fig. 48. Paul Cadmus, *Playground*, 1948. egg tempera on pressed wood panel.



Fig. 49. View of the Saint John Vocational School's main floor central hallway, showing from left to right: Fred Ross's *City Slums*, [male and female studying] (above the doors), and *Humanistic Education*.



Fig. 50. Fred Ross. *Study for Humanistic Education*, 1953, sanguine conté on paper.



Fig. 51. Raphael. *Parnassus*, 1510, fresco.



Fig. 52. Eugene Berman, *Sentinels of the Night*, 1938.



Fig. 53. Fred Ross. *Humanistic Education*, 1954, casein tempera on plaster.



Fig. 54. Fred Willar, *[Saint John Vocational School library mural]*, 1956, casein tempera on plaster.



Fig. 55. Fred Ross, *[Prince of Wales College mural]*, 1961.



Fig. 56a.

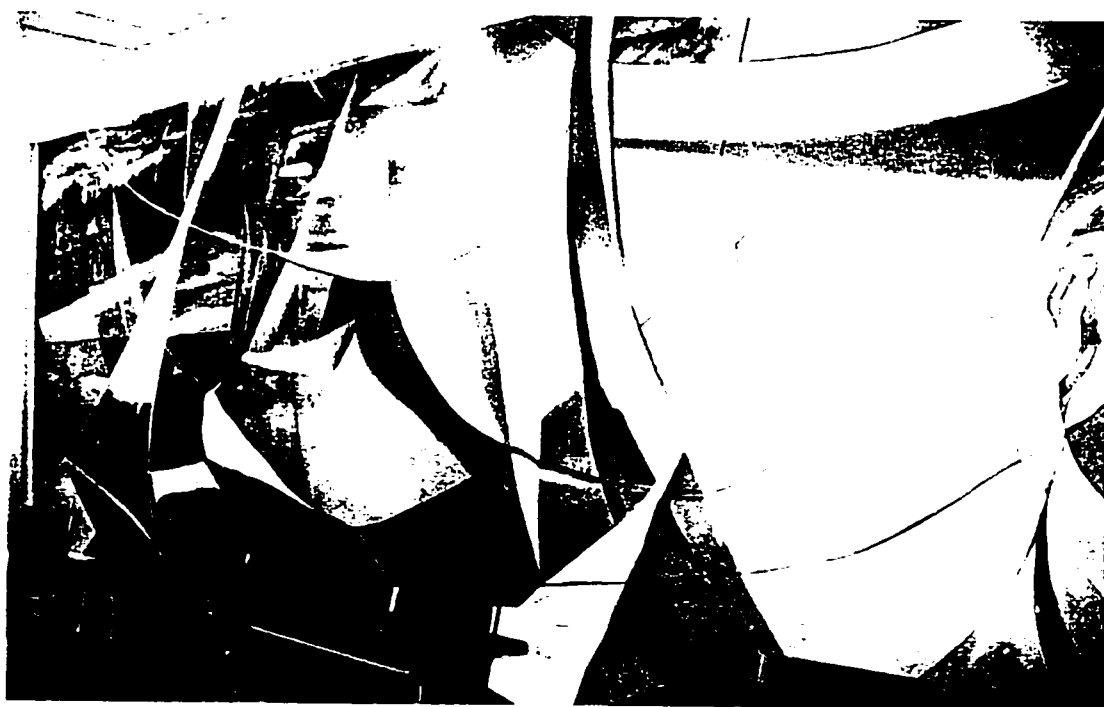



Fig. 56b.

Fig. 56. Photos of Fred Ross's [*Prince of Wales College mural*], showing the later ceiling and wall alterations.



Fig. 57. Fred Ross. *[Centennial Building mural]*, 1967, mixed media.



The spacious lobby on 6th floor has dynamic abstract by Fred Ross as focal point

We Were Pleased To Complete
LATHING and PLASTERING
throughout this imposing modern
CENTENNIAL BUILDING
which accommodates most of New
Brunswick's government departments.

STANDARD LATHING & PLASTERING LIMITED

236 St. George Street, Moncton, N.B. Phone 382-6643

Fig. 58.

Fred Ross's sixth floor mural, reproduced in a March 13, 1967 advertisement in Fredericton's *Daily Gleaner*, celebrating the opening of the Centennial Building.



Fig. 59. Fred Ross. *Harlequin and Four Dancers*. 1955, oil and casein tempera on panel.

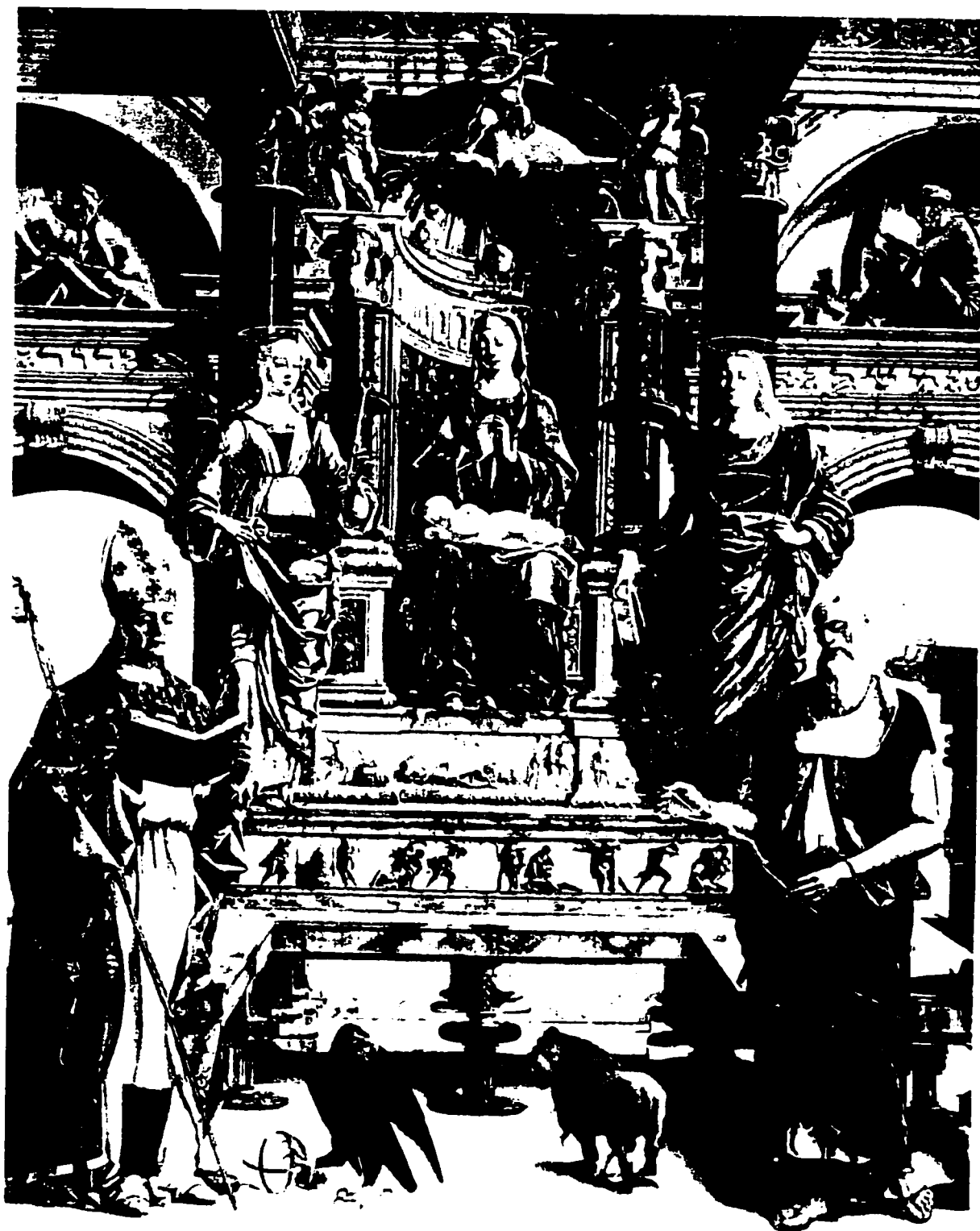


Fig. 60. Cossa and Roberti, *Altarpiece from St. Lazzaro*, c.1476-78, canvas, (destroyed in 1945).



Fig. 61. Fred Ross. *Portrait of Sheila in Blue*, 1955, oil on masonite.



Fig. 62.

Diego Rivera. *Portrait of Ruth Rivera*,
1949, oil on canvas.

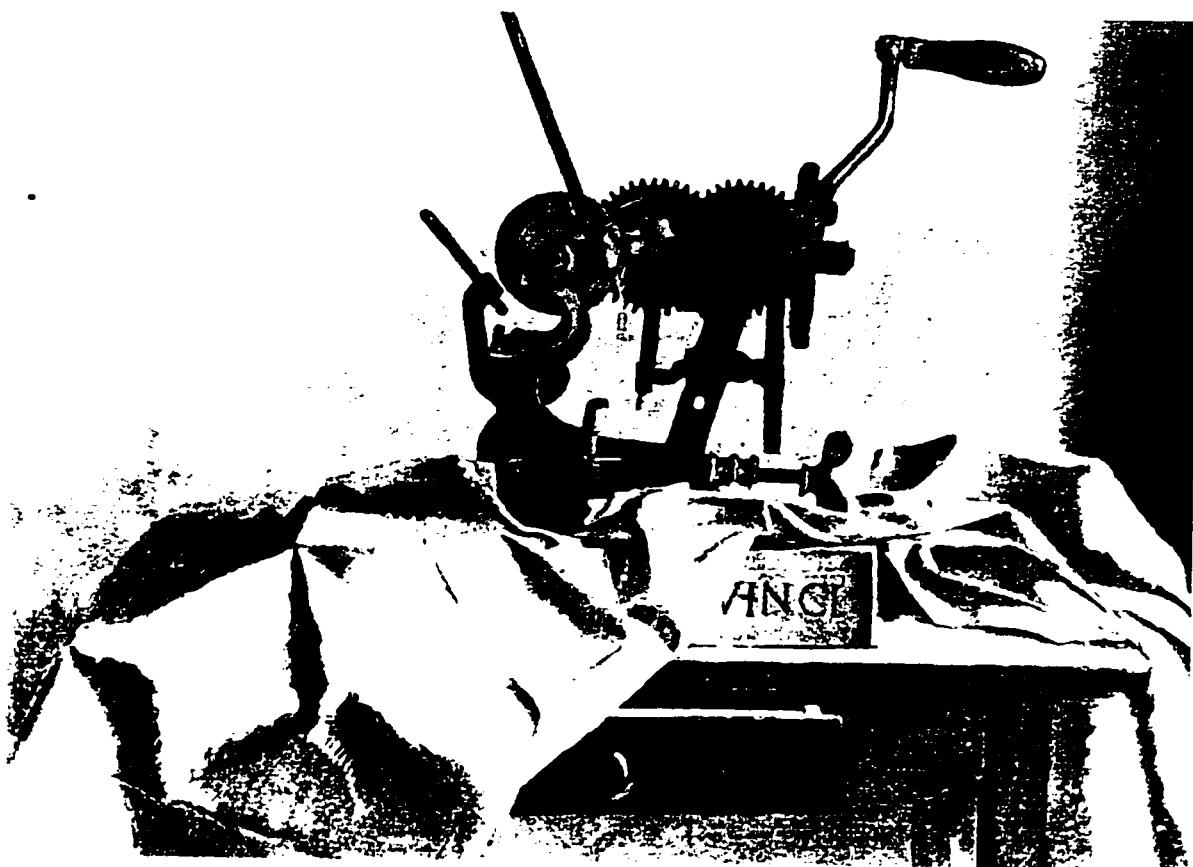


Fig. 63. Fred Ross. *Still Life*, c.1980, mixed media.

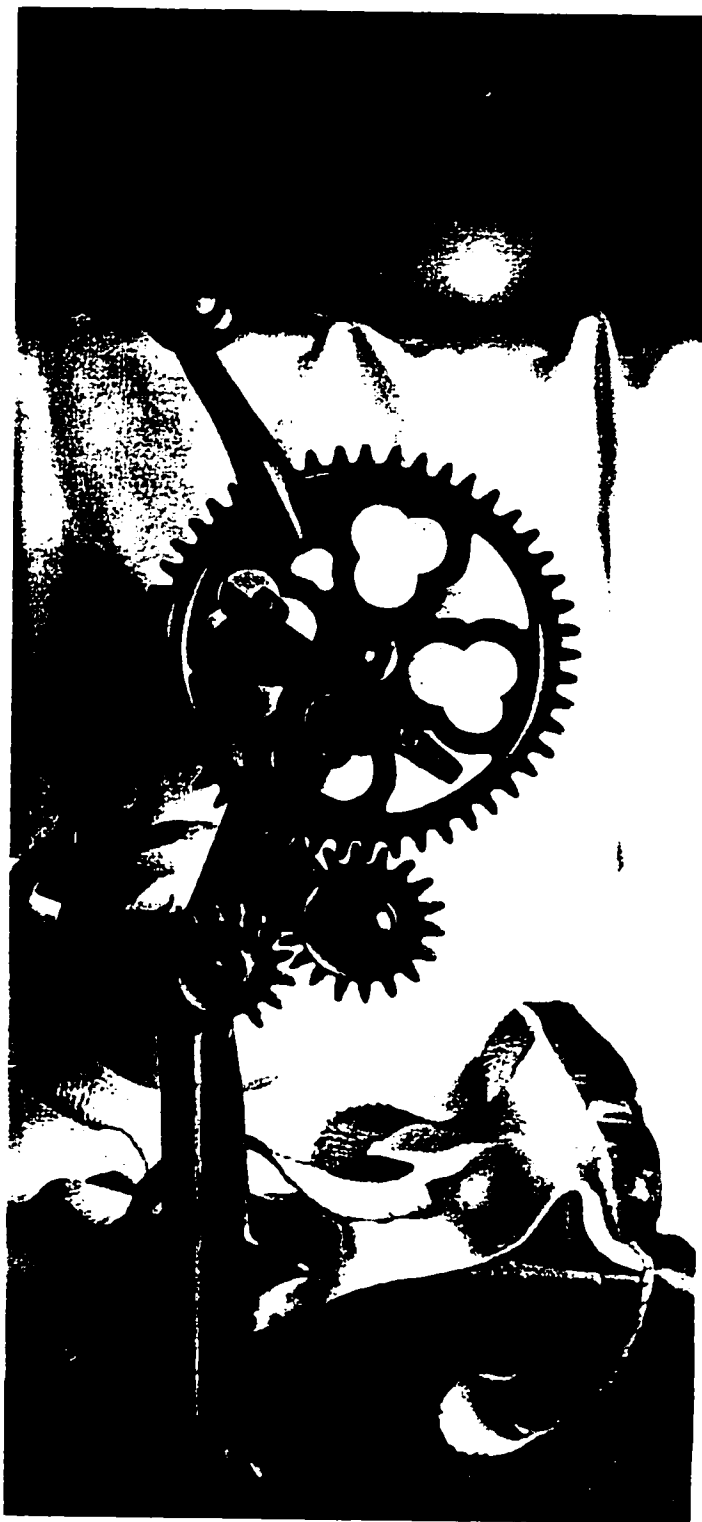


Fig. 64. Paul Cadmus, *Apple Peeler*, 1959, egg tempera on board.