GEORGE TOOKER: A REASSESSMENT OF THE ARTIST

by

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ABSTRACT

The paintings of George Tooker (1920-) belong to a group which many consider the artistic backwash of art in America in the 1950s as a result of the concurrent critical acclaim of Abstract Expressionism. My thesis rebutes this accusation and justifies his significance as an alternative to the intellectual and critical popularity of Abstract Expressionism.

Each of the five chapters focuses on a specific problem associated with the study of art history. Tooker is discussed in the context of problems concerning identification of periods and movements, the transferral of ideas from one movement to another, and the development of an ideological conflict between the avant-garde and the traditionalists. Although this thesis does not supply the reader with an in-depth chronological survey of his work, many of Tooker's paintings are assessed in detail.

Chapter One establishes the place of the paintings of Tooker and those of his closest associates (Paul Cadmus and Jared French), both historically and stylistically, within a general framework. The work of Cadmus and French will also motivate a good deal of discussion thoughout the thesis. The problems involved with the collective grouping of artists such as Tooker into movements or periods will then

be discussed.

Chapter Two examines the various forms of cultural stimulation which surrounded Tooker as a young man. Since the presence of a radical intellectual circle usually denotes an avant-garde sensibility, a comparison is drawn between Tooker, Cadmus, and French, and the work of their European contemporaries. Their affiliations and motivations then provides us with a platform upon which we may question the validity of the concept of the avant-garde in art.

Chapter Three deals with the effect of Renaissance Art on Tooker. His work is analysed according to a number of ideas which will link him conclusively with the popular Renaissance concept of Humanism. Tooker's transferral of traditional images and themes into a modern context, reflecting his dedication to the past, provides substance for an examination of the use of those theories as they apply to modern art.

Chapter Four examines the Depression and its consequences and expands on the theory that all major changes are related to revolution, whether political, cultural, economic, or social. Thus, since Tooker was still a very young man in the 1930s, the contributions of Cadmus and French during the period will predominate. The Mexican Revolution is seen as the liberating factor for the deluge of socially conscious art produced in the United States in the 1930s. Art became overtly political; however, the

organisation and control of culture by the American government resulted in a series of widespread conflicts.

Chapter Five deals with the development of a dichotomy between realism and abstraction, which can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States. Since Tooker remained dedicated to a traditional technique and philosophy, this chapter will examine doctrines and events outside of his immediate realm. The consequent popularity of the Abstract Expressionists with the critics and museums concerns us again with the idea of the avant-garde in history. Hence, the problems associated with a linear approach, whereby history is organised into convenient periods and movements, will be examined.

In conclusion, Tooker's relative obscurity will be explained as the result of political and ideological approaches.

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George Tooker himself provided me with a great deal of information about his life and art when we met on November 14th, 1985, at his home in Vermont. Furthermore, his extraordinary personality offered me an invaluable source of insight into his milieu, for which I will always remain grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

I first became interested in the paintings of George Tooker when I came across a reference to his work in Paul Von Blume's The Art of Social Conscience. I was drawn to Tooker's powerful style of painting because it expressed the plight of man in a modern urban environment with the clear, exacting style of the Renaissance masters, but without the dogmatic pretension that often accompanies socially conscious art. Tooker's work is urgent yet restrained and immediate yet deliberate. It is the kind of art that everyone can look at and immediately understand because the content is both universal and fundamentally simple.

Tooker's paintings have been figurative since his artistic career began in the mid 1940s. He has persisted with a style that suits him instead of with a method, such as Abstract Expressionism, that would have perhaps otherwise gained him more immediate recognition as a painter. He has remained open yet diplomatically indifferent to the various changes in modern art in the United States from the 1940s to the present, and now lives in relative cultural isolation in a home a few miles north of Hartland, Vermont.

I wrote to Tooker on September 25th, 1985, expressing my interest in his life and art. I asked if he would be available for an interview and, well aware of his reclusiveness,[1] I prepared myself for a polite refusal. I

was, therefore, both surprised and delighted when I received a letter from him less than one month later, in which he wrote: "I would be glad to meet with you when we both can arrange it."[2] Shortly thereafter, I made the necessary travel plans, telephoned Tooker, and organized a meeting with him at his home on November 14th, 1985.

I travelled to New York on Tuesday, November 12th, and as planned immediately phoned Tooker with more specific information about my proposed time of arrival at his home. The most direct mode of transportation offered was a train bound for Montreal, which left New York at 9 p.m. on Wednesday evening, and arrived at White River Junction (a few miles South of Hartland) at the ridiculous hour of 4:30 a.m., on the next day. Tooker referred me to a local accommodation, where we planned to meet at a more appropriate hour on Thursday morning, and I set my sights on a few precious hours of sleep in a proper bed after a night in a rumbling coach-class chair.

I left Penn Station on time, with a copy of the just published book on Tooker by Thomas Garver in hand, and prepared myself for a sleepless night of reading and nervous agitation. I compiled a series of last minute questions and finished Garver's book. When the train pulled into the junction seven and a half hours later my restlessness was overcome by gratitude when I recognized that the solitary figure standing at the end of the platform was Tooker

himself. We greeted each other with as much dignity and aplomb as can be expected when one meets a total stranger in the middle of the night, and he directed me to a smart red Toyota pickup, in which we completed the final leg of my journey.

We drove for about twenty-five minutes before pulling onto a dirt road that led to a typically New England home surrounded by shrubbery and nestled into the hillside. I was greeted at the door by a large energetic dog, named Rocky, whose toes clicked on the hardwood floors as he led me from the vestibule into a living-dining room which was furnished with some unobtrusive antiques and an occasional vernacular period piece. As I sat I noticed that the only picture on the walls was a sketch by Reginald Marsh, who was one of Tooker's teachers at the Art Students League, in New York. I later realized that his own work was nowhere to be seen except in his studio, which was organized according to its utilitarian function and, therefore, did not display his work for aesthetic reasons. This expression of humility was one of my first indications of his truly remarkable character.

In person, George Tooker is gentle, sensitive, and extremely kind. He insisted on feeding and entertaining me for the duration of my stay in Hartland, which lasted until 12:30 a.m., on Friday, November 15th. He proved to be a most gracious host and our conversations, both on and off

tape, were constantly punctuated with laughter. Yet, beyond all the pleasantries, I noted his intense devotion to both his work and those people whom he loves.

During our five hours of taped conversation we discussed Tooker's early years of art education with Malcolm Frazier, who was a painter in the Barbizon tradition. We then talked about his initial exposure to social consciousness in the Depression-worn towns of Lawrence and Lowell, which were located a few miles north of a preparatory school that Tooker attended in the late 1930s. We also discussed Robert Graves and his book The White Goddess (1948), as well as other influential works by various writers and poets of the twentieth century.

We talked about Paul Cadmus and Jared French, two men whom Tooker feels are his most important influences; about Malaga, Spain, the winters spent there with his lifelong companion, William Christopher (who died in 1973), and the lure of that country as a source of inspiration and a place of residence for other artists and writers; about the Renaissance and in particular, Piero della Francesca, Giotto, and Bronzino; about his method of painting with egg tempera, its requirements and practicality; and about Magic Realism, the movement with which Tooker, Cadmus, and French are most often associated.

When I asked Tooker how he felt about critics and historians labelling him as a Magic Realist, he said that he

considered the term "rather precious." In my thesis, I will suggest that the term "Magic Realism" is not only inappropriate, but far too indefinite to describe the work of Tooker and his colleagues.

The term, "Magic Realism," has been used to describe a number of groups in a variety of locations. In 1925, Franz Roh's Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus· Probleme der Neuesten Europaischer Malerei (After Expressionism Magic Realism The Problems of the Newest European Paintings)[4] stimulated an interest in a form of post-expressionist painting in Germany, which became known as Neue Sachlichkeit, or New Objectivity.[5] The movement was not centered in any one German city and there was no spokesman,[6] therefore, it included a wide range of verism or works which loosely conform to the idea of an association with reality, as interpreted by a great number of contributing artists.[7]

Twenty years later, Alfred H. Barr used the term "Magic Realism" to describe the work of numerous American artists,[8] whose only link to their German antecedents was their interest in verism. Furthermore, the term has also been used to describe the writings of a group of post World War II Latin American fiction writers,[9] whose work by its very nature may only be remotely connected with the original exponents of the movement. And so the term has long been overused and oversimplified.

Tooker prefers to think of himself as an individual. Yet, as such, if he did not belong to any specific group or period, according to the precepts of modern art criticism he would have no place or serve no function in the overall scheme of things. As far as I could tell, it would suit Tooker very well indeed to be an individual, without the restrictions placed upon him by associative terminology, even if it did mean he would remain an unknown painter.

From the beginning of his career as a painter, Tooker's work has revealed two major concerns, indicating both social and spiritual consciousness. Tooker's interest in social consciousness has been explored by Paul Von Blume in The Art of Social Conscience (1976), in Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler's Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting: 1940-1960 (1981), in Seymour Menton's Magic Realism Rediscovered (1983), and in numerous other books, articles, and exhibition catalogues; only Thomas Garver discusses Tooker's pious nature as a contributing factor to his work.[10] However, Garver's summary of Tooker's religious inclinations is brief and somewhat vague. I believe that it is his spiritual consciousness which nurtures Tooker's creativity as a step beyond his concern for modern social problems.

A consideration of Tooker's work from the early period in his career (approximately 1945 to 1955) reveals that many of his paintings express a genuine interest in

serenity and a harmonious interaction with oneself and with others. This particular aspect of Tooker's work will be more thoroughly explored throughout the thesis. Let it suffice to state at this point that The Island (1945) and Coney Island (1948) are exemplary of such a concern for mankind.

According to Thomas Garver, "an analysis of the importance of the historic references in Tooker's paintings is inconsequential."[11] Yet, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, apart from stylistic similarities, Tooker's connection with the Renaissance may also be attributed to a philosophical link with the concept of Humanism. The Renaissance provided Tooker with inspiration to which we will refer for an iconographic interpretation of his work.

Tooker shared his interest in the Renaissance with Cadmus and French, who were also devoted to the exacting technique of egg tempera painting. Although the three shared many similarities of style, Tooker was primarily concerned with humanist tendencies in his art, Cadmus was essentially a satirizing moralist, and French explored psychological interpretations of man.

Although all three men were realist painters, such a strong differentiation between their philosophies provides an opportunity to explore their work as a product of three unique reactions to life in the United States from 1940 to the present. Tooker in particular may be singled out as a

man whose compassion, religious inclinations, and commitment to a traditional philosophy and technique provided him with enough insight to paint what he wanted to paint. Although his easily recognizable imagery has always distinguished his work from that of other realists, Tooker has never asserted himself as a personality. Thus, I believe that it is his dedication to his discipline rather than to his personal image that has enabled Tooker to remain as a constant, regardless of the changing trends fashionable in the cultural environment of post-war America.

Footnotes

[1]Seldon Rodman makes mention of Tooker's quiet, reclusive nature in his book, Conversations with Artists (New York, 1961), 210.

[2]In a letter from George Tooker to the author, sent from Hartland, Vermont, on October 11th, 1985.

[3]In a conversation between George Tooker and the author on November 14th, 1985, at his home in Hartland, Vermont.

[4]Published in Leipzig in 1925.

[5]Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting (Berkeley, 1974), 319.

[6]John Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period The New Sobriety 1917-1933 (New York, 1978), 112.

[7]Ibid., 111. Their work was first shown as a collective at the Mannheim Kunstahalle in the summer of 1925. The exhibition included paintings by George Grosz, Max Beckman, Otto Dix, Christian Schad, and many others.

[8]Barr reused the term in an exhibition catalogue intitled American Realists and Magic Realists, which was edited by Dorothy C. Miller and held at the Museum of Modern Art, in 1943.

[9]Seymour Menton, Magic Realism Rediscovered (Philadelphia, 1983), 9.

[10]Thomas Garver, George Tooker (New York, 1985), 123.

[11]Ibid, 10.

CHAPTER I

TOOKER. HIS BACKGROUND AND HIS MILIEU

Early Life and Education

During the first two decades of the twentieth century an extraordinary burst of creativity and inventiveness in the arts established a platform upon which prominent movements, such as Cubism, Fauvism, Futurism, and German Expressionism enthusiastically called for a reassessment of the role of art in a modern world. By 1920 (two years after the Armistice and three years after the Soviet Revolution), the proliferation of diverse avant-garde artistic activities throughout Europe indicated how widespread were the thoughts and ideas now considered to be modern. In Berlin, in a reaction to the trauma of World War I, Richard Huelsenbeck, George Grosz, John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann, and others renounced art and together exhibited their "anti-art" objects at the first International Dada fair.[1] In Moscow, Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner wrote the Realist Manifesto which has little to do with the type of realism to be discussed below, in order to define the term "constructivist" as an expression of a newly established socialist society. The publication of Piet Mondrian's Neoplasticism, was but one example of the search for a utopian ideal in art as an escape from repetition, pedantry

and hollow profundities.

While such monumental events took place in Europe, the cultural impact of the twentieth century on the United States was, by 1920, tentative, at best. Apart from the concern for the state of art in the United States as expressed by the modernists at Stieglitz's "291" and a handful of other privately run New York galleries, American art in 1920 consisted largely of realistic depictions of life in rural communities or in large cities. Although the form or style of these movements was innovative for American art at the time, the inevitable confrontation with content as a tool for unsentimental social comment had as of yet been avoided. Hence, while Europe struggled with challenging new philosophies and concepts, the United States hid behind a protective barrier of nineteenth century ideals.

The reason for the United State's repressed cultural situation in the early twentieth century was due to a number of factors. At the time, Americans were busy becoming rich by a system which proclaimed the supremacy of a democracy for capitalistic gains. It was a period of industrial expansion and thousands of Europeans, fleeing from assorted war-torn homelands, arrived each day with hopes for a new life blessed with opportunity and fortune. But as these people arrived, they were quickly assimilated into a culture that was becoming rapidly middle class and narrow minded.

America's physical distance from Europe also contributed to the lack of interest in artistic developments on the Continent, which theoretically could have been transposed by waves of immigrants, but those Europeans who came to America were often poor and uneducated. More often than not, valued possessions hauled from crammed ocean liners were either decorative art objects associated with religion or vernacular pieces from a secular traditional heritage. European intellectuals on the other hand responded to the war by retreating from the disasters of the era; hence, art itself became significantly more conservative in the 1920s. In America, however, although the impact of World War I was tremendous, it was not immediate enough to shake the cultural foundations of a country with ideals strongly entrenched in glory and heroics.

In 1920 George Clair Tooker was born on August 5th, in Brooklyn, New York [2] Tooker was the elder of the two children of George Clair Tooker senior, originally a cocoa broker who later became a municipal bond broker, and Angela Motejo Roura, a woman of Cuban ancestry. When he was seven his family moved to Bellport, Long Island, and he was enrolled in art classes taught by Malcolm Frazier. A painter with Barbizon School connections and a friend of George Inness, Frazier taught Tooker the fundamentals of oil painting and academic compositional techniques. After two years with Frazier, Tooker painted on his own until 1936

when he enrolled at the Phillips Academy, in Andover, Massachusetts. Although he received further artistic instruction by taking a number of studio courses while there, no credit was given at Phillips for such activities since they were considered unacademic. Nevertheless, Tooker spent a good deal of his time either writing poetry or painting water colour landscapes, "all of which he gave away (or) sold in a little shop in Belleport to help people get along in the Depression."[3] During his two years at Phillips, Tooker's occasional visits to the nearby textile towns of Lawrence and Lowell, which were hard-hit by the Depression, instilled in him a feeling of political responsibility. This was magnified by his relative social isolation from his upper class schoolmates, who no doubt made him aware of his multi-cultural ancestry and his middle class social stature. However, although his trips to Lawrence and Lowell exposed him to poverty and social imbalances,[4] his attitude at the time could perhaps be best described as that of a polo playing socialist.

In the fall of 1938, Tooker enrolled at Harvard University, where he was exposed to three important influences.[5] First, his introduction to the work of the Renaissance Masters, which hung in the Fogg Art Museum, sparked an interest in traditional methods and ideas, second, the intellectual stimulation of Harvard enabled him to pursue more liberal political thinking; and third, his

status as an English major with emphasis on poetics established strong literary interests which would be of major importance to Tooker in the future. While at Harvard, Tooker imitated Sargent and Homer in large, loose watercolours, but he considered his efforts mediocre at best, and gave them all away as gifts.[6] After his graduation in 1942, Tooker spent one year in Officer Candidate school with the United States Marines; however, much to the chagrin of his parents, a health problem led to his premature discharge.[7] Hence, at age 23, Tooker was free to pursue a career as a painter without further undue pressure from his parents to support himself in a more financially responsible manner.

The Art Students League: The Influences of Kenneth Hayes Miller and Reginald Marsh

In the spring of 1943, Tooker enrolled at the Art Students League, in New York. It was here that Tooker made contact with fellow students Paul Cadmus (1904-)[8] and Jared French (1905-),[9] who became his mentors, as well as with two prominent exponents of the American tradition, Kenneth Hayes Miller (1876-1952), who taught at the Art Students League from 1911 to 1931, 1932 to 1936, and 1944 to 1951, and Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), who taught at the Art Students League intermittently from 1935 onward. During his two years at the Art Students League, profound changes in his approach to art enabled Tooker to improve his technique and develop his work intellectually to a point of relative

maturity by 1945. His inspiration came first from his immediate surroundings, via his instructors, Miller and Marsh, and then from his friends and colleagues, Cadmus and French.

While in New York, Tooker became aware of the American tradition of urban realism. The formation of the group known as the "Ash Can School" or more simply, "The Eight", in New York City, in 1908, under the shared leadership of Sloan, Henri, Luks and others, marked a significant yet somewhat romantic alternative to American provincialism since their vision of a modern America paid little attention to the suffering of the people. Less than twenty years later, however, Kenneth Hayes Miller and other members of the "Fourteenth Street School" (including Bellows, Hopper, Kuniyoshi, Bacon, Marsh, Bishop, Isaac Soyer, and Morris Kantor) produced works of art which carried the Ash Can style to a more realistic interpretation of urban genre subjects, to which they often applied Renaissance techniques.[10] Miller's own personal contribution to the "14th Street" style was based on a passionate preoccupation with connecting the past to the present, both stylistically and theoretically. Hence, he was interested in composition, three dimensionality, adherence to the rules of technical procedures in the tradition of the Baroque and Renaissance Masters, and Humanism as a philosophy based on devotion to human

interests. In short, Miller stressed the importance of respect for the traditional basis of art as a timeless craft.[11]

At the suggestion of Reginald Marsh, Tooker attended lectures given by Miller at the Art Students League in 1944. Miller, who was previously Marsh's teacher, subsequently inspired both Marsh and Tooker to paint in a traditional style.[12] Although Tooker and Miller did not get along well together, Miller's pronouncements, such as, "a hole in a picture is like a hole in a tea kettle,"[13] and "quantity in painting is more important in painting than quality,"[14] which stressed his interest in attention to details, have remained with Tooker as somewhat sentimental yet inspiring words of advice.[15]

Tooker found Reginald Marsh to be more personable and stimulating than Miller, because Marsh was not an "old and very sick man,"[16] as was Miller when Tooker attended classes at the League in the 1940s. Furthermore, since Marsh approached painting with the same devotion to three dimensionality as a sculptor, his figures express the same substance or volume that Tooker's characters display. Yet, although Tooker shared Marsh's interest in realistic painting, his choice of subject matter, the characters and events of New York's Bowery, bars, and the burlesque, did not appeal to Tooker at all. Marsh said, "the havoc caused by the tremendous influence of Impressionism and

Expressionism must be overcome before America can go on and paint the substance, not the light and shadow."[17] He was concerned that art emphasize content over form, and idea over style. Thus, since both Marsh and Miller believed that style had already been perfected by the great masters of the Renaissance and the Baroque, it will be made clear (in later sections) that Tooker shared their vision that art must, therefore, exist as a traditional method applied to contemporary thoughts.

Tooker's style is more immediately similar to that of Miller than that of Marsh. The figures in Miller's Nude by a Penthouse Window (circa 1929-39) (Fig. 1) are very like Tooker's characters (see figure 4) with their blockiness and blank expressions of indifference On the other hand, the frantic, agitated lines and exaggerated physical types in Marsh's Coney Island Beach (1947) (Fig. 2) may be linked more closely with the work of Tooker's friend and mentor, Paul Cadmus, who painted his own satirical version of a Coney Island beach scene in 1935 (Fig 3). Tooker also painted a Coney Island scene in 1948 (Fig. 4), however, he felt too self-conscious and exposed while sketching at such public places.[18] Even so, the intimate depiction of the figures in Tooker's Coney Island is more compassionate than it is in Marsh's or Cadmus's version. Marsh's figures, which are a mere extension of their surroundings, are either lost in the swirling tides of landscape and shore, or stand

or sit in defiance as in the case of the Olympian couple in the upper left corner of the painting, or the gargantuan woman in the foreground. Cadmus's figures are more intimate than Marsh's, but a profusion of tasteless activities and sexual innuendos in Cadmus's picture, such as the prone man in the painting's foreground, who pinches the bottom of a restless infant, or the obese woman to the left of the composition, who bares a breast while pouring a beer into her lover's face, reflect a satirical vision of the Island's summer life. Tooker's gentle figures at play in the bright sunlight, or at rest in the subdued light of the boardwalk remain as the only testament of the three to the redeemable nature of mankind.

1945 marked the end of World War II, the death of Roosevelt, and the beginning of the atomic age when the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was also the year in which Evelyn Waugh wrote Brideshead Revisited and George Orwell wrote Animal Farm. In Paris, a Matisse retrospective was held at the Salon d'Automne and in New York City, Rothko exhibited for the first time at the Art of this Century gallery. In the summer of the same year, Paul Cadmus and Jared French urged George Tooker, then twenty-four, to move to a small cold water flat on Bleeker Street, in Greenwich Village.[19] This move signified the beginning of Tooker's career as a mature artist.

In order to understand Tooker's philosophical outlook

on art, mention of Paul Cadmus and Jared French's own interpretations is in order. Both Paul Cadmus and Jared French played significant roles in the artistic and philosophical development of George Tooker. Although very little is known about the reclusive French, Cadmus's career has been widely publicized since the 1930s.

Paul Cadmus as a Mentor Directions in his Work

Cadmus's controversial battle with the media began in 1933, (while he was earning $23 per week as an artist for the Works Progress Administration), when Shore Leave (Fig 5) was exhibited for the first time in a New York gallery. The painting illustrates a colourful collection of humanity in New York's Riverside Park (on the Hudson River), with special attention paid to the less than noble activities of sailors and marines at their leisure, such as their pursuit of alcohol and both heterosexual and homosexual activities. One critic termed the work a "monument to vulgarity."[20] Cadmus, who was immediately labelled a cause celebre,[21] somewhat naively commented "that he had watched his subjects a great deal and was inspired by their [the sailors'] freedom and lack of inhibitions."[22] One year later Cadmus painted The Fleet's In! (Fig. 6), the second of three works which mocked the licentiousness of the sailors' behaviour. It was met with disapproval by Admiral Hugh Rodman, who wrote to the Secretary of the United States Navy that the painting was "an unwarranted insult" (to the Navy) which had

"originated in the depraved imagination of someone who had no conception of actual conditions in [the] Service."[23] Cadmus was declared the enfant terrible[24] of the art world and in 1937, at his first one man show at the Midtown Gallery, in New York, a record 7,000 curious viewers were admitted to the exhibition.[25] In 1940, the exhibition of Cadmus's 1938 painting, entitled Sailors and Floosies (Fig 7), in San Francisco, caused further scandal for the young artist. The director of the Golden Gate art exhibition, Dr. Walter Heil, removed the work from the show. However, it was almost immediately rehung due to the controversy in the San Francisco press over the painting's censorship. By 1940, Cadmus was an old hand at dealing with Naval officials; in reaction to his latest controversy he stated with an everpresent satiric wit, "I think it would make a good recruiting poster. I will raise my prices."[26]

During the first ten years of his career as an artist, Cadmus was reputed to be a biting satirist. Yet, the attention to detail and technical prowess which is particularly evident in his later academic nude studies, such as, NM 149 (Fig. 8) eventually won Cadmus respect among a small number of critics, who considered these less publicized works to be his artistic forte. In May, 1937, Margaret Breuning wrote in an exhibition review, "Look at his drawings and forget, if you can, the riotous orgy of his canvases."[27] In November of the same year, Childe Reece

wrote, in the Magazine of Art, "What gives Cadmus' work importance is the healthy delight he takes in the human figure, it is the love of form that vitalizes and makes expressive his point of view."[28] These and other critics exposed the dual nature of Cadmus's productivity, which George Tooker later described as "formidable .. ranging from the cruelest satire to the most idyllic romanticism."[29]

As with Marsh, Cadmus's influence on Tooker was based more on philosophy than style. By acknowledging the self-destructive nature of society as well as the enduring excellence of the individual, Cadmus conveyed an interest in humanity as a vital source. Two contemporary figures are Cadmus's most important inspiration. The first, and most immediate is his artist/friend, Jared French, who will be discussed below. The second is the author, E.M. Forster (1879-1970).

Two events of note occurred in the United States to boost the popularity of the English-born author. First, in the spring of 1938, the editors of the liberal periodical, The Nation, asked Forster to write an essay which appeared as the first of a series called "Living Philosophies". He responded promptly and expressed ideas of "logical stoicism and aphoristic modesty."[30] His essay was well received by the American public, who inundated Forster with correspondence. Second, in 1943, the American critic, Lionel Trilling, published a book on Forster which described

the author's writing as that of a "moral realist", and explored Forster's discussion of the nature of evil and the conflict between Spirit and Necessity.[31] What Forster meant by this distinction was, in fact, precisely what Paul Cadmus also believed when he stated that man was capable of demonstrating the heights and depths of his nature in order to gain results of far greater significance than those achieved by isolation, introspection or subjective contemplation of inanimate objects.[32]

Cadmus began his correspondence with Forster in 1943,[33] when he was introduced by mail to the author by Jared French's wife, Margaret, who had begun her own correspondence with Forster shortly after the publication of his "Living Philosophies" essay. Cadmus and the Frenches finally met Forster in 1947, when he arrived suddenly one summer afternoon at their shared Greenwich Village Studio; according to the guest, "it was a perfect meeting, Paul Cadmus and the Frenches got wine and delicatessen from a nearby restaurant and everyone over indulged."[34] Later that year, Cadmus painted What I Believe (Fig. 9), a visual interpretation of Forster's philosophy about life, which Lincoln Kirstein describes as "an exploitation without deformation or caricature of the nude in a personal allegory."[35] The painting is divided; on the left men and women exist in various states of well-being and mutual cooperation by building a home or merely embracing one

another, while on the right, disorder, confusion, and hysteria among the people contribute to a general state of distress and apathy as dictators shout unheard, from a summit of rubble.

Cadmus and Forster shared a humanistic approach to both art and life which values man's capacity to love and be loved, and condemns man's tendency towards corruption. Phillip Eliasoph, one of Cadmus's biographers, categorizes him as a member of the Forsterian aristocracy, an elite group of kind and gentle people.[36] Although they considered themselves a pious minority with much the same conviction as a Jehovah's Witness, the Forsterian concept emphasizes the importance of the individual, his or her sense of duty and a clear moral disposition, and should not be confused with any sort of fanaticism. To both Cadmus and Forster, any sense of dogmatism lay in hostility towards the power of anonymous forces, such as society and the environment, over the individual. Thus, Cadmus chose to illustrate his concerns in satirical painting, while Forster voiced his opinions through fiction.

Jared French as a Mentor: Directions in his Work

A second important inspiration for Cadmus and Tooker is the artist Jared French. Little information is available about the elusive French, about whom Cadmus once said, "Jerry got me started into painting pictures other than just direct painting from life, just composing pictures, trying

to be more like the old masters."[37] In February, 1968, in Rome,[38] French issued his only public statement concerning his work to date

> My work has long been concerned with the representation of diverse aspects of man and his universe. At first it was mainly concerned with his physical aspect and his physical universe. Gradually I began to represent aspects of his psyche, until in The Sea (1946) (Fig. 10) and Evasion (1947) I showed quite clearly my interest in man's inner reality. In 1964, without conscious prevision, I began a series of sketches that led to my present work. It may seem at first sight that this work marks a break with what went before. But it is in reality a development and a further clarification. This development has resulted in my relegating other aspects of my work to positions of relative unimportance.
>
> It has been asserted that art at the present time has become only a marginal activity. If this is so, the artist can hardly be held to account. The artist presents. Society decides when it wants to accept, and whether it wants art near the center of its world.[39]

It is evident that French's earliest views about art and about the place of man in his universe were in accordance with Cadmus's early thoughts. It is not therefore surprising that Cadmus's 1937 Credo, written for his first Midtown Galleries one man show, was in actuality composed by Jared French.[40] Hence, frequent declarations, such as, "Jared French uses egg tempera with an exactitude worthy of a Paul Cadmus,"[41] which was made by Lillian Lonngren in an Art News exhibition review in March of 1962, have helped to solidify the misconception that French is a loyal follower of Cadmus; if anything, the opposite is true. One only needs to read French's "Credo" to understand that

his work is a visual dissertation on the complexities of the human psyche and is, therefore, more intellectual than Cadmus's satirical viewpoint.

French's work from before 1964 may be described as essentially allegorical, with emphasis on the use of compositional symmetry to enhance the timelessness of the intentionally archaic figures. During this earlier period French's work was based on the comparative theories of Carl Jung, who attributes modern neuroses and western society's crises to an over-dependence on the rational and scientific to the detriment of the irrational and subconscious.[42, 43] Berman and Wechsler explained the similarities between the paintings of French and the writings of Jung, which are the result of a fundamental interest in the use of symbolism to examine the psychological nature of man. According to Berman and Wechsler, French had read the first American publication, in 1939, of Jung's Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious and found in it the kind of theoretical inspiration for which he was searching.[44] The figures in The Sea (1946) (Fig. 10) are a visual manifestation of two of Jung's "archetypes", primordial or mythological images which "belong to the realm of the activities of the instincts."[45] According to Berman and Wechsler, the picture suggests the polarity between the "persona" archetype, or superficial aspect of the personality, and the "anima/animus" archetype, or true nature of the inner self,

held in a precarious balance which Jung refers to as "the war of the opposites."[46] Since Jung also stated that "man is happiest when the conscious and the unconscious have learned to live at peace with each other,"[47] French's use of the Greek archaic smile as a recurring motif, with its vacuous optimism, reinforces the idea of the precarious nature of the individual while searching for equilibrium since the smile also suggests ambiguity.

French's Murder (1942) (Fig. 11) appears to be a more complex visualization of Jung's persona/anima theory. The figures and gestures are strictly divided in two, with emphasis on dichotomous expression and emotion to illustrate the conscious/sub-conscious polarity. French's Crew (1941) (Fig 12) illustrates Jung's idea of the existence of a binding collective unconscious[48] within every man, since each crewman is not only identical but also equally attentive to the actions of the team captain Thus, French consistently used figuration as a direct method of depicting Jung's theories. In 1964, French's work underwent a radical stylistic change. Although his work was no longer figurative, he remained devoted to the ideas of Jung. This may be seen in the abstract organic form in Syzygy (Nest) (1968) (Fig. 13). "Syzygy" is a term which to astronomers means both conjunction and opposition and is a direct reference to Jung's use of the word as representative of the concurrent masculine and feminine elements present in

humanity.[49]

The media's reaction to French's "new style" was less than favourable. In January, 1968, an article in Art News, by Rackstraw Downes, declared: "these bulbous piles of flesh, so chaste in execution, are filled with lurid innuendos."[50] Just over one year later (in April 1969), James R. Mellow wrote in an Art International review that "the most recent work is much more sexually suggestive [and] deals with an imagery of strange transmutations of flesh and bone."[51] Unfortunately, these and other reviews, which are perhaps more descriptive than positive, no doubt inspired French to pursue his artistic career in a relative isolation that continues today.

Berman and Wechsler appear to be the first to undertake the academic study of French's work; even so, their discussion of his work is largely speculative and far from definitive. Furthermore, throughout his career French has allowed only a handful of his works to be exhibited and he frequently rejects potential collectors by refusing to sell his paintings.[52] Although no explanation has been offered for his reticence, discussion of a scandal early in his career[53] will more substantially expose the reason for French's evasiveness.

Some of French's reticence appears to have rubbed off on Cadmus, who, in 1983, stated, "I have made statements in the past [i.e., concerning the exegesis of a painting], now

I know better. Let art majors, art historians, etc. say their says."[54] George Tooker is also known for his reclusive nature; perhaps he, too, was somewhat motivated by French's reticence. Although it is no doubt partially true that the three men were ethically opposed to over-publicizing, as we shall see in Chapter Five, events which led to the dominance of Abstract Expressionism in the United States in the late 1940s influenced painters and artists in other styles to be cultural wallflowers.

Tooker as an Individual

The paintings of George Tooker represent a careful assimilation of the thoughts and practises of his two mentors. From Cadmus, he has derived a dualistic approach; he examines both anonymity and identity, isolation and communication, the artificial and the natural, and the repulsive and the sensual. From French, Tooker acquired a fascination with the use of symbolism, as well as an interest in psychological analysis. Despite Cadmus's and French's influences, however, Tooker's work is unique because of his profound spirituality, which is expressed by his perpetual involvement with the metaphorical interpretation of revelatory images.

In Tooker's work there is a dichotomy between those works which are personal, intimate or "private", and those which are related to social issues and are, therefore, essentially "public."[55] Tooker's "private" paintings are

categorized by Garver into four main groups, with the exception of a handful of unrelated works scattered here and there. They are those which are overtly religious,[56] and those which belong to series based on windows, mirrors, and lovers.

The theme of windows was the subject of nine paintings (done between late 1954 and 1968 and entitled Window I through Window IX) as well as several other closely related works. Citing Window II (1956) (Fig. 14) as an example, Tooker remarked that this work and others from the series are "visual involvements in working out variations of figures enclosed in a small space"[57] and that "figures ... were intentionally multi-racial for compositional effect."[58] Although the mood is intimate, a sense of uneasiness pervades in Window II due to the ominous presence of a secondary figure hidden behind the curtain, which acts as a foil to the more serene figure. The work echoes French's use of the Jungian persona/anima theory, since, as with the figures in French's The Sea, we are once again confronted with similar yet opposing characters. These and other figures in Tooker's window series appear to observe their subjects unnoticed but not without some kind of emotional response. For example, the standing figure in Window II expresses an overt sensuality that suggests involvement with the object or, more likely, person, who is his focus of attention, even though he is physically separated from that

object or person.

In Tooker's mirror series, a mood of intimacy is implied similar to that in the window series, yet the theme is fundamentally more moralizing in the former. While the window series investigates the dichotomy between separation and inclusion, the mirror series evaluates the flaws in man's character.

The self-contained figure in Tooker's Mirror I (1962) (Fig. 15) gazes arrogantly into a hand mirror, completely unaware of the Holbeinesque skull behind her,[59] which contrasts to her beauty and foreshadows her eventual death. All of the paintings in Tooker's mirror series use pairs of figures, or figures and symbolic objects, such as the woman and the skull in Mirror I, to emphasize contrasts between the beautiful and the repulsive, transience and permanence, the artificial and the real, and naivety and wisdom. Tooker's constant use of such opposed themes in this series stems directly from his interest in the traditional concept of "vanitas."[60]

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scholars such as Giorgio Vasari saw time as a prelude to final judgement; therefore, the "vanitas" theme conveyed the idea that life was finite.[61] Furthermore, Vasari and others also accepted man as capable of being both good and evil. Tooker's assimilation of such a traditional concept in his own work is, as we shall see in later chapters, both

theoretically and practically successful.

The theme of lovers is the least extensive of Tooker's private series; he has produced four paintings on this theme, to which he often refers as scenes of "embrace."[62] These paintings consistently suggest an intimacy beyond sex. The figures in Lovers II (1960) (Fig. 16), who are lost in an embrace, seem to be oblivious to passion but not to spiritual exaltation or agape. Their intimacy is neither urgent, nor obsessive, they merely lie together, with their bodies like an undulating landscape, in a state of peace and contentment. These and many other figural works reflect Tooker's persistent search for a personal revelation, the striving for which, as we shall see, has more recently become the focal point of his artistic career.

A few of Tooker's "public" paintings have achieved great recognition because of their vivid illustration of the theme of man's alienation and dehumanization in a modern urban society. Among these paintings perhaps three may be singled out as the most influential; they are: The Subway (1950) (Fig. 17), Government Bureau (1956) (Fig. 18), and The Waiting Room (1959) (Fig. 19). When asked about his social intention in such early works, Tooker stated:

> These were all paintings of protest. I think the rebellion in everyone is at its apex during one's younger years. I painted the world as I saw it and in many cases I didn't like what I saw.[63]

These paintings deal in very disturbing images with clearly understandable social concerns, such as the fear of danger (on public transit systems), the frustration with a faceless, indifferent bureaucracy (in bureaucratic systems), and the anxiety of waiting (in nameless offices).

Tooker explained The Subway for the Whitney Museum's files, in January 1951, by saying that The Subway was "... a good place to represent a denial of the senses and a negation of life itself."[64] According to Berman, the "subterranean location was important to Tooker as he felt that the presence of a great weight overhead would emphasize the sense of both physical and mental oppression."[65] In 1951, shortly after the Whitney Museum purchased The Subway, an article, which appeared in the March issue of Art Digest, commented that the work "reminds us that we are more shifty-eyed than we think."[66] Although this statement is well founded, it merely hints at the urgency of Tooker's message, which, in short, expresses fear and anxiety as negative aspects of modern urban living

The genesis of The Government Bureau was directly related to an unpleasant incident with Brooklyn City officials. In 1953, Tooker and his companion, William Christopher, purchased a rooming house in Brooklyn Heights, with the intent of converting the structure into a two apartment dwelling. They met with opposition from the Brooklyn Borough Hall and were repeatedly denied the

approval to renovate.[67] Tooker's personal frustration is, therefore, expressed in Government Bureau by the inability of either the viewer or the figures within the composition to see any one complete face belonging to the many half-hidden government employees. The repetition of facial and body types of both customers and employees recalls Fritz Lang's "automatons", from his film Metropolis, of 1923, who existed in precisely the same sort of banal environment of communal hopelessness and alienation.

Tooker's Waiting Room presents the viewer with a room full of people experiencing various degrees of existential dilemma; the man in booth 115 grasps the partition for security; the woman in booth 114 stands with her eyes closed as if suspended in a trance, and others around her exist in various states of consciousness. The figures' anxiety is consistent with their sterile and oppressive environment.

By looking at these three paintings, we can again define many fundamental conflicts which are the themes of these and other "public" works. They are the contrast between isolation and communication, the collective and the individual, anonymity and identity, bureaucracy and intimacy. Furthermore, the persistent use of symbolic elements, such as repetition of objects and figures, denies the viewer any relief from the intense urgency of the message.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Tooker's

repeated use of specific themes and symbols may be, in part, derived from his close association with Cadmus and French, however, we should not ignore Tooker's idea of the individual as capable of exceptional creation. Concerning the three artists as a collective, Tooker himself once stated: "I think movements and groups are death to an artist."[68] Furthermore, since all labels attached to art movements are to a certain extent arbitrary, and, with rare exceptions, works of art are not made to fulfill predetermined aesthetic programmes, it is problematic to categorize Tooker with his artistic colleagues.

Tooker as a Magic Realist:
The Problematic Nature of the Term

Numerous American scholars have often placed Tooker and his colleagues within the movement known as "Magic Realism." Among those who attempted to define this term was Alfred H. Barr. In 1943, in a Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalogue entitled "American Realists and Magic Realists" (which did not include works by Tooker), Barr declared that "magic realism is a term sometimes applied to the work of painters who by means of an exact realistic technique try to make plausible and convincing their improbable, dreamlike, or fantastic images."[69] This was the first effort made by an American to define the term which, in fact, had originated in Europe.

In 1925, Franz Roh (1890-1965) wrote a survey entitled Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus: Probleme

der Neuesten Europaischer Malerei,[70] which by using a Wolfflinian scale of values endeavoured to separate and distinguish the work of expressionist and post-expressionist, or Magic Realist, artists[71] active in Germany at the time. Roh's definition differed from Barr's version because it was an application of opposites, i.e , of the differences between expressionist and post-expressionist characteristics in art, such as the dynamic and the static or the monumental and the miniature, which define expressionism and post-expressionism respectively.[72]

Although Roh's book stimulated a great deal of interest in the movement, Magic Realism existed precariously in Germany from its inception in the 1920s due to the unfavourable economic conditions present during the Weimar Republic and the increase in power of the culturally conservative National Socialist Party. After 1933, when Hitler forced the movement into exile, Barr's reassessment of Magic Realism in the United States one decade later signified an attempt to solidify its position as a viable international movement.

Although Barr's and Roh's definitions of Magic Realism were essentially in accordance with one another, the German exponents of the movement were prompted to create by an environment so far removed from the one surrounding the Americans twenty years later, that the term as it applies in the United States should be acknowledged as tentative.

Since 1980, however, with the recent burst of interest in realism in general, academics are once again wrestling with the problematic nature of the movement. For example, in 1983, Seymour Menton explained Magic Realism as a psychological and philosophical reflection of Jungian theories.[73] In 1981, Harold Osborne defined the term as suggestive of "an imaginative or dream reality other than the reality of everyday life which, with a strong impression of presence is conveyed by some naive art, some metaphysical painting, and some Surrealism."[74] It is evident by looking at recent hypotheses that although research in the area is still sadly lacking, attempts are being made to provide an accurate and concise description of Magic Realism.

Unfortunately, with every system of collective grouping come misconceptions. For example, the term Magic Realism has been applied to the work of Tooker and his close associates, as well as other American Artists including Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler, Andrew Wyeth, Grant Wood, Peter Blume, Kenneth Callahan, John Wilde, Siegfried Reinhardt, and Pavel Tchelichew.[75] Furthermore, the term has also been used to describe the work of the French Surrealist, Pierre Roy;[76] the paintings of the German Neue Sachlichkeit,[77] and a group of post World War II Latin American fiction writers, including Jorge Luis Borges, Llejo Carpentier, Miguel Angel Asturias, Julio Carthazar, Jan Rulfo, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and others.[78] Since the term

is also linked with numerous other painters and writers working in Italy and France since the end of World War I, such a diversity of representatives confers a false sense of order and denies the artist a place as an individual. Thus, the adverse reaction of Tooker and his colleagues to the term Magic Realism and other labels is not only appropriate, but justifiable.

In 1965, Henry Geldzahler made an uncharacteristic "faux pas" by referring to Tooker as a Surrealist.[79] Since few other critics or scholars had ventured beyond the oppressive theoretical confines of Abstract Expressionism until the early 1960s, Geldzahler's comment reflected the values of the period dominated by Abstract Expressionism when other movements such as Magic Realism were often dismissed as anachronistic. Although Tooker has also been described as a "Precise Realist,"[80] Garver points out that he and Cadmus and French were more appropriately labelled as "Symbolic Realists"[81] in an exhibition catalogue entitled "Symbolic Realism in American Painting, 1940-1950", which was written by Lincoln Kirstein.[82, 83]

Kirstein's term "Symbolic Realism" is a more useful theoretical framework than Magic Realism in which to consider Tooker, Cadmus, and French; Kirstein wrote:

> Symbolic realism accepts painting as a triumph of the orderly, the intelligent, and the achieved, rather than as victim of the decorative, the fragmentary, or the improvised. Pictures of symbolic realism are essential rather than anecdotal; they attempt to define

> qualities and conditions, independently of their designers' appetites, their reference is to a universal legibility rather than inward towards a limited correspondence.[84]

Therefore, according to Kirstein, Symbolic Realism looks beyond Magic Realism's superficial preoccupation with the narrative, acknowledging the lyrical and the metaphysical aspects[85] of paintings. Yet, an inherent problem exists even with Kirstein's theory because it, too, is a generalization.

Although the paintings of Tooker, Cadmus, and French reflect a shared interest in technical virtuosity[86] and themes of servility, venality, and corruptibility,[87] the work of each artist clearly differs from the others in the individual's philosophical approach to painting. The paintings of Tooker are inherently spiritual, Cadmus's images are satiric, and French relies upon symbolism to explore contemporary psychological issues. Furthermore, although Tooker's paintings are fundamentally metaphysical, Cadmus's are judgmental, and French's are analytical, the work of these three men may be linked by their speculation about man's rational capabilities in a modern environment. Hence, it is this comprehensive presupposition which has inspired theoreticians to allot Tooker, Cadmus, French, and others a place in art history as a collective known as the Magic Realists. Yet, as usual, such placement is arbitrary because it is based upon generalizations. Surrealism may also be described as being concerned with the rational

nature of man in the twentieth century; however, the approaches of a Masson and a Magritte are as distinct as a piece of Magic Realist literature by Jorge Luis Borges is from a painting by Christian Schad,[88] or one by George Tooker.

Lincoln Kirstein's definition of Tooker and his colleagues as "Symbolic Realists" is more applicable than Franz Roh's "Magischer Realismus" simply because it is more immediate; that is, Kirstein devised the term "Symbolic Realists" specifically for the American painters. Even so, the term "Symbolic Realism" is unsatisfactory because it acknowledges the universal qualities of the group's philosophy as a collective rather than the notion of each artist as an individual. More recently, Jeffrey Wechsler proposed the term "Imaginative Realism" for the work of Tooker and his colleagues. However, he also acknowledged the term to be a generality and accounted for its connection with other realist modes, such as the surrealist, the fantastic, the visionary, the symbolist, and the eccentric.[89] Furthermore, he also indirectly referred to the relative youth of the movement by stating:

> The very qualities that produce our pleasure in viewing magic realism hinder our full intellectual grasp of it, and this has surely contributed to the dearth of research devoted thus far to magic realism.[90]

Thus, Wechsler appears to have come the furthest in an attempt to define the work of Tooker and his colleagues.

His description is at least more concise than "Magic Realism", which, as we have seen, may refer to any number of groups active during a span of over half a century. Yet, even so, "imaginative" suggests an irrational notion or a mental conception which leads far beyond the confines of a stark subway interior or a droning government office. Therefore, until a more adequate term is put forth and academically accepted, Magic Realism will be used to refer to Tooker and his associates because it has at least the advantage of long usage and widespread acceptance. For want of a better term, Magic Realism will be used throughout the body of this thesis to refer to a number of loosely associated groups and movements, however, but not without hesitation. I believe that it is too indefinite to describe Tooker's work in particular because he is the sole initiator of a style of realism that is based more on Humanism than anything magical. Thus, perhaps "Humanist Realism" would be a more appropriate term to describe Tooker's work. Even so, such a term does not apply to the paintings of Cadmus and French and since they are an integral part of my topic of discussion, Magic Realism will be used with acknowledged reticence to refer to their collective oeuvre. As we shall see in Chapter Two and subsequent chapters, the use of labels to define periods and movements is inherently problematic.

Footnotes

[1]Robert Short, Dada and Surrealism (London, 1980), 42.

[2]This information was obtained during an interview with George Tooker, 14 November 1985, in Hartland, Vermont

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Paul Cadmus was born in New York on December 17, 1904. His father, who was of Dutch origins, was a commercial lithographer and watercolourist, and his mother, who was of Spanish descent, was an illustrator. At age 15, Cadmus enrolled at the National Academy of Design where he studied etching under Charles Hinton from 1919-26. After the completion of his studies at the National Academy of Design, Cadmus worked briefly as an illustrator for the New York Herald Tribune. In 1928, he enrolled at the Art Students League, where he received instruction in painting from Charles Locke and Allen Lewis; and in lithography from Joseph Pennell (the biographer of Whistler). From 1928 to 1931, Cadmus worked for the Blackman and Co. advertising agency in New York, in order to save money for a trip to Europe with Jared French. After an extensive tour of a number of major European countries, Cadmus and French returned to the United States in 1933 to begin their careers as independent artists.

[9]Jared French was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, on February 4, 1905. After graduating with a BA from Amherst College in 1925, he enrolled at the Art Students League, where he studied under the Regionalist, Thomas Hart Benton, and Boardman Robinson, who gave him "an idea of the importance of art" (Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Dorothy C. Miller, American Realists and Magic Realists [New York, 1943], 36). In 1937, he married Margaret Hoening, an academic sculptor who introduced both her husband and Cadmus to the work of E.M. Forster. French was also devoted to the writings of Robert Frost, which he studied diligently while in college, and to the work of G.L. Dickinson. Cadmus referred to French as The Poet in a portrait of his friend

from the early 1930s.

[10]The Fourteenth Street group emerged in the late 1920s under the leadership of Kenneth Hayes Miller, who was perhaps a more influential teacher than a painter. Miller, his students, and other members of the group most often painted subjects, such as New York's Fourteenth Street, the Bowery, and Union Square, in a traditional manner, i.e., with emphasis on compositional clarity, geometric symmetry, and technical precision, which explored the potential of a classical approach to documentation of the common man in an ordinary environment.

[11]Milton W. Brown, American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression (Princeton, 1955), 183.

[12]Peyton Boswell, Jr., Modern American Painting (New York, 1940), 142.

[13]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[14]Seldon Rodman, Conversations with Artists (New York, 1961), 210.

[15]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985

[16]Ibid.

[17]Boswell, 142.

[18]Thomas Garver in an exhibition catalogue entitled George Tooker. Paintings 1947-1973 (San Francisco, 1974), not paginated, discusses Tooker's reticence about being observed while sketching in public. Garver also makes it clear that Tooker has always been a reclusive man.

[19]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[20]As quoted in Una E. Johnson's Paul Cadmus: Prints and Drawings 1922-1967 (New York, 1968), 8.

[21]As quoted in Lee Nordness and Allen S. Weller's Art USA Now Volume II (New York, 1963), 131

[22]Lincoln Kirstein, Paul Cadmus (New York, 1984), 25.

[23]As quoted in an anonymous reviewer's article entitled "Paul Cadmus of Navy Fame has His First Art Show" in Life, No. 2, March 1937, 44.

[24]Childe Reece, "Paul Cadmus, Etcher," Magazine of Art, Volume 30, November 1937, 664.

[25]Anonymous reviewer, "Paul Cadmus of Navy Fame has His First Art Show," Life, 44.

[26]As quoted in an anonymous reviewer's article entitled "A Good Recruiting Poster, Claims Cadmus" in Art Digest, Volume 14, September 1940, 13.

[27]Margaret Breuning, "Field Notes: Paul Cadmus," Magazine of Art, Volume 30, May 1937, 329.

[28]Reece, 664.

[29]As quoted on the back overleaf of Kirstein's Paul Cadmus, and from information obtained from George Tooker, 14 November 1985.

[30]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 75. Kirstein also notes that such ideas were in direct accordance with the philosophies of Cadmus at that time.

[31]P N. Furbank and Mary Lago, eds., Selected Letters of E.M. Forster. Vol. II (London, 1985), 238.

[32]As quoted from Paul Cadmus's Credo (written in 1937 for an exhibition at the Midtown Gallery, New York) in Kirstein's Paul Cadmus, 143. Also quoted in P.N. Furbank's E.M. Forster: A Life, Vol. II (London, 1978), 245.

[33]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 75. The last letter that Cadmus received from Forster was dated 1969, the year before he died.

[34]Furbank, 270.

[35]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 75.

[36]Philip Eliasoph, Paul Cadmus. Yesterday and Today (Miami, 1981), 73.

[37]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 21.

[38]French's place of residence for several years now.

[39]As quoted in "Artists on their Art" in Art International, Vol. 12, April 1968, 54. An incomplete version of French's statement also appears in Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler's Realism and Realities: The other Side of American Painting, 1940-1960 (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), 96.

[40]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 131.

[41]Lillian Lonngren, "Reviews and Previews: Jared French," Art News, Vol. 61, March 1962, 14.

[42]Seymour M. Menton, Magic Realism Rediscovered. 1918-1981 (Philadelphia, 1983), 14.

[43]In 1981, Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler published an exhibition catalogue, entitled Realism and Realities: the Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960. This catalogue surveyed a wide variety of representational art, including socially conscious paintings, works dealing with themes ranging from romantic to grotesque, and those related to Tooker's genre of realism, during those years between 1940 and 1960, when abstraction predominated in the art world.

[44]Berman and Wechsler, 12. Many American artists working during the 1940s were interested in Jungian imagery. These painters included Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Adolf Gottlieb, and William Baziotes.

[45]Carl G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (New York, 1958), xiv.

[46]Berman and Wechsler, 97.

[47]Carl G. Jung, Man and His Symbols (London, 1964), 14.

[48]Menton, 14.

[49]Jung, Psyche, 9.

[50]Rackstraw Downes, "Reviews and Previews: Jared French," Art News, Vol. 66, January 1968, 13.

[51]James R. Mellow, "New York Letters: Jared French," Art International, Vol. 13, April 1969, 36,

[52]Berman and Wechsler, 93.

[53]A scandal involving French and one of his government sponsored mural commissions will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

[54]As quoted in Contemporary Artists (London, 1983), 137.

[55]Both "private" and "public" are terms used by Thomas Garver in his book George Tooker (New York, 1985), 48, to delineate two main approaches to Tooker's work.

[56]Those works by Tooker which are overtly religious will be discussed at length in Chapters Three and Five.

[57]Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, n.p.

[58]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[59]Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, n.p.

[60]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[61]The "Vanitas" theme was particularly popular as a style of painting in Protestant dominated Northern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because it represented a symbolic reference to Man's mortality through the use of associative objects such as mirrors, skulls, and hour glasses. Linda and Peter Murray, Art and Artists (New York, 1978), 430.

[62]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[63]As quoted in Gail Levin's "The Office Image in the Visual Arts" in Arts Magazine, Vol. 59 (September, 1984), 102.

[64]As quoted in Berman and Wechsler, 85.

[65]Ibid.

[66]As quoted by an anonymous reviewer in an article entitled "Fiftyseventh Street in Review: George Tooker" in Art Digest, Vol. 25, March 1951, 24.

[67]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[68]As quoted in Current Biography, Vol. 19, March 1958, 441. Also stated in conversation with George Tooker, 14 November 1985.

[69]Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Dorothy C. Miller, American

Realists and Magic Realists (New York, 1943), 5.

[70]Translated into English by Dr. E. Tumasonis as After Expressionism: Magic Realism The Problems of the Newest European Painting (Leipzig, 1925).

[71]Menton, 17.

[72]Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting (Berkeley, 1974), 319. Selz includes Roh's complete list of differences between expressionist and post-expressionist characteristics in German art at the time. More will be said about Roh and German Magic Realism, or Neue Sachlichkeit, in Chapter Two.

[73]Menton, 13.

[74]Harold Osborne, The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Art (Oxford, 1981), 344.

[75]As defined by Barr and Miller in their American Realists and Magic Realists exhibition catalogue, (1943), as well as in Seymour Menton's Magic Realism Rediscovered.

[76]Mitchell Beazley, The Dictionary of Painting and Sculpture, Art and Artists, Vol. 4 (London, 1981), 110.

[77]Selz, 319.

[78]Menton, 9.

[79]Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 160.

[80]John I.H. Baur and Lloyd Goodrich, American Art of the Twentieth Century (London, 1962), 139.

[81]Garver, George Tooker, 83.

[82]This exhibition was held first at the Edwin Hewitt Gallery, April 3-22, 1950, and then travelled to London where it was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art, July 18-August 18, 1950. The show included works by Tooker, Cadmus, French, Edward Hopper, Walter Murch, Alton Pickens, Ben Shahn, Andrew Wyeth, and others. Garver, George Tooker, 142.

[83]More will be said about Lincoln Kirstein, who was a mentor to Tooker, Cadmus, and French, in Chapter Two, section four.

[84]As quoted from page three in Kirstein's "Symbolic

Realism" exhibition catalogue in Garver's George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, n.p.

[85]Eliasoph, 21.

[86]The importance of egg tempera as a method of painting pictures to Tooker, Cadmus, and French will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three, section two.

[87]Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1980), 121.

[88]Christian Schad was a Neue Sachlichkeit painter who will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, section seven.

[89]Jeffrey Wechsler, "Magic Realism Defining the Indefinite," Art Journal, Vol. 45, Winter 1985, 293.

[90]Ibid., 298.

CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES

PAJAMA Group Photography

In order to clarify the cultural background surrounding Tooker and his colleagues in New York City in the 1940s and 1950s, it would be beneficial to discuss a series of significant events which either directly or indirectly involved Tooker, Cadmus, French, and a few others who belonged to their closely knit intellectual circle at the time. This chapter is an exploration of events which occurred both in Europe and America in the early twentieth century that in one way or other influenced Tooker's ideas about modern art. Many events which directly involved Tooker and his colleagues occurred on a narrow spit of land, known as Fire Island, which runs in a roughly parallel fashion along the southern coast of Long Island. Although it is now an exclusive summer resort area, in the 1940s Fire Island's sandy beaches were virtually deserted and it was the ideal location for young artists interested in seclusion.

Paul Cadmus and Jared and Margaret French discovered the Island in 1937 when they decided to rent a summer vacation cottage near the village of Saltaire.[1] Shortly after they arrived, the three became interested in using

their surroundings as the location for a series of unique photographic studies based on a collective effort. They dubbed their newly formed group PAJAMA, after a combination of the first two letters in each of their names (PAul Cadmus, JAred French, and MArgaret French),[2] and what followed was not one but several successive series of photographs which explored themes of mystery, romance, fantasy, sexual innuendo, and narcissism (see Fig. 20).

As the years progressed and the trio travelled beyond Fire Island for their summer holidays, Cadmus and the Frenches became more adept with the use of their cameras, and a number of prominent artists and writers were asked to participate in PAJAMA "shoots" in locations as diverse as Provincetown, on Cape Cod, London, and Rome.[3] The distinguished American photographer, George Platt Lynes,[4] became a major contributor to the PAJAMA oeuvre. Eminent participants such as Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Christopher Isherwood, W.H Auden, Monroe Wheeler[5] and Glenway Wescott[6] unabashedly threw dignity aside and staged poses reminiscent of Surrealist paintings with a beachy twist. The fact that all of these guests were either writers or poets (with the exception of George Platt Lynes) reflects the importance of literary interpretations to the core PAJAMA group. They had devoted a good deal of their time pursuing the philosophical guidance of E.M. Forster. The core PAJAMA members, to whom Hyatt Mayor once referred

as the "Fire Island School of Painting,"[7] invited various guests to participate in PAJAMA shoots until they stopped taking pictures as a group around 1950.[8]

George Tooker was asked by Cadmus and the Frenches to contribute his services as a PAJAMA model on numerous occasions.[9] The effect of his frequent visits to Fire Island and Provincetown can be seen in his work in such figurative landscapes from the mid 1940s as The Island (1946) (Fig. 21) The three figures are clad in the same casual beachwear sported by the PAJAMA group and their friends and their poses are similar to those in the theatrical photographs. As can be expected, the PAJAMA photographs also had a profound effect on the paintings of Cadmus and French. The figures in Cadmus's The Shower (1943) (Fig. 22) emanate an air of sensuality which W.H. Auden referred to as typical of the "casual decadence which existed on Pleasure (Fire) Island."[10] Jared French's Three Women and a Lifeguard (1938) (Fig. 23) presents a mysterious confrontation similar to the PAJAMA photographs. Themes of subtle eroticism and strange innuendo existing in both the paintings by Cadmus and French and photography by the PAJAMA group indicate a concern with the expressive power of ambiguous groups of figures.

Paintings by the Canadian artist, Alex Colville (1920-), from the 1940s and 1950s, exhibit the same sense of mystery as those of his American colleagues. Also, there

are remarkable stylistic similarities between some of Colville's beach paintings, such as Four Figures on a Wharf (1952) (Fig. 24) and the aforementioned works by Tooker, Cadmus, and French, which were inspired by the PAJAMA photographs. In Four Figures on A Wharf static poses and columnar forms in classical drapery indicate a sense of timelessness. Detachment or isolation in figures drawn with technical precision reflects Colville's preoccupation with existence beyond the superficial occurances in life. The stylistic connection between Colville's work and that of his American colleagues from approximately the same time is more than just coincidental; in the early 1950s, Colville joined the Edwin Hewitt and Robert Isaacson galleries in New York, at a time when Tooker, Cadmus, French, and Andrew Wyeth were all exhibiting together as Magic Realists.[11] Furthermore, Colville lists Edward Hopper, Ben Shahn, archaic Greek sculpture, and Piero della Francesca as important influences on his work,[12] all of which were also influential on Tooker, Cadmus, and French. Colville once stated that "there are two qualities essential to an artist - humility and mystery."[13] His philosophical approach is similar, therefore, to that of his American colleagues. Hence, although the term Magic Realism is not accurate, perhaps we may conclude that Alex Colville's work from the 1940s and 1950s (and beyond) makes him a viable representative of a Canadian contingency of that movement.

An examination of one painting by Paul Cadmus, entitled Fantasia on a Theme by Dr. S. (1946) (Fig. 25), reveals an important aspect of life on Fire Island in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. According to Cadmus, the painting "springs from a purely erotic fascination with certain sexual mores."[14] Its openness is almost as remarkable now as it was then because of the sensitive nature of its subject matter, which boldly deals with the theme of homosexuality. In an interview with Jeffrey Wechsler, on August 14, 1981, Glenway Wescott described the vacationers of the earlier years as artist or writer types, who might wish to bathe in the nude, or be (by the residents' standards) too rowdy or of inappropriate sexual preference.[15] Cadmus's depiction of these vacationers was based on the psychoanalytical interpretation of man as defined by the Harvard anthropologist, psychologist, and sex researcher, Dr. William H. Sheldon.

Dr. Sheldon made his claim to fame in 1942 when he published an exhaustive dissertation on the classification of human beings according to body structures, entitled Varieties of Human Temperament, in which he explored the relative balance of organic, genetic, and physical elements in men and women.[16] In Cadmus's painting, five homosexuals (three male and two female figures) illustrate Sheldon's three main body types, which relate fat, muscle, and mind to his terms viscerotonic, somatotonic, and cerebrotonic,

respectively. As can be expected, Cadmus's satire accounts for the figures' grossly overstated physical proportions and the exhaustive attention to details, such as the "Just-a-mere Camp" weathervane in the painting's upper left corner. Although Cadmus presents the viewer with a rather harsh and blatantly exaggerated view of life on Fire Island in the 1940s, the underlying sense of complacency which the figures express with regard to both their sexuality and their environment was most likely in accordance with the artist's personal reaction to the Island.[17] Fire Island was, therefore, by its relative isolation, a haven which allowed PAJAMA to flourish relatively undaunted by society's disapproval of the participants' unconventional sexual practices, however, the romantic notion of suggestion as a major element in PAJAMA philosophy probably sprang as much from an esoteric approach as it did from the necessity for subtlety. As Christopher Isherwood said, in The World in the Evening (1954):

> True High Camp always has an underlying seriousness ... you're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance . . Baroque art is largely camp about religion. The Ballet is camp about love.[18]

Susan Sontag also acknowledged the value of camp as a variant of sophistication, something of a private code or a badge of identity among small urban cliques[19] such as Tooker's.

The Literary Connections with Tooker's Visual Imagery

A great number of authors and poets, including Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden and others, visited Cadmus and the Frenches on Fire Island because the location offered sanctuary for their relatively small but diverse group. At the same time, in the Bohemian areas of both London and New York, artists, writers, and poets embraced Existentialism; Sartre and Camus became the hot new topic of conversation. Through Existentialism, artists expressed a renewed interest in illustrating the plight of modern man as the result of too much intellectual and emotional double talk. George Orwell's 1984 (1948) and Auden's The Age of Anxiety (1948) were produced in accordance with Sartre's image of "nausea" as a common illness of modern urban dwellers, whose disillusionment with their environment surpassed their hopes Thomas Mann accurately pinpointed a similar concept of man lost in cultural and spiritual isolation in 1912, when he wrote, in Death in Venice:

> A solitary, unused to speaking of what he sees and feels, has mental expressions which are at once more intense and less articulate than those of a gregarious man ... Solitude gives birth to the original in us, to beauty unfamiliar and perilous - to poetry.[20]

Mann based this idea upon the theories of Nietzsche, who was a forerunner of Existentialism because he "loathed smugness, complacency, and mass mediocrity, and the silent little man of resentment who is multiplying throughout the modern world."[21] Furthermore, the same concept may be

traced even farther back to Byron, who once wrote:

> At last men came to set me free;
> I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where;
> It was at length the same to me,
> Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
> I learn'd to love despair.[22]

Sartre's No Exit, from 1944, retells the same tale of engulfing isolation as the consequence of the search for freedom, regardless of price.

In their book Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960, Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler acknowledged the impact of Existential literature on Tooker, including its methods of communication,[23] and devised a list of key themes which conformed with his interest in exposing the desperation of man in a fundamentally corrupt environment. Although their hypothesis is correct, their presumption that Tooker worked from a strictly defined set of principles is not entirely true.

When Tooker himself once stated that "painting is a very isolated occupation"[24] he declared an existential view of man not unlike Kafka, whose popularity among American intellectuals was awakened in 1947 when William Barrett and James Burnnam wrote articles about his work in the Partisan Review.[25] In general, the similarities between Tooker's paintings and Kafka's writings may be explained as the result of a shared interest in expressing a kind of "nightmare logic."[26] Also, Tooker himself noted that he was

influenced by Kafka,[27] whose images of cold, mysterious subterranean landscapes populated by creatures who exist in a state of limbo, unaware of the potentials of life with positive emotion, are not unlike the creatures in Tooker's Sleepers II (1957) (Fig. 26).

Among the extensive list of authors and poets whom Tooker notes as influential, Robert Graves appears to have predominated while the artist was still a young man.[28] He was particularly inspired by Graves's The White Goddess (1949),[29] which proposes the existence of a female goddess who controls human destiny regardless of repeated attempts to overthrow her power. Graves traced her history through cross-cultural references to poetry based on love, romance, and passion, and examined her manifestations as numerous mythological characters. In 1955, Tooker painted The Artist's Daughter (Fig 27) as a tribute to the muse, whom he portrays as a young girl with the combined characteristics of a Greek Kore figure and an owl, according to Garver, the kore refers to the time in ancient Greece when the oracles (who were women) made predictions; and the owl indicates that she is a "wise but elusive" creature [30] Since the owl is also a symbol of Athena, Tooker's figure is a many layered symbolic reference to Graves's goddess from the classical Greek period.

As the years passed, Tooker's involvement with Graves's ideas waned and he developed an interest in another

theological concept. He had been raised as an Episcopalian; however, events which occurred later in Tooker's life prompted reassessment of his personal theological views. In late 1973, his lifelong companion, William Christopher, died in Spain and Tooker embraced Catholicism with a passionate fervour to match his anguish. Consequently, his most recent paintings[31] exhibit a profound sense of spirituality and intuition, based on the consolidation of his emotional energy and his creative power.

Tooker found other authors and poets such as Matthew Arnold, W.H. Auden, D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, and James Joyce inspirational to his work.[32] Sleepers I (1951) (Fig. 28) is a visual interpretation of Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach", as well as a memorial piece for his father, who died in 1950.[33] Cornice (1949) (Fig. 29) is based on Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest."[34] Auden's character, which stands "swaying out on the ultimate/wind-whipped cornice that overhangs the unabiding void,"[35] was precisely the type of man, faced with indecision, that Tooker said he wished to portray,[36] perhaps as an auto-biographical statement about the social restrictions placed upon the artist by his homosexuality.

Cadmus also derived inspiration from Auden and Forster, who were both close personal friends of the painter. Little is known about French's literary

connections. Perhaps it would be safe to assume that he found the work of his colleagues' favourite writers equally stimulating.

Lincoln Kirstein as Patron: The Impact of the Ballet

Tooker, Cadmus, and French periodically looked beyond artistic and literary inspiration to involvement with the ballet. Cadmus was the first to become acquainted with the dance when he met his future brother-in-law, Lincoln Kirstein, in 1937.[37] Kirstein was at the time one of the organizers of the Ballet Caravan,[38] the company which eventually became the prestigious New York City Ballet. Apart from the fact that the ballet offered diverse cultural stimulation for the painters, the newly acquired friendship with Kirstein proved to be invaluable to Tooker, Cadmus, and French because it was he who became their most important patron, and provided them with access to the inner circles of bohemia in New York.

Cadmus was immediately taken with the similarities between dance and his interest in the human figure, and he attended numerous classes at the School of American Ballet to sketch or watch the dramatic displays of movement to music.[39] Kirstein said that, in art as well as in the ballet, "the classic style, supported by its academic technique, depends upon rigid criteria and severe discipline for even a modest executant efficiency;"[40] Cadmus seems to have shared Kirstein's ideas on the subject. Less than one

year after their first meeting, Cadmus was asked to design the costumes and sets for a Ballet Caravan production, entitled "The Filling Station."[41] The musical score was written by Virgil Thompson, and the choreography was by Lew Christensen. It was the first Caravan ballet produced under the direction of Kirstein, who opened the performance in Hartford, Connecticut, in November, 1937; sixteen years later it was recreated by the dancer Jacques d'Amboise for the New York City Ballet.

The ballet's plot was based on the everyday occurrences of the life of a mechanic as he meets with an assortment of people who stop throughout the day at his station for gas. An excerpt from the production's libretto reads as follows

> The hum and swell of cars and trucks in their ceaseless flow along our highways provide the undertones for a drama which occurs in the routine of a mechanic's life; a violent and exciting day, but no more unreal than those experienced by millions of other motorists or mechanics.[42]

Although this description suggests seriousness, Cadmus's arbitrary costumes were very different from what the audience must have expected. Una E. Johnson described the costumes as expressive of "a contemporary Hogarthian derisiveness of spirit and accented human weakness and folly."[43] Kirstein, in his book, Ballet Bias and Belief, describes the costumes of the truck drivers, Roy and Ray, as "Zip front jackets of velvet, silk lastex, and cellophane

with stencilled handprints in grease and oil on the trousers, and a lilac in Roy's cap."[44] Cadmus most likely chose cellophane for its translucency in order to display the movements and musculature of the dancers as clearly as possible, which, as a conspicuous parade of eroticism, was as important to Cadmus in the theatre as it was on canvas.

In 1939, Kirstein again approached Cadmus with a commission, but this time the artist was asked to illustrate a book which would describe both verbally and visually the fundamental positions and steps of classical dance. Cadmus accepted and the Ballet Alphabet (Fig. 30) was printed that year as a result of private funding by Mr. and Mrs. Martin Kamin.[45] Cadmus's drawings (Fig. 31), which were based upon photos of the Ballet Caravan dancer, Michael Kidd,[46] are remarkably simple, yet indicate that Cadmus relied heavily upon the academic tradition of anatomical accuracy.

Just as Cadmus's costumes and drawings from the dance expressed his artistic intentions, so too did the clothes designed by Jared French for the 1938 Ballet Caravan production of "Billy the Kid."[47] The musical score was written by Aaron Copland, the libretto was by Kirstein himself, and the direction was supervised by Eugene Loring. Not long after its opening night performance on October 16, 1938, in Chicago, Illinois, its overwhelming popularity made it the most durable of all the Ballet Caravan productions.[48] Regardless of the ballet's success, however, the fact that

French's costumes were appropriately "Western" indicates that he was less daring than Cadmus in his designs.

Tooker was also given the opportunity to produce works for the theatre when, in 1954, Kirstein asked him to create sets for an opera by Gian Carlo Menotti, entitled "Bleecker Street". According to Thomas Garver, Menotti saw Tooker's Festa (1948) (Fig. 32) while visiting Kirstein at his home, and insisted on hiring him to create the sets because Tooker's figures were so full of "the spirit that he was attempting to achieve in the opera."[49] Tooker produced four individual designs based on locations in an alleyway, a restaurant, a cold water flat, and the subway, in the predominantly Italian district in and around Bleecker Street.[50] Unfortunately, when the opera opened at a Broadway theatre in New York in December, 1954, Tooker was not credited for his work on the sets because he was not a member of the Scenic Artists' Union.[51] Shortly before opening night, he crammed for an exam to allow him membership; however, the emphasis on technicalities and terminology was much too involved for a last minute attempt and Tooker failed miserably.[52]

Surrealism in Europe and America

Along with Tooker, Cadmus and French became interested in other artistic movements beyond the relative confines of the modern American idiom. From the turn of the century on, waves of Europeans came to the United States

brandishing manifestos which proclaimed exciting new ideas about the directions of modern art. Among the groups, the Surrealists appeared to have almost immediately placed themselves at the top of the "expatriates in America" ladder. Thus, with the advent of World War II, Andre Breton, Salvador Dali, Yves Tanguy, Kurt Seligmann, Max Ernst and other personalities arrived in droves and demanded attention, which they received with enthusiasm from both the public and the critics until the mid 1940s, when the Americans began to develop their own Abstract Expressionist style. Robert Motherwell's negative reaction to the paintings of Max Ernst was typical by the late 1940s; he said:

> [Ernst's] art depends upon a sense of the vicious past. To the American mind nothing could be more alien ... consciously abandoning the past is the essentially American creative act.[53]

Thus, the development of a polarization between the provincialists and the European expatriates marked the period around the mid twentieth century.

As art history began to acknowledge such a rift, Tooker, Cadmus and French were automatically categorized as Surrealists because of their combination of pictorial realism with extraordinary scenes. For example, Joseph T. Butler's article, entitled "The Surrealism of George Tooker," makes no attempt to define Tooker's work according to any other theoretical tenet. Yet, as Jeffrey Wechsler so

succinctly points out, in his article, "Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite", in the Winter 1985 issue of Art Journal,

> Magic realism does not invent a new order of things (such as, the hybrid monsters of Salvador Dali), it simply reorders reality to make it seem alien. Magic realism is an art of the implausible, not the impossible; it is imaginative, not imaginary.[55]

Hence, although Magic Realism and Surrealism both fit into Wechsler's categorical term, "Imaginative Realism,"[56] they become distinct from each other when events depicted become implausible.

Tooker himself distinguished between his paintings and the work of the Surrealists when he stated. "I am after painting reality impressed on the mind so hard that it recurs as a dream, but I am not after painting dreams as such, or fantasy."[57] Numerous prominent scholars have drawn a distinction between Surrealism and Magic Realism; for example, Patricia Hills noted that French Surrealism focused on inner anxieties based on sexual frustration, while in the United States, emphasis was placed on the violence inherent in modern social institutions.[58] Franz Roh stated that "while magic realism turned daily life into eerie form, Surrealism, which developed only a few years later, set out to smash our existing world completely."[59] Roh's remark about the chronological development of Magic Realism as it relates to Surrealism is crucial and should be discussed in greater detail.

It is a well known fact that the Surrealist movement was initiated by André Breton in Paris, in 1924. In his first manifesto, Breton professed: "I believe that the apparent antagonism between dream and reality will be resolved in a kind of absolute reality - in Surreality."[60] His ideas aroused wild enthusiasm among artists and critics alike. Surrealism was an instant success in France. However, Magic Realism, on the other hand, was only tentatively accepted in Germany at approximately the same time, the imminent success of the National Socialist party was clear even in the early 1920s, when George Grosz and other members of the not yet established Magic Realist movement spoke out against Nazi politics. Furthermore, although reproductions of paintings discussed in Franz Roh's 1925 publication, Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus: Probleme der Europaishen Malerei, predate Breton's Surrealist Manifesto,[61] the overwhelming popularity of the French movement caused the development of misconceptions about its precedence in relation to Magic Realism.

To further complicate things, a number of American painters, working at the same time as Tooker and his close associates, dealt with themes and ideas that are neither Surrealist nor Magic Realist, yet belong somewhere in between. Among them, perhaps the paintings of Peter Blume (born 1906) could be considered the most closely linked to the Surrealist technique.[62] His sharp edged, almost

Precisionist work conveys the same sense of the ominous that characterizes the paintings of Magritte. However, Blume's themes probe with a spiritual consciousness, based on a passionate interest in humanity (as with Tooker's) which is lacking in the work of his European colleague.

Less closely connected to the Surrealist mode, the paintings of Henry Koerner and Robert Vickrey deserve mention. Koerner's use of Flemish or medieval formulas to indicate pictorial depth parallels Tooker's interest in similar methods,[63] and Vickrey's preoccupation with recurring images of nuns, walls, and posters echoes Tooker's similar use of the disturbing effect of repetition in figures and motifs.[64] As well as the technical similarities, Koerner, Vickrey, and Tooker all exhibit a passionate interest in the human condition.

According to Lloyd Goodrich, other American painters, including Charles Burchfield, Ivan Albright, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Edwin Dickinson, were already involved in a spontaneous native manifestation of the trend towards free imagery or pictures without convention before the arrival of the Surrealists in the late 1930s.[65] The presence of artists such as Burchfield and others indicates an independent development in the exploration of themes dealing with the irrational. Perhaps we may conclude that Tooker's work is as much a product of an internal movement as it is the result of influences from abroad.

Pittura Metafisica and Neue Sachlichkeit

In order to understand Tooker's affiliation with German Magic Realism it would be beneficial to look back to the contributions of Giorgio De Chirico (1888-1978) and his Pittura Metafisica and to the artists of the Magic Realist movement, such as Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, Christian Schad, and others, prior to its formation in 1925. De Chirico's work exhibits a sense of foreboding and apprehension which suggests that the superficial appearance of the exterior world conceals a different, deeper reality.[66] The visual results of De Chirico's synthesis, therefore, consist of disturbing images of figures and objects in ominous urban landscapes reminiscent of Italian Renaissance piazzas and gardens, where the soulless characters stand in a state that Jung commonly refers to as a "manichino", a puppet without a face and a consciousness.[67] De Chirico illustrated his ideas in a manner based on the revival of traditional artistic techniques, particularly from the period of Giotto to the time of Piero della Francesca. Although the German Magic Realists relied less than De Chirico upon the assimilation of traditional stylistic methods, their interest in the state of man as defined by both his material and metaphysical surroundings was equally intense

The impetus for the formation of Magic Realism was, as can be expected, provided by a series of momentous

political, economic, and cultural events which occurred in Germany from the turn of the century to the early 1920s. At the end of the First World War, Emperor Wilhelm II abdicated from the throne and Germany was proclaimed a Republic with its constitution adopted at Weimar on November 9, 1918. By 1919, the country was politically divided between a strong left, as represented by the Communists and the Spartacists, and an equally powerful right, as indicated by the Reactionaries and the Royalists. In the arts, the utopian ideas of Walter Gropius and other members of the newly formed Bauhaus proclaimed a new search for order, while the Dadaists cried out in disillusionment, and the German Expressionists quietly faded into historical oblivion. In 1923, the conservative government ordered the depreciation of the German mark as a method to boost the economy; the result was disastrous and the country experienced the consequences of extreme inflation. In the same year, Gustav F. Hartlaub (1884-1963), who was the director of the Mannheim Museum at the time, decided to organize an exhibit of works by artists who had withdrawn from the experimentation with abstraction and were producing realistic paintings with themes based on a reaction to contemporary political and economic conditions.[68]

In March of 1925 Hartlaub's idea was realized and an exhibition of "Neue Sachlichkeit" (New Objectivity) including works by Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz,

Christian Schad, and many others, was held in the Kunsthalle of the Mannheim Museum. The paintings revealed themes of social alienation, mental anguish, and sexual dilemmas, as indicative of a life in Germany in the 1920s where there was little hope for a bright future. Although these themes were not new to German art in 1925, the clinical emphasis on detail and close observation of visual reality represented a rejection of the wild distortions and gesticulations in paintings by artists involved with Die Brucke or Der Blaue Reiter.

Among the Neue Sachlichkeit painters, the work of Otto Dix was most influential on George Tooker, who first became interested in Dix's paintings when he saw Dr. Mayer - Hermann (1926) (Fig. 33) at the Museum of Modern Art, in the early 1950s[69]. The connection between the two was less philosophical than it was technical, since both Dix and Tooker used traditional techniques in order to express concerns which differed according to the relative despondency of their respective cultures. Furthermore, although Dix had communist affiliations,[70] Tooker remained something of a polo playing socialist throughout his life.

Since Dix often looked back to the masters for his technical inspiration,[71] a connection may be drawn to Tooker, who saw the same potential in learning from the academic past. As we have seen, Tooker was inspired by the works exhibited in the Fogg Art Museum, at Harvard, as well

as by those paintings by masters of the Italian Renaissance and Proto-Renaissance which he saw while travelling through Europe in the 1940s and 1950s.[72]

Although Dix and other members of the Neue Sachlichkeit were politically active,[73] no one representative acted as a spokesman for the movement[74] and no manifestos were issued. The group dissolved under the onslaught of Nazi power, in 1933, and many members fled to America. The fact that the movement existed in Cologne, Munich, Hannover, Berlin, and Dresden, instead of in one "artistic metropolis"[75] contributed to its relative lack of unity.

German National Socialist Painting

Shortly after Hitler became chancellor of Germany, a new style of art was established which was based on a similar concept used by the Soviets for their Socialist Realism of the 1920s. The function of the style was intentionally didactic, with emphasis on the prominence of a well established German national identity, and the aesthetic results were what may be best described as pure kitsch. Furthermore, in reaction to the established avant-garde mode, hundreds of paintings by contemporary European artists, including works by Dix[76] and other members of the Neue Sachlichkeit, were confiscated by the Nazi government and in 1937 most of the paintings and sculptures were shown at a "Degenerate Art" exhibition, in Munich. Two years

later, over 4,000 (1,004 oils and sculptures and 3,825 watercolours)[77] were burned in the courtyard of the Berlin Central Fire Department in a dramatic attempt to alter the tastes of millions; Van Gogh, Kirchner, and Picasso were "out", and Adolf Ziegler, Udo Wendel, and Carl Schwalbach were "in".

Among the prominent painters of the Nazi era, Adolf Ziegler was the most influential and perhaps the most dangerous to the condition of modern art. In 1933, he sprang from relative obscurity to a position of renown as the "master of the German pubic hair"[78] because of his overt interest in painting semi-pornographic nudes disguised as heroic figures. By 1936, he was elected to the position of president in the newly formed Reich Chamber of Visual Arts. According to Berthold Hinz, in his book Art in the Third Reich, Ziegler and four other appointed committee members confiscated works of art for the Munich Degenerate Art exhibition in a most unconventional manner; no inventories were kept and many valuable objects were plundered for personal gain.[79] Zeigler procured a number of modern masterpieces for himself even though he openly condemned the work of Dix, Beckmann, Kollwitz, and many other contemporary German artists.

Ziegler's Judgement of Paris (Fig. 34), from the late 1930s,[80] is strikingly similar to both Tooker's and Jared French's Fire Island period paintings, most likely because

all three artists drew inspiration from the past. The Americans' paintings were probably based on the same traditional themes, the same formality, compositional symmetry, and elements such as a low horizon line in, for example, French's Three Women and A Lifeguard (Fig. 23) which is strikingly similar to Ziegler's work. Furthermore, the facial expression of Ziegler's "Paris" is almost akin to an archaic Greek smile, a motif which (as previously mentioned) French used with great frequency. Nevertheless, the difference in Zieqler's work and that of French (and Tooker) lay in intent; the former was expressing a dogmatic political ideology while the latter was simply depicting a traditional theme disguised in modern garb. Hence, we must consider content rather than form as the element which serves to separate kitsch from genuinely good art.

The paintings of two other National Socialist artists may be used as further examples to illustrate the problems that arise when works that are stylistically similar but theoretically opposed are compared. The figures in Carl Schwalbach's The Wise and Foolish Virgins (circa 1939) (Fig. 35) are strongly reminiscent of the vanitas character in Tooker's Mirror I (Fig. 15) (in particular, the woman in the far left corner of Schwalbach's composition). Since both paintings deal with the theme of vanity, again the intent of the artist must be defined. Schwalbach's work was allegorical in order to stress the government's alleged

roots in what Hinz refers to as a primal and essential substance, which served to camouflage the irrational nature of that government.[81] Tooker, however, drew his inspiration from the past to expose the persistence of an ethical dilemma, man's inability to accept mortality.

The starkly realistic figures in Udo Wendel's The Art Magazine (circa 1938) (Fig. 36) bring to mind characters such as Dix's Dr. Mayer - Hermann (Fig. 33). Both scenes could be referred to as genre, and both are equally disturbing; the family in Wendel's scene oozes Fascist complacency, and Dix's surgeon suggests unspeakable atrocities. Even so, the intents of the two works were fundamentally opposed; Wendel chose to elevate the self-image of the German people,[82] while Dix used Dr. Mayer-Hermann as a symbol of the frightening and alienating aspects of modern medicine. Thus, Robert Hughes's notion that the avant-garde, as a product of radical political thinking, is designed to propagate social subversion and reconstruction,[83] allows little discrimination between National Socialist and Neue Sachlichkeit art, is too vaguely applicable, and must, therefore, be dismissed as an invalid hypothesis.

Although the stylistic similarities and the social circumstances existing between the two movements are comparable, it is the sincerity behind the expression which distinguishes between them. Nazi art was inherently

deceptive, while Neue Sachlichkeit was essentially revealing. As we shall see,[84] the concept of the avant-garde is characteristically fragile and ambiguous, and constantly threatened by opposing forces;[85] therefore, its theoretical substance is as indefinite as any other conjecture on the nature of modern art.

To return briefly to Tooker, since both he and his colleagues, as well as many twentieth century European artists, looked back to the Renaissance for stylistic and thematic inspiration, a more detailed analysis of this effect on Tooker would be in order. Thus, as we shall see, in Chapter Three, it is those tenets drawn from the Renaissance which provide Tooker with the stamina to exist as a constant throughout his career.

Footnotes

[1]Lincoln Kirstein, Paul Cadmus (New York, 1984), 61.

[2]Ibid., 63.

[3]P. Morrin, "Pajama Game The Photography Collection of Paul Cadmus," Arts Magazine, Vol. 53, December 1978, 119.

[4]George Platt Lynes was trained in Paris under Baron Gayne de Mayer and Man Ray and produced his most important work in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s.

[5]Monroe Wheeler was the author and editor of many Museum of Modern Art publications. Information about the list of participants is from Morrin, 119.

[6]Glenway Wescott is the author of The Apple of the Eye, Goodbye, Wisconsin, The Pilgrim Hawk, and others. Platt Lynes, Wheeler, and Wescott appear in a rare group portrait, by Paul Cadmus (Cadmus has painted very few commissioned portraits), entitled Conversation Piece, 1940, which illustrates the three men in front of their communally owned home, "Stone Blossom," in Clinton, New Jersey. Information obtained from Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 71.

[7]As quoted by Paul Cadmus in Kirstein's Paul Cadmus, 63.

[8]According to Morrin, the group existed from approximately 1937 to 1950 which was, therefore, long enough to evolve and express a distinct group style (119).

[9]Tooker, in conversation, November 14, 1985.

[10]As quoted in Kirstein's Paul Cadmus, 63.

[11]Tooker, in conversation, November 14, 1985.

[12]David Burnett, Colville (Toronto, 1983), 112.

[13]As quoted in Helen J. Dow's The Art of Alex Colville (Toronto, 1972), 99.

[14]As quoted in J.I.H. Baur and Lloyd Goodrich's American Art of the Twentieth Century (London, 1962), 139.

[15]As quoted in Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, Realism and Realities The Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960 (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), 179.

[16]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 63.

[17]Both Cadmus and Tooker have frequently acknowledged their homosexuality. Jared French's marriage to Margaret Hoening in 1937 appears to have saved him from such a commitment. I believe that homoerotic elements present in Cadmus's Jerry, 1931, which illustrates the young man lying nude on a bed, with a copy of James Joyce's Ulysses in hand, signify that Cadmus and French were quite possibly lovers during their travels throughout Europe in the early 1930s. (Jerry was painted in Mallorca, Spain).

[18]As quoted in Morrin, 119.

[19]Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (New York, 1966), 275. Sontag's discussion of the meaning of the term "camp" is the focus of her essay, "Notes on 'Camp'" which appears in its entirety in the aforementioned publication.

[20]As quoted in Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973 (San Francisco, 1974), n.p.

[21]Houston Peterson, ed., Essays in Philosophy (New York, 1959), 215.

[22]Byron, Complete Poetical Works, edited by P.E. Murray (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), 406. This stanza is an excerpt from Byron's fable, "The Prisoner of Chillon."

[23]Berman and Wechsler, 89.

[24]As quoted in Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, n.p.

[25]Dore Ashton, The New York School A Cultural Reckoning (New York, 1973), 178.

[26]As quoted by Joyce Carol Oates in the introduction to Franz Kafka's The Complete Stories and Parables (New York, 1983), x.

[27]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Garver, George Tooker (New York, 1985), 89.

[31]Many of Tooker's works from the mid 1970s on are obviously and profoundly spiritual. A number of these paintings will be discussed in later chapters

[32]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[33]Ibid. Also noted in Garver, George Tooker, 86. The second stanza from Arnold's poem which inspired Sleepers I reads as follows:

> Only from the long line of spray
> Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd sand,
> Listen! you hear the grating roar
> Of pebbles which the Waves draw back, and fling,
> At their return, up the high strand,
> Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in.
>
> From "Dover Beach," Poetical Works (London, 1969), 211.

[34]Ibid. Also noted in Garver, George Tooker, 29. Auden's clever monologue by Caliban, Prospero's slave, was the inspiration for Cornice. An excerpt from his long epilogue reads as follows:

> Yet, at this very moment when we do at last see ourselves as we are, neither cozy nor playful, but swaying out on the ultimate wind-whipped cornice that overhangs the unabiding void - we have never stood anywhere else - when our reasons are silenced in the heavy huge derision - There is nothing to say
>
> W.H. Auden, "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest," Selected Poems (New York, 1979), 173.

[35]Auden, Selected Poems, 173.

[36]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[37]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 7.

[38]The Ballet Caravan was imported to the United States from the European Continent, with George Balanchine, who was the ballet master of Sergei Diaghilev's Paris company until 1932. Balanchine formed the Ballet Russe in Monte Carlo during the same year, but in 1933 he moved to New York, where he eventually met Kirstein.

[39]Ralph Pomeroy, "Paul Cadmus Continues," After Dark, Vol. not cited, December 1970, 35.

[40]As quoted in Hilton Brown's "Looking at Paintings," American Artist, Vol. 46, January 1982, 42.

[41]Una E. Johnson, Paul Cadmus: Prints and Drawings 1922-1967 (New York, 1968), 10.

[42]Ibid., 11.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Lincoln Kirstein, Ballet Bias and Belief (New York, 1983), 263

[45]Ibid., 154. Mr. and Mrs. Martin Kamin were wealthy patrons of the dance who owned a bookshop in New York devoted solely to literature about ballet.

[46]Ibid., 155.

[47]Ibid., 69.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Garver, George Tooker, 128.

[50]Tooker had actually lived on Bleecker Street, in New York, just prior to this commission He had witnessed the festivities occurring in and around our Lady of Pompeii Church, after which the structure in Festa is modelled. Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[51]Ibid. Although Tooker did not receive proper recognition for his work on the sets, friends and those who knew his distinct style were highly supportive of his effort, regardless of the union restrictions.

[52]Ibid.

[53]As quoted in Sam Hunter's American Art of the Twentieth Century (New York, n.d.), 146

[54]Joseph T. Butler, "The Surrealism of George Tooker," Connoisseur, Vol. 187, October 1974, 135.

[55]Jeffrey Wechsler, "Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite," Art Journal, Vol. 45, Winter 1985, 293.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Seldon Rodman, Conversations with Artists (New York, 1961), 210

[58]Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, The figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1980), 87.

[59]As quoted from page 84 of Franz Roh's German Painting in the Twentieth Century in Seymour Menton's Magic Realism Rediscovered (Philadelphia, 1983), 42

[60]As quoted as a direct translation from Breton's Surrealist Manifesto in William Rubin's Dada and Surrealism (London, 1978), 121.

[61]Wechsler, 296

[62]Just like Tooker, Cadmus, and French, Peter Blume used Renaissance techniques for his meticulously detailed compositions. He was born in Russia in 1906, where he lived for a few years before immigrating to the United States with his family, in 1911. Blume studied art at the Educational Alliance, the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, and at the Art Students League, in New York. After he finished his schooling, he devoted his time to independent studies, and since he was not very prolific he produced a minimal quantity of paintings of often bizarre content with moralizing themes. Blume's The Rock, 1948, which is owned by The Art Institute of Chicago, (illustrated on page 57, Berman and Wechsler), is an excellent example of Blume's interest in the cyclical nature of existence, a preoccupation which he "can't get away from." Berman and Wechsler, 56.

[63]The influence of Renaissance techniques on Tooker will be discussed further in Chapter Three, section two. Henry Koerner's Lebenspiegel (Mirror of Life), also called Vanity Fair, 1946, which is owned by the Whitney Museum of American Art (illustrated on page 68, Berman and Wechsler), is a good example of the artist's use of Flemish formulas of perspective, as well as his use of allegory as a tool of social comment.

[64]Robert Vickrey's Fear, 1954, which is part of the Sara Roby Foundation collection (illustrated on page 80, Berman and Wechsler), illustrates an angst-ridden nun fleeing from the viewer toward some sort of barrier. Her plight is similar to that of the central figure in Tooker's The Subway (see Fig. 17).

[65]John I.H. Baur and Lloyd Goodrich, American Art of the Twentieth Century (London, 1962), 104.

[66]Alan Bowness, Modern European Art (London, 1972), 150.

[67]Carl G. Jung, Man and his Symbols (London, 1964), 257.

[68]Peter Gay, Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider (New York, 1970), 122.

[69]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[70]Gay, 107.

[71]John Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period The New Sobriety 1917-1933 (New York, 1978), 115.

[72]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[73]Dix, Grosz, and Kathe Kollwitz were all members of the Assoziation Revolutionarer Bildender Kunstler Deutschlands (The Association of Revolutionary German Artists).

[74]Menton, 30.

[75]Ibid.

[76]The Nazis confiscated 260 of Dix's works. Berthold Hinz, Art in the Third Reich (New York, 1979), 39.

[77]Ibid., 43.

[78]Ibid., 38.

[79]Ibid., 39.

[80]The exact date for Ziegler's painting is not cited in Hinz's book, therefore, the late 1930s is a hypothesis.

[81]Hinz, 160.

[82]Ibid., 79.

[83]Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change (London, 1980), 371.

[84]Chapter Five will deal with the nature of the American avant-garde in the 1940s and 1950s in detail.

[85]Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art (Chicago, 1983), 3.

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCES FROM THE PAST: RENAISSANCE AND FLEMISH PAINTING

The Technical Application of Painting with Egg Tempera

Since Tooker believes that the past provides invaluable information about the future,[1] the link between the artist and the Renaissance, in both theory and practice, is provided by a study of history.

According to Thomas Garver, "there is little to be gained by the search for the historic references in Tooker's paintings."[2] As we shall see, this statement is incorrect because it ignores the fact that a deeper meaning lies beyond the historical references. As Jung said, "no matter how much we are of today, there has been a yesterday, which was just as real, just as human and warm as the moment we call now."[3] Tooker and his colleagues were influenced by Renaissance Humanism in their common interest in mankind. Tooker was also interested in the technical achievements of Renaissance painters, such as Giotto di Bondone, Piero della Francesca, Mantegna, Bronzino, and many others.[4]

Sometime in the late 13th century, the Florentine artist, Giotto (circa 1266-1337), made use of a method of painting based on the combination of "an emulsion of aqueous and oleaginous materials in the presence of a catalyst,"[5] which in contemporary terms is known as egg tempera and

consists of a mixture of water, pigment, and egg yolk. Giotto then passed on his knowledge of the technique to his foster son, Taddeo Gaddi,[6] who, in turn, taught his son Agnolo Gaddi. In the 14th century Agnolo showed the method to his pupil, Cennino D'andrea Cennini, who carefully chronicled its teachings in Da Colle di Val D'elsa. Cennini's original manuscript is no longer extant, and a precise date for its compilation is unknown, however, it is hypothesized that the original version of the document was produced sometime between 1396 and 1437 AD, with July 31, 1437 being a date favoured by the late historian, Daniel V. Thompson.[7] Two copies of the now lost original, which are both in Florence,[8] were used by Thompson in the 1920s and 1930s as a basis for an accurate translation of the method into a comprehensive modern dissertation.

In 1932, Thompson published a two volume series, entitled IL Libro dell 'Arte, The Craftsman's Handbook, in which he included both a translation and a complete version of the original document, as well as a brief introduction which expounded upon the merits of the technique. Four years later, he defined the method of egg tempera painting from a more personal viewpoint in The Practice of Tempera Painting, remarking that "if he [the artist] has a well-defined pictorial idea, he may do well with it",[9] and that the medium requires either the rejection of the naturalistic ideal or a critical approach to naturalism[10]

because it is such an exacting technique. In 1956, Thompson published The Materials and Technique of Medieval Painting, with a foreward by Bernard Berenson, as the last of his treatises on the subject.

As a young man, Thompson studied at the Courtauld under W.G. Constable, with Max Doerner in Munich, and with Edward Waldo Forbes[11] while at Harvard.[12] Thompson was particularly influenced by the teachings of Forbes, who instructed Lincoln Kirstein a number of years later, and cited Forbes as the main source of inspiration for his research into Cennini's manuscript.[13] Meanwhile, beyond the walls of yet another ivy league establishment, similar measures were being taken to reinstate the use of egg tempera as a medium. At Yale University, Lewis E. York expounded upon the same theories of the applicability of egg tempera as he instilled in his students a sense of dedication to the ideas of the past. Among York's students, Alfonso Ossorio was notable because it was he who introduced Cadmus and French to the technique in 1940.[14]

Before 1935, Cadmus used oils in harsh, acid tones, but from 1935 to 1940, he worked primarily with an emulsion of varnish, egg, oil, and water, known as "mixed technique."[15] His change to an emulsion of egg, pigment, and water in 1940 reflects his refinement of a more complicated process. While Cadmus appears to have approached the idea of using egg tempera as a medium with

caution, French embraced the concept wholeheartedly and immediately immersed himself in the writings of Thompson.[16] French referred Cadmus to Thompson's Craftsman's Handbook, and three years later, in 1943, when the young George Tooker came to their studio for private tutelage, he was struck with the enthusiasm of both men, who were by then equally proficient with the method.[17] From that time to the present day, Tooker has worked exclusively with egg tempera on gessoed pressed-wood boards, with the exception of only one painting.[18]

For Tooker, Cadmus, and French, it appears that their dedication to the use of egg tempera as a preferred medium was based as much upon its technical benefits as it was upon its philosophical application, since the process requires a great deal of discipline and forethought and must, therefore, be approached with the dedication of a craftsman. Cadmus compared the brush strokes made by egg tempera to a beating heart, "with each stroke or beat being equally important yet almost invisible or unnoticeable."[19] He believed in the contemplative effect of the process. Tooker also admired the precise, delicate nature of the medium which he used as a means to set in order, to connect and to understand.[20]

Tooker's productivity is compatible with the requirements of egg tempera. By 1973, the fact that he had produced an average of only two paintings a year prompted

Thomas Garver to remark (in the same year) that "Tooker works with time in units of years or decades rather than in minutes."[21] Although each painting requires somewhere between one to three months of work to design and complete, the idea may take Tooker many years of thought before a specific image is realized. As much as he can, Tooker first looks without drawing,[22] and then produces hundreds of sketches on small cards in preparation for a final rough drawing, which when chosen is enlarged to the correct scale and transferred onto a prepared panel with a red iron oxide pigment used for tracing.[23] Although Tooker does not adhere to a precise system for the production of his compositions, it is clear that his use of lines and grids provides him with some measure of geometric clarity. Tooker's interest in a precise, geometric order is, therefore, similar to the Renaissance search for order in nature.

The Renaissance Masters: Their Influence on Tooker

Tooker was influenced especially by Renaissance art from the period of the 14th and 15th centuries in Florence, when, according to Roger Fry, man created intellectual art based on both observation and logic.[24] Although Tooker cites several inspirational sources from a variety of artistic mediums, the work of a few masters, such as Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Mantegna, Bronzino, and others, may be singled out as exemplary.[25] A number of years ago, Tooker stated:

> I think of painting in terms of carving, of bas-relief, a solid form supported from behind. Andrew Wyeth paints atmosphere but I work to cut it out, to compress space, to push it to the front (of the painting) as much as possible.[26]

He was indirectly referring to fifteenth century Italian relief sculptors, such as Agostino di Duccio, whose work Tooker saw in the Tempio Malaestiano, in Rimini, while travelling through Europe in the late 1940s.[27] The paintings of Tooker's window series (for example, Fig. 14, Window II) are particularly reminiscent of Agostino's use of compressed space, attention to symbolism, interest in the human figure, and compositional clarity.

Another important influence on Tooker are the paintings of Giotto, whose work during the fourteenth century marks a period of initial development towards the understanding of man as an element of nature rather than as an outside observer at a time when the preoccupation with science became an increasingly important part of people's lives. Since in Giotto's work the gestures of the hands are frequently explicit indications of a particular emotion,[28] it is clear that both he and Tooker share a common interest in defining emotion according to the subtleties of forms. Second, because Giotto saw life as a single, self-consistent, and systematic whole,[29] the concept of a collective unity of the spirit, the body, and the intellect was also important to Tooker. Hence, a comparison of a

detail from the master's Massacre of the Innocents (Fig. 37), from the Life of Christ frescoes in the Arena Chapel, in Padua, dating to about 1305, with Tooker's Men and Women Fighting (1958) (Fig. 38), reveals stylistic and philosophical similarities between the two works of art.[30]

These similarities are evident in the use of blocky, columnar figures in a compressed space, as well as in the emphasis on geometric symmetry and compositional order. Furthermore, since the facial features in Men and Women Fighting bear strong resemblance to those in the Massacre, it is evident that Tooker consciously used the same motifs to express emotions that Giotto had expressed six and a half centuries earlier.

Giotto and Tooker approached their subjects with the intention of commenting upon the folly of man, the antagonistic figures in both paintings exemplify the concept of commune cum brutis, or the subhuman state of man as equated with beasts.[31] Yet, in Giotto's fresco, King Herod's soldiers are the only tyrants and are met with pitiful cries of despair from the horrified mothers, while Tooker's women also exhibit bestial characteristics as they openly defy their assailants with taunting faces and bared breasts. Hence, although Tooker drew his inspiration from Giotto's Massacre,[32] his theme of conflict over the custody of children is allegorical, while Giotto's work is narrative. Tooker himself explained that he felt great

sympathy for children who are caught between parents in custody battles.[33] As such, Men and Women Fighting expresses yet another example of a modern-day dilemma.

While Giotto inspired Tooker to develop his own theories about the visual depiction of emotion, the paintings of Piero della Francesca (circa 1420-1492) prompted the young artist to develop an interest in formal structure.[34] Piero della Francesca was a superb mathematician and geometrician who, according to Vasari, used Euclidean theories to understand the geometric nature of the perfect curves drawn on a basis of regular bodies.[35] Piero's centralized, structured treatment of space, as seen in his Resurrection fresco (circa 1463) (Fig. 39), in which the central figures form a triangle, is comparable to that used by Tooker in his Coney Island (Fig. 4), which he described, in 1985, as an attempt to make a pyramid of people.[36] Piero also understood the nature of artificial light as generalized in terms of either an ideal night scene,[37] or by the use of slightly bleached colours. Tooker's Subway (Fig. 17) reflects the same methods applied to a contemporary situation because it too uses figures to construct geometric clarity and artificial light to express a specific emotion.

According to Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, the figures in Tooker's Sleepers I (Fig. 28) bear strong resemblance to those illustrated in the foreground of Andrea

Mantegna's (circa 1431-1506) The Agony in the Garden (circa 1460) (Fig. 40), as well as to Giovanni Bellini's version of the same theme.[38] Although it is clear that Mantegna's unusual use of perspective and foreshortening (which stemmed from Antonio Pollaiuolo's [1431-1498] experiments with anatomy) influenced Tooker, perhaps also the master's interest in the historic past[39] inspired Tooker to explain his stylistic sources with a quote by Thomas Aquinas, who stated that "art comes from other art."[40]

The paintings of Bronzino (1503-1572), which were typical of the aristocratic style popular in Italy and beyond in the second quarter of the 16th century,[41] appealed to Tooker's interest in Mannerism as a young man. However, he recently stated: "I don't know that I like Bronzino as much as I used to."[42] Tooker's Self Portrait (1947) (Fig. 41) is strongly reminiscent of (among other noteworthy masterpieces) Bronzino's Portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi (circa 1540) (Fig. 42). Both figures confront the viewer with blank expressions that reveal less about their character than they do about the composition's precise manner of execution; in each, hands grasp objects which may or may not be symbolic, in a simple composition which draws attention to details. Perhaps it was the coldness in Bronzino's work that prompted Tooker to cease emulating his style in favour of a more humanist approach like Giotto's. Even though Bronzino's later works were much more pious in

nature, they still exhibited the same unfeeling quality as his earlier portaits, and have been described as "mere exercises in elegant physical attenuation."[43] Therefore, as Tooker's work became more spiritual, it also became more emotional, unlike Bronzino's.

The Flemish Primitives and the "Vanitas"

The paintings of the Flemish primitives were also of interest to Tooker.[44] In general, the compositions in Flemish art represent a fusion of Italian humanism with a form of spatial ambiguity popular in the Northern European countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Quentin Metsys,[45] Antwerp's chief court painter in the early 16th century, produced works of art based on an eclectic assimilation of the genre, the didactic, and the intimate. His Unequal Pair (circa 1515 to 1520) (Fig. 43), which has been described as an ancestor of the Flemish tavern picture,[46] illustrates the proverb, "a fool and his money are soon parted," by exposing the folly of a drunken man who is robbed by a harlot and her accomplice. According to Linda Murray, the painting exhibits a moralizing theme because the man who is the focus of attention is a low-life type descended from the iconography of the prodigal son[47] and, therefore, represents avarice and other undesirable characteristics. Hence, the painting is comparable to Tooker's Mirror I (Fig. 15) because both works are fundamentally didactic, with emphasis placed upon the

negative consequences of immoral practices or attitudes.

Among the themes Tooker drew from Renaissance art, that of "vanitas" appears to be the most prominent. Perhaps this was due foremost to the fact that the use of mirrors as reflective devices provides a means of scrupulous self-analysis through which one could be made aware of ideas, such as the transitory nature of youth and beauty. Robert Graves elucidated this same concept in a stanza from "The Pier-Glass," which reads as follows:

> Peer rather in the glass once more, take note
> Of self, the grey lips and long hair dishevelled,
> Sleep-staring eyes.[48]

The subject is confronted with his own mortality. The concept of the mirror as a metaphor for the contrast between reality and illusion was also important to Tooker, a concept which was clearly revealed in numerous compositions by Titian, who often painted women with mirrors; in Parmigianino's revealing Self Portrait, from 1524, or less obviously but still notably in Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini wedding portrait, from 1434.

Symbolism and Tooker's Philosophical Vision

Yet, with reference to Tooker's statement that symbolism can be limiting and dangerous[49] it must be emphasized that not all of the objects and images in his paintings are intentionally symbolic, and those which are are not necessarily consistent. For example, when asked about the significance of the shell in his Self Portrait

(1947) (Fig. 41), Tooker stated "I liked the object for its aesthetic appeal, and included it in my painting because its shape fitted well into the round composition."[50] The shell's presence, therefore, had nothing to do with its traditional iconography connecting it to the pilgrimage, or to St. James the Great, as it is listed in George Ferguson's Signs and Symbols in Christian Art.[51]

Even so, Tooker's The Bird Watchers (148) (Fig. 44), which he intended as a religious picture without religious subject matter,[52] is a veritable compendium of references to traditional Christian iconography. Sandra Langer described this scene as "an inadvertent stumbling upon the abode of the Biblical damned or doomed."[53] Berman and Wechsler likened it to a Trecento altarpiece adorned with images of saints and staffage figures.[54] Indeed, there are numerous references to traditional symbolism. The central figure is as self-contained as a Medieval Christ as he gestures as if revealing the stigmata to his followers, while those behind him stand as if patiently waiting for guidance. The Christ-like figure is also flanked on either side by a tree with leaves, which is a symbol of life or knowledge, according to Ferguson.[55] Even such details as the species of birds are significant in Tooker's painting. There appear to be two types of birds present, sparrows and goldfinch. According to Ferguson, since the sparrow is a common bird, it is used as a symbol of the lowly, or the least among all

people, who are nevertheless, under the protection of God;[56] because goldfinch are fond of thorns, they allude to the passion of Christ.[57] The numerous elements in The Bird Watchers implying the use of traditional symbolism suggests that Tooker spent a great deal of time planning and researching his subject. However, quite the opposite is true. Tooker himself stated that he did not intend to paint a specific allegory,[58] even though Garver notes the painting's similarity to the Crucifixion;[59] and the trees, the stone arches, and other elements suggest the story of the risen Christ meeting his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. He simply wanted to paint a positive picture based on quattrocento prototypes,[60] drawing from his intuition[61] and the formal methods of the Masters.

Yet, as Tooker became more spiritual, his interest in religious themes grew. For example, Supper (1963) (Fig. 45) is reminiscent of the theme of the supper at Emmaus as painted by Rembrandt and others. Tooker was inspired to paint Supper after he and William Christopher went to Selma, Alabama, to listen to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. give a service for two murdered civil rights workers.[62] Its simple composition is a virtual mirror image of a detail from Piero della Francesca's Flagellation of Christ (Fig. 46), which dates to the 1460s. However, even though symbolic elements in Supper, such as the bread, the wine, and the gesturing hand of the central figure are overtly Christian, the fact

that issues of theology appear to have been less important than those of revolution in the 1960s prompted the critics of the time to focus on different aspects of Supper and other later works. In the May 1964 issue of Art News, Suzi Gablik wrote:

> The exaggerated strain of aloofness and mutual incommunicability of these figures causes them to appear as though they had succumbed to a morbid passivity - or were victims of some secret monomania.[63]

Since Gablik failed to observe that Supper represented Tooker's interest in an ethnic and spiritual reconciliation among men,[64] she instead confused the figures' expressions of inner peace with trauma.

Other critics writing in the 1960s understood the difficulties involved with analysing Tooker's paintings and made comments, such as, "one is not tempted to examine the symbolic aspects too closely."[65] Yet, even so, the element that is perpetual throughout Tooker's career is his humanist approach. Therefore, regardless of whether the images are predominantly secular or religious, the dignity of mankind is evident as a fundamental concern.

During the last fourteen years of his life, Piero della Francesca abandoned painting and wrote De Prospetiva Pingendi as a literary source for those artists who wished to apply perspective to their work, which emphasized the significance of the individual human view point and imposed an all encompassing pattern on nature.[66] Man was hailed as

supreme, creativity was encouraged, and the function of art ceased to be simply decorative or dogmatic. The art of the Renaissance, therefore, became reflective of both past and present concerns. From the past, the concerns and themes common in the period of classical antiquity, which referred to secular Greek and Roman mythology, were reiterated with a profound new clarity that can be attributed to the insight that comes with time and cultural isolation. From the present, the Renaissance painters were conscious of the imperfections of their own period and produced works reflective of an often despairing society.[67] For example, Dante wrote his Inferno as a treatise on Hell, Donatello sculpted a ragged beggar woman and called her "Mary Magdalene", and Michelangelo carved colossal images of bound and dying "slaves".

W.H. Auden wrote about Renaissance thought the way Tooker painted it. In a passage from his "Musée des Beaux Arts" he stated:

> About suffering they were never wrong,
> The Old Masters: how well they understood
> Its human position, how it takes place
> While someone else is eating or opening a window or
> just walking dully along ... [68]

Thus, both Tooker's and Auden's work demonstrates that it is not the human position which changes, but rather the significance of our attitude toward it. For example, as we shall see, in Chapter Four, the impact of the Great Depression radically altered the social consciousness of

Americans during the 1920s and beyond. Although Tooker himself was motivated by the events of the time, his recognizable imagery has remained consistent to today. Thus, as an exception to the cultural stimulus, he has grown with the stability which he extrapolates from his existing individuality. Chapter Four will focus less on Tooker than on his colleagues, Cadmus and French, who were both old enough and recognized enough to receive government sponsored mural commissions in the 1930s.

Footnotes

[1]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[2]Garver, George Tooker (New York, 1984), 10.

[3]Carl G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (New York, 1958), xiii.

[4]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[5]Frederic Taubes, "Egg Tempera Painting: Selected Examples by George Tooker," American Artist, Vol. 21, May 1957, 20.

[6]The line of succession is carefully chronicled by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. in the introduction to his translation of Cennino D'andrea Cennini's Da Colle di Val D'elsa. Daniel V. Thompson, IL Libro Dell 'Arte: The Craftsman's Handbook (New Haven, 1932), ix.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid. The oldest copy exists in the Medicia-Laurenziana, and the second oldest in the Riccardiana.

[9]Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. The Practice of Tempera Painting (New York, 1936, reprinted 1962), 4.

[10]Ibid., 7.

[11]Edward Waldo Forbes was the director of the Fogg Art Museum at the time.

[12]Hilton Brown, "Looking at Paintings," American Artist, Vol. 46, January 1982, 42.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Lincoln Kirstein, Paul Cadmus (New York, 1984), 48.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Laundress, 1952, is an oil on panel composition measuring 23 1/2 x 24 in. According to Garver, in George

Tooker, its present whereabouts is unknown (133).

[19]Kirstein, Paul Cadmus, 59.

[20]John I.H. Baur, The New Decade: 35 American Painters and Sculptors (New York, 1955), 87.

[21]Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973 (San Francisco, 1974), n.p.

[22]Ralph Pomeroy, "George Tooker Really," Art and Artists, Vol. 2, April 1967, 27.

[23]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[24]Roger Fry, Vision and Design (New York, 1960), 178.

[25]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[26]Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, n.p.

[27]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[28]Fry, 152.

[29]Ibid., 177.

[30]Thomas Garver, in George Tooker, defines Men and Women Fighting as a modern day massacre of the innocents (34), even though he made no direct reference to Giotto's work by the same name.

[31]Philip Eliasoph, Paul Cadmus: Yesterday and Today (Miami, 1981), 22.

[32]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Artists (New York, 1981), 196.

[36]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[37]Charles D. Cuttler, Northern Painting (New York, 1968), 224.

[38]Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960 (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), 21.

[39]Michael Levey, Early Renaissance (New York, 1979), 175.

[40]As quoted in Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, n.p.

[41]John Shearman, Mannerism (New York, 1979), 176. Bronzino was appointed by Socimo I, the Duke of Florence, and his wife, Eleanora of Toledo, in 1539 to the position of Chief Medici Court Painter.

[42]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985

[43]Bernard Denvir, Art Treasures of Italy (New York, 1980), 116.

[44]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[45]Quentin Metsys (circa 1464/6-1530) is also referred to as Massys or Matsys.

[46]Linda Murray, The High Renaissance and Mannerism (London, 1977), 212.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Robert Graves, Collected Poems 1914-1947 (Edinburgh, 1948), 28.

[49]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[50]Ibid.

[51]George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (New York, 1980), 24.

[52]Garver, George Tooker, 22.

[53]Sandra L. Langer, "Realism and Realities," Arts Magazine, Vol. 57A, September 1982, 22.

[54]Berman and Wechsler, 21.

[55]Ferguson, 24.

[56]Ibid., 25.

[57]Ibid., 19.

[58]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[59]Garver, George Tooker, 23.

[60]Ibid., 22.

[61]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Suzi Gablik, "Exhibition Review: George Tooker," Art News, Vol. 63, May 1964, 16.

[64]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985

[65]Vivian Raynor, "In the Galleries: George Tooker," Arts Magazine, Vol. 36, May-June 1962, 101.

[66]Bernard Denvir, 81

[67]Ibid., 169.

[68]W. H. Auden, Selected Poems (New York, 1979), 79.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEPRESSION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The Mexican Muralists as a Liberating Factor

In America before 1920, art had yet to prove itself truly socially conscious. The Ash Can School expressed a concern for the urban experience; however the paintings were steeped in a romanticism that overlooked the plight of the destitute.[1] During the 1920s and especially the 1930s, Regionalists from the Mid West, such as Thomas Hart Benton (1889-) and John Steuart Curry (1897-1946), rejected the Ash Can School's concern with the urban and expounded upon the virtues of rural life with an enthusiasm that was misleading and contradictory. W.H. Auden succinctly expressed the country's angst in his poem "September 1st, 1939," a stanza of which reads as follows:

> I sit in one of the dives
> On Fifty-Second Street
> Uncertain and afraid
> As the clever hopes expire
> Of a low dishonest decade:
> Waves of anger and fear
> Circulate over the bright
> And darkened lands of the earth,
> Obsessing our private lives;
> The unmentionable odour of death
> Offends the September night.[2]

In the late 1920s, however, the political neutrality of painting in America was altered by two important incidents. First, the New York stock market crash, on

Tuesday, October 29th, 1929, and the subsequent Great Depression polarized artists into two camps, those who advocated a mixture of populism, Jeffersonian agrarianism, and traditional individualism (for example, Thomas Hart Benton), and those who gravitated towards the left and ideas of communism or socialism[3] (for example, Ben Shahn). Second, a group of influential muralists, including David Alfaro Siqueiros (1898-1974), Diego Rivera (1886-1957), and Jose Clement Orozco (1883-1949), arrived from Mexico with new ideas for artistic change, based on concepts formed during the Mexican revolution in 1922. According to Siqueiros, spokesman of the group, "the fundamental aesthetic goal of the Mexican Muralists is to socialize artistic expression and wipe out bourgeois individualism."[4] The development of American art as a symbol of a national identity was temporarily cut short by these two incidents of the late 1920s. Meanwhile the development of an American avant-garde, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, was also crucial to the evolution of a modern idiom in the United States. The Muralists expressed an interest in a universal art, whereby the illiterate could be educated by means of murals, prints, and other widely publicized methods. After the Stock Market crash, government officials, noting the success of the Muralists' endeavours, applied similar tactics to the formation of a series of federally sponsored organizations.[5]

In 1932, Diego Rivera was asked by Henry Ford to paint a mural at his plant in Detroit, Michigan, on the theme of modern industry.[6] Rivera's response to the commission indicated his revolutionary political attitude since he remarked "art is like ham; it nourishes people."[7] He then proceeded to sketch incessantly in and around the plant while keeping in mind the idea that his mural would depict "a wonderful symphony,"[8] or a union of the accomplishments of Henry Ford and Karl Marx, just as "Lenin applied it with his sense of large-scale social organisation ... and Henry Ford made the work of the socialist state possible."[9] After the completion of The Age of Steel, the mural was met with hostility by those members of the public and the press who felt that it was overtly political, even though it was defended by Edsel Ford, who said "I admire his [Rivera's] spirit."[10]

Less than one year later, when Rivera was commissioned to paint a mural at the Rockefeller Center, in New York, on the theme of "Men at the Crossroads looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future"[11] (determined by Nelson Rockefeller), it was clear that before its completion the mural would meet with great controversy. Hence, when Rivera insisted on including a portrait of Lenin in the composition, Rockefeller fired Rivera and had the mural first covered, and then destroyed. Shortly thereafter Rivera left New York and returned to

Mexico, where he repainted the Rockefeller mural in Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts, in 1934.[12]

Siqueiros and Orozco also received commissions in the late 1920s and early 1930s to paint murals in the United States, they too were met with open hostility from groups of strong willed conservatives. Even so, the Muralists' impact on the young artists active in America at the time was phenomenal. Henry Geldzahler described their presence as a "liberating factor,"[13] since the political nature of a work of art was at that time becoming more and more pronounced.

Tooker was influenced by Siqueiros in particular.[14] In the late 1930s he made plans to study under the muralist at his New York workshop but he was deterred by his parents, who encouraged him to continue with his studies at Harvard.[15] Tooker shared with Siqueiros a preoccupation with techniques and ideas of the Renaissance. Siqueiros said that "the fundamental basis of a work of art is the magnificent geometric structure of form and the concept of the interplay of volume and perspective, which combine to create depth, to create spatial volumes."[16] This remark reflects his careful observation of the technical methods of the Renaissance masters. Siqueiros also declared that:

> We must regard the ancients as models for their constructive basis and their great sincerity, but we must not use archaic motifs which would be exotic for us. We must live in our marvellous dynamic age.[17]

Siqueiros understood that the transferral of

traditional concepts and themes from the past to the present is not necessarily applicable to modern thought, and should, therefore, be adjusted accordingly. Siqueiros referred to himself as a "neohumanist realist;"[18] perhaps this term is as accurate a description for Tooker as Magic Realist, Symbolic Realist, or Imaginative Realist, or any of the other terms that have been applied to him.

At the time of the New York Stock Market crash in 1929, it was not initially clear that the event would prove to be so cataclysmic. When unemployment reached an all time high in the winter of 1932 (twenty-five percent of the population, or fifteen million Americans, were jobless), Hoover's anti-depression methods proved to be too late. As John Steinbeck (1902-1968) described in The Grapes of Wrath, the country was notably affected by a profusion of wandering migrants from the wastelands of Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas, who camped in "Hoovervilles" on their way to California in search of new jobs and a better life.[19]

Roosevelt and Organized Culture

When Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president in November, 1932, and installed in the position on March 4th, 1933, he repealed prohibition and established a number of momentous programs which almost immediately altered the economic state of the nation.[20] The Mexican Muralists had already made it clear to the American public that art could be a valuable tool for social expression when Roosevelt set

up a series of organizations to boost American culture. He commissioned prominent artists to produce murals which would influence the people according to the needs of the government.

George Biddle (1919-1973), who was an artist and a close friend of Roosevelt, was instrumental in establishing the cultural branch of the "New Deal" administration. He wrote to the President in May 1933 and proposed that the government should organize a system to commission artists to decorate public buildings and post offices all over America.[21] Roosevelt approved of the suggestion and in December, 1933, the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was established as the first New Deal art program, with Edward Bruce (1879-1943), who was a lawyer turned landscape painter, as the director; Forbes Watson as the technical director; and Edward Rowan as the chief assistant.[22] The PWAP was inaugurated as a subsidiary of the United States Treasury Department, with funding primarily from the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and, during an intensely prolific seven month period, provided employment to 3,749 artists, who were not already on some form of government relief when selected.

Bruce, who disliked both "the nymph-ridden nostalgia purveyed by the National Academy of Design and the modernism of the School of Paris, as imported and promulgated by the Museum of Modern Art,"[23] chose realism as the style for the

PWAP murals. His idea of realism was the type used by the Regionalists, concerned with propagating contemporary right-wing American ideals about patriotism, although elements of left-wing philosophies, painted by artists sympathetic to Diego Rivera during the scandal of the same year, appeared in public buildings all over America. Socially conscious art in America was realized even through government patronage as early as 1933.

In June, 1934, the Fine Arts Section of the Treasury Department superceded the PWAP, and one year later the cultural spotlight was placed on other government controlled New Deal projects. In May, 1935, two New York State art projects, the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), and the College Art Association Work Relief Program (under Audrey McMahon and Francis Pollak), both established late in 1932, were combined to form the Works Progress Administration (WPA) under the supervision of Holger Cahill (1893-1960), the national director until the organization dissolved in 1943.[24] The Federal Arts Project (FAP) and its subsidiary, the Treasury Relief Art Program (TRAP, which existed from mid 1935 to June 1939) were set up as divisions of the WPA with a system of employment based on need rather than experience or reputation. Artists who were already on some form of government relief were hired to produce works of art that were allowed complete stylistic, but not thematic, freedom.[25]

According to Cahill, the artists were encouraged to promote an interest in "collective action and social responsibility."[26] Yet, the public remained unsympathetic to their efforts because they dismissed art as frivolous in such a time of economic crisis. Reginald Marsh described one of his experiences while he was a government sponsored muralist:

> Having mounted the scaffold without a coloured smock and a Tam O'Shanter resulted in many employees [who worked in the public building which Marsh was decorating] asking when the artist was coming along. This happened even after I had completed full length figures. In all the time I was there, no one asked me my name. One or two had heard of [Rockwell] Kent - three or four had heard of [Grant] Wood, and about a dozen of a Mexican who had trouble with the Rockefeller Center. One had heard of Michelangelo. Many volunteered to tell me that Cubism angered them. Many wanted to know if there were new jobs in store for me and always looked at me in a pitying way. Most of them ventured that I must have been born that way.[27]

For all the government publicity, the public was still very much in the dark about contemporary art issues. According to Serge Guilbaut, the defeat of the Coffee-Pepper Bill in 1939, which provided continual funds for WPA artists, stopped incoming federal aid,[28] and around 1940, the American government set up a "Buy American Art Week" to stimulate the private art market and assist the then waning organization.[29] However, with its dissolution in 1943, scholars like Ian Bennett declared that "little of real worth had resulted"[30] from the WPA. Perhaps this was due

foremost to the fact that such government sponsored structures were most frequently organized according to a set aesthetic program which allowed very little freedom for self expression.[31] Thus, the government organizations did little to heal the rift between realism and modernism which had been growing since the turn of the century.

Mural Commissions for Cadmus and French

Both Paul Cadmus and Jared French were commissioned to produce numerous murals and paintings for the WPA in the 1930s. Cadmus was admitted to the PWAP in December, 1933, and French began work on his first FAP mural in September, 1935.[32] Although Cadmus's controversial The Fleet's In! (1934) (Fig. 6) was his first PWAP commissioned work, the young painter was asked repeatedly to produce murals and paintings for the government until 1939. French's commissions also were controversial, yet, with time, they have been virtually forgotten.

From September 3rd, 1935, to January 16th, 1939, French worked on a series of seven panels, which were commissioned by the FAP for a salary of $4,000, on the collective theme of the "Origins of Food".[33] The finished mural was then exhibited at the Julian Levy Gallery in February, 1939, prior to its installation at the State Vocational Institution, at West Coxsachie, New York. The mural proved to be quite controversial. For the next month a journalist by the name of Paul Bird kept account of a

battle of reviews between Glenway Wescott and Emily Genauer (of the World Telegram), in a series of three Art Digest articles entitled "The Fortnight in New York· Genauer vs. Wescott," which were published on February 1st, February 15th, and March 1st, 1939. In the February 1st article, Bird quoted Wescott's description of French's murals as "brilliant,"[34] while Genauer dismissed the work as "terrible."[35] The wide range of opinion about French's murals was no doubt due to the growing critical controversy over modernism and realism in American art. The critics then proceeded to attack one another with personal insults which were promptly withdrawn after the publication of the second Art Digest article.

A sculptor by the name of Naum M. Los saw a reproduction of French's The Tropics (Fig. 47), from his "Origins" series, in Genauer's exhibition review, and was struck by its similarity to another work.[36] He then reproduced an image from a French textbook by Dr. Paul Richer, entitled Phsyiologie Attitudes et Mouvements (Fig. 48), which was published in 1921, bearing a striking resemblance to the main figure in The Tropics.[37] Since it was obvious that French had copied Richer's illustration, Genauer was triumphant, Wescott was embarrassed, and French made no comment. To clarify matters, Bird published a third article which dealt with the question of the validity of transferring images from commercial art to fine art.

Although Bird's third article touched upon a subject that has been a topic of discussion for many years[38] (artists have been borrowing figures and images from other artists for centuries), the significance of his editorials was soon dismissed and, to this day, no other record of French's scandalous Tropics panel exists in a scholarly publication.

In 1937, a WPA official named Edward Rowan, an assistant to Edward Bruce, approached Cadmus and French with offers to paint two murals for the Parcel Post buiding in Richmond, Virginia, dealing with the theme of the town's history. Cadmus chose the topic of Pocahontas Saving the Life of Captain John Smith (Fig. 49), while French submitted a scene of Cavalrymen Crossing a River (Fig. 50), from a historical account of a daring manoeuver by members of the Confederate Cavalry who, under the leadership of J.E.B. Stuart, swam across a swollen river to conquer new territory.[39] Rowan was concerned about Cadmus's taste for the satirical, but when the artist submitted a subdued preliminary sketch the official accepted it with enthusiasm. French's initial drawings were rejected on the grounds that the composition of predominantly nude and semi-nude men was "too obviously flying in the face of the public."[40]

Consequently, yet another of French's murals became the center of controversy. The public was notified of French's scandalous painting, which was to be exhibited before its installation in the Parcel Post building (along

with Cadmus's mural) through numerous articles in the local paper and they flocked to see the finished product at its unveiling exhibition, at Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York, in February, 1939. However, when the public finally saw French's depiction of newly clothed models (Fig. 51), their reaction was one of indifference and they turned their attention to a strategically placed fox's head covering the genitals of the central figure in Cadmus's mural[41] (Fig. 49). French's panel was henceforth dismissed and Cadmus ironically gained further notoriety.

Since very little is known about the reclusive French it is most likely that the adverse reaction to the Origins of Food and the Cavalrymen Crossing a River murals, which occurred while French was still a very young man (only 24), contributed a great deal to his eventual alienation from both the media and the public. With Origins, he was accused of being unscrupulous while Cavalrymen was rejected because of immorality. Hence, perhaps since he lacked Cadmus's self assuredness, French turned away from public commissions and has to this day made only one public statement about the nature of his art.[42] Therefore, unless he grants someone the permission to chronicle his life and art, he will always remain an enigma. Since it is clear that both Cadmus and Tooker consider him a valuable personal and artistic influence, he deserves more positive attention than he received in the past.

American Social Realism

In the 1930s, a group of individuals, known collectively as Social Realists, developed an interest in themes of social consciousness, which focused on the problems of contemporary American society, and expounded upon the value of art with content. Among these artists, Ben Shahn (1898-1969) was one of the most verbal and politically active Social Realists. In 1957, he published a book on the subject of form versus content entitled The Shape of Content; he declared the unity of the two by stating:

> It [form] is the visible shape of all man's growth; it is the living picture of his tribe at its most primitive, and of his civilization at its most sophisticated state. Form is the many faces of the legend - bardic, epic, sculptural, musical, pictorial, architectural; it is the infinite images of religion; it is the expression and the remnant of self. Form is the very shape of content.[43]

In contrast with the complacent romanticism of the Ash Can School, the Regionalists, and the Fourteenth Street School, Social Realism emerged as more of "an attitude toward the role of art in life,"[44] which stressed commitment to a socialist political doctrine.

The social realists were stirred by the human suffering around them and ventured to expose the weaknesses of the socio-political system with a critical attack on hypocrisy. Their work often contrasted "the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, freedom and bondage,

equality and racism, and bigotry and oppression."[45] Art was no longer acceptable to them as a vehicle of aesthetic expression; it was meant to investigate and to challenge with a self-conscious, moral determination that spoke for thousands who couldn't.

Literary Expression in the 1930s

Many Social Realists turned towards left-wing political ideologies. The publication of The New Masses communist review in the late 1920s voiced the opinions of many concerned artists and critics, including Cadmus, who described himself as "a little pink"[46] at the time, the periodical's offices were used as a meeting place for American Communist Party members until the formation of the anti-modernist John Reed Club in 1929.[47]

In September, 1933 (three months before the founding of Roosevelt's PWAP), twenty-five New York based artists, including Stuart Davis as the vice-president, formed the Emergency Work Bureau Artists Group, which, by May, 1934, became a more militant, radical organization, known as the Artists' Union.[48] Six months later, the Artists' Union and the Artists' Committee of Action published their first issue of Art Front, which provided artists , such as Davis, one of the editors-in-chief, with a means to discuss issues of both aesthetic and political importance. However, the periodical's lifespan was short and its last issue was published in December, 1937. The early left wing journals,

such as The New Masses and Art Front, were, therefore, the original source for criticism and social protest and may even be considered the progenitors of Social Realism in the United States.

In Moscow, at the Seventh Congress of the Komintern (Communist International), from July 25th to August 20th, 1935, a series of plans were devised to overthrow the existing power of fascism by establishing an international alliance of intellectuals, known as the Popular Front.[49] In April of the same year, at the First American Writers' Congress, in America, officials proposed an anti-capitalist policy with a Marxist core.[50] The United States proved its political maturity by abandoning provincialism in favour of widespread reform. As a result, when two new journals were introduced to the American public from independent sources, it was clear that there was room for both. The Partisan Review was supplied with articles by progressive artists and writers, such as Stuart Davis, Lewis Mumford, Rockwell Kent, George Biddle, and Meyer Schapiro (who was the writer for Art Front); the Marxist Quarterly was organized by Trotskyite intellectuals at Columbia University. Both stressed the need for artists to work independently of political parties and totalitarian ideals.[51]

In 1935, the Partisan Review published articles like Trotsky's "Art and Politics" and Rivera and Breton's "Towards an Independent Revolutionary Art "[52] Clement

Greenberg, who was aesthetically the most radical critic of his day, was also a frequent contributor to the journal.[53] Modernism re-established its place in American culture with the help of left-wing periodicals in which Greenberg and others expounded upon the virtue of the new abstraction and dismissed academicism as "the essence of pure kitsch."[54]

In the late 1930s, dissension among members of the communist party led to events, such as the Moscow trials of 1936 and 1938 against Trotsky and others, which foreshadowed the party's decline in international popularity.[55] Furthermore, the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact of 1938 seriously tarnished the party's reputation as a weapon against Nazism. In 1940, when the American Artists' Congress defended Russia's invasion of Finland, many Trotskyites withdrew from the organization and established a collective known as the Federation of American Painters and Sculptors. Shortly after World War II, attention turned back towards cultural patriotism as Greenberg and other critics announced their discovery of an innovative theoretical extension of European Modernism that was inherently American, as visualized in the work of Adolf Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, and others. When Abstract Expressionism took the cultural spotlight in the late 1940s, Social Realist themes of collective involvement were replaced with the expression of individual emotional states brought on by the war, the economy, and the socio-political

structure in the United States at the time. Furthermore, anti-communist hysteria, which reigned for almost a decade after World War II, greatly affected the more politically active members of the Social Realist movement (as well as the Abstract Expressionists), who were often blackened by a smear technique devised to harm those artists known to have had communist sympathies in the 1930s.[56] Hence, it was made clear that there is no place for a fundamentally socialist art movement in a capitalist society.

Political Consequences: McCarthyism

While culture in America in the late 1940s developed from a government organization to a system controlled by critics, corporations, museums, galleries, and wealthy patrons, federal officials working under Senator Joseph McCarthy tried to eradicate all anarchistic dissent in the arts in an attempt to sustain the government's authority.[57] McCarthy allocated to the Michigan-based Republican, George A. Dondero, the job of abolishing all politically subversive cultural activities in the 1940s, and the weeding out of potentially subversive characters commenced.

Dondero was a patriotic fanatic with a radical bias against all avant-garde art, who referred to such artists as "germ-carrying vermin", "human termites", and "international art thugs."[58] His overt fear of communist infiltration prompted him to organize a series of inquiries in which he focused his attacks on non-representational artists whose

works he described as "communist because of the depraved and destructive nature of their forms."[59] His methods were extremely dogmatic throughout the duration of his appointment, which lasted from about 1946 to 1956. He was well received by Harry S. Truman, who initiated a widespread anti-communist movement in the United States shortly after he ascended to the presidency in 1948. Truman equated modern art with communism[60] because it was not rooted in the American tradition. Therefore, the consequences for many American artists involved with left-wing politics, such as Ben Shahn, Stuart Davis, and John Marin,[61] were detrimental and often irretrievably damaging to their careers.

Those artists who retained their communist affiliations from the 1930s were immediately labelled as dissidents and suspected of subversive activities. For example, William Hauptman states that Harold Harby, who was an official of the Los Angeles Building and Safety Committee, denounced works of art in a local exhibition because "in some cases, the abstract paintings were actually secret maps of strategic US fortifications."[62] Ben Shahn was one of the most active opponents of Dondero's theory that the individual's freedom of thought should be restrained, Shahn claimed the opposite since he believed that individuality was the heart of artistic creation.[63] Although Paul Cadmus was not nearly as politically active as Shahn, he too was subjected to careful government scrutiny,

for example, he was nearly denied a passport for having once signed petitions for the League Against Fascism and Foreign Wars.[64] Since little is known about French's political involvement, even though his views were most likely similar to Cadmus's, his relative seclusion by the 1950s (he lived in New York at the time) would probably account for a lack of government persecution. Tooker joined the Young Communists Party in the early 1940s but found it boring because it was too dogmatic and biased.[65] When he was asked by NASA to illustrate a group of people on detention, in the 1950s, Tooker accepted the commission because he wanted to know if he had been blacklisted by the government; he was admitted without hesitation and he promptly refused to do the job.[66] Even though Tooker remarked that he was accepted because he was still too obscure for them to be bothered with him,[67] the fact that he was only 30 years old in 1950 would have influenced his status, since he would have been much too young to participate in any seditious political activities in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1953, during the height of McCarthyism, Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected to the presidency. The anti-communist investigations persisted for three more years even though the United States Senate voted for the condemnation of McCarthy in 1954.[68] Dondero repeatedly denied untraditional artists their freedom of expression when he accused them of charlatanism for four specific reasons:

1. They could not draw
2. They were insane
3. They were involved in a plot to make the bourgeoisie nervous
4. They were committed to degrade their art for the purpose of communist propaganda[69]

The notion that Dondero was the supposed arbiter of taste for art in America for the best part of a decade brings to mind visions of great cultural degeneration. Yet, the theories and paintings of the Abstract Expressionists during the same period indicate that quite the opposite was true. Furthermore, the reactionary nature of the artistic climate in the 1940s provoked a rift between realism and abstraction that called for superior efforts in both styles which were far from degenerate. While the Abstract Expressionists believed that realism, in general, represented outmoded practices and theories, the Realists expounded upon the value of verism as a tool of social expression. Artistic communalism was discouraged since the 1950s was a time of political and cultural extremism, with little room for compromise. Even so, as will be discussed, Abstract Expressionism and realism in America in the 1950s found a common philosophical basis in the writings of Jung.

Footnotes

[1]Reginald Marsh's Why Not use the "L"?, (illustrated in Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, Realism and Realities The Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960 [New Brunswick, N.J., 1982], 13), 1930, which is part of the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, clearly illustrates the artist's detachment from his subjects, since the sleeping bum in the center of the composition is more of an attempt to observe than to reform society's inequalities and foibles. Berman and Wechsler, 13.

[2]W.H. Auden, from "September 1st, 1939," in Robin Skelton's Poetry of the Thirties (New York, 1985), 280. Also in W.H. Auden, Collected Shorter Poems· 1930-1944 (London, 1950), 74, and W.H. Auden, Selected Poems (New York, 1979), 86.

[3]Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1980), 80. More will be said about socially conscious art and thought in America later on in this chapter.

[4]David Alfaro Siqueiros, Art and revolution (London, 1975), 24. This quotation is an excerpt from a publication entitled the Declaration of Social, Political, and Aesthetic Principles by Members of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors.

[5]These federally sponsored organizations will be discussed in detail in the next section

[6]William Hauptman, "The Supression of Art in the McCarthy Decade," Artforum, Vol. 12, October 1973, 51.

[7]Hayden Herrera, Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo (New York, 1983), 116.

[8]Ibid., 135.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., 161.

[11]Ibid., 164.

[12]Ibid., 166.

[13]Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the

Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 111.

[14]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Siqueiros, 22.

[17]Ibid., 21.

[18]Ibid., 93.

[19]Lester Jay Marks, Thematic Design in the Novels of John Steinbeck (The Hague, 1969), 73.

[20]Barbara Rose, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (Lausanne, 1969), 42.

[21]Karal Ann Marling, Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of the Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression (Minneapolis, 1982), 30.

[22]Rose, American Painting in the Twentieth Century, 42.

[23]Marling, 44.

[24]Ibid., 49.

[25]Ibid., 51.

[26]As quoted in an exhibition catalogue, edited by David Shapiro, entitled Art for the People - New Deal Murals on Long Island, at the Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, Hempstead, Long Island, November 1-December 31, 1978 (2).

[27]As quoted in Barbara Rose, Readings in American Art Since 1900 (New York, 1968), 116. This excerpt is from "Poverty, Politics, and Artists, 1930-1945," Art in America, Vol. 53, August-September 1965.

[28]Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art (Chicago, 1983), 41.

[29]Ibid., 55.

[30]Ian Bennett, A History of American Painting (London, 1973), 197.

[31]Ashile Gorky's mural for the Newark airport may be listed as an example of one of the few abstract murals

commissioned by the WPA.

[32]Marling, 283.

[33]Paul Bird, "The Fortnight in New York; Genauer vs Wescott," Art Digest, Vol. 13, 15 February 1939, 14.

[34]Ibid., 19. As quoted in the February 1st article.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., 14. From the February 15th article.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Bird's third article in the series appeared in the March 1st, 1939, issue of Art Digest.

[39]Marling, 284

[40]Ibid., 185. This comment was made by Edward Rowan in a letter to Jared French, dated April 13, 1938.

[41]Ibid., 288.

[42]A short dissertation in the February, 1968, issue of Art and Artists, as quoted earlier on page 24.

[43]Ben Shahn, The Shape of Content (New York, 1960), 53.

[44]Hills and Tarbell, 84.

[45]Ibid., 85.

[46]Philip Eliasoph, Paul Cadmus Yesterday and Today (Miami, 1981), 24.

[47]David Shapiro, Social Realism: Art as a Weapon (New York, 1975), 21.

[48]Ibid., 6.

[49]Guilbaut, 17.

[50]Ibid., 19.

[51]Ibid., 25.

[52]Diego Rivera and Andre Breton's article, "Towards an Independent Revolutionary Art" 1938, was actually written by Breton and Trotsky, but signed by Rivera.

[53]In the fall of 1939, Greenberg wrote an article entitled "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," for the Partisan Review.

[54]Guilbaut, 35.

[55]Ibid., 27.

[56]As will be discussed below, Ben Shahn and even Paul Cadmus were victims of anti-communist activities in the 1950s.

[57]Dore Ashton, The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning (New York, 1973), 174.

[58]William Hauptman, "The Supression of Art in the McCarthy Decade," Artforum, Vol. 12, October 1973, 48.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Guilbaut, 4.

[61]Hauptman, 49.

[62]Ibid., 50.

[63]Ibid., 48.

[64]Eliasoph, 24

[65]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Hauptman, 51.

[69]Ibid., 48.

CHAPTER V

REALISM VERSUS ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

> Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,
> Crushed strawberries! Come, let us feast our eyes.[1]

The Early Developments of the Dichotomy

In order to establish a theoretical connection between abstraction and realism in the United States, it would be beneficial to trace the development of the controversy in American art to its source. In the 19th century, two general styles of painting existed in America; one expounded upon the sublime as it was revealed in the magnificent American landscape,[2] while the other focused on intimate genre scenes, still lifes, and portraiture.[3] Although both forms were realistic in technique, those exponents of the sublime were grounded in the traditional methods of the past, as promulgated by European antecedents; while the genre realists propagated the idea of a new approach for artistic expression in America, which was based on the observance of events from everyday life. When the Eight's first group exhibition was held at the Macbeth Gallery's Independents' Show in New York, in 1908, it was clear that since the members were searching for common themes in urban settings, American art had, therefore, turned away from the ideal in favour of a more intimate, documentative form of realism.

Around the same time as the Independent's Show, however, other notable events which occurred in New York foreshadowed the imminent downfall of the realists' domination of the American art scene. In 1905, Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen founded the Little Gallery of the Photo Secession, at 291 Fifth Avenue, at which exhibitions by Matisse (1908), Picasso (1911), Brancusi (1914),[4] and many other eminent Europeans were held to draw the American publics' attention to such modernist trends as Fauvism, Cubism, and Futurism. Six years later, Stieglitz and sixteen charter members of the newly formed Association of American Painters and Sculptors made plans to hold a monumental presentation of works of art by contemporary European and American artists. In 1913, the project was realized at the Armory Show, in the 69th Regiment Armory, on Lexington Avenue.

The exhibition radically altered the attitude of the American public toward modernism. Stieglitz and his circle, therefore, acted as early forerunners of the Abstract Expressionists since they challenged the intellectual and stylistic validity of the Ash Can and Fourteenth Street schools. As early as the teens, modernism began to replace realism as the new avant-garde movement in America; the latter was eventually redefined as conservative. The abstraction versus realism controversy provided the impetus for many artists, including Tooker, to wrestle with the

ensuing theoretical problems.[5]

By the mid 1920s, the growing notoriety of modernism in America necessitated the formation of new exhibition spaces. Even though Stieglitz opened the Intimate Gallery in 1925 and "An American Place" in 1930, it was clear that such small, privately-run organizations were no longer substantial enough to meet the demand for modernist exhibitions. During the decade from 1929 to 1939, three of America's most influential museums were founded in New York; in 1929, Alfred H. Barr became the first director of the Museum of Modern Art;[6] in 1931, the Whitney Museum of American Art opened;[7] and in 1939, the Guggenheim Museum was established.[8] Modernism was welcomed by the directors of all three institutions, who stocked their walls and storage spaces with works of art by contemporary painters and sculptors from both Europe and America.[9] Therefore, when World War I and World War II provided the impetus for many avant-garde European artists to immigrate to America, access to works of art by contemporary masters became more immediately available and the museums flourished in spite of the desperate circumstances surrounding the events of the time.

The Flight of the Europeans to the United States

Many exponents of European modernism came to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. When, in 1921, Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray established the "Société Anonyme," under

the patronage of Katherine S. Dreier, even though the group was dissolved in the same year, the organization itself foreshadowed the great changes in American art that would occur in the next few decades.[10] In 1931, Hans Hofmann came to America from Munich with ideas about an individual expression which were based on an assimilation of the theories of Cubism, Fauvism, and those of Kandinsky. He put them into practice when he established a school in New York in 1933.[11] Also in 1931, Joseph Albers arrived in the United States as the first refugee from the Bauhaus, with fresh ideas on colour theory. Six years later his Dessau colleague, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, established the Chicago Institute of Design with the intention of developing the Bauhaus system in America.[12] Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the influence of Dali, Tanguy, Seligmann, Ernst, Breton, Matta, Masson, and other Surrealists superseded the realist approach that had existed in the United States prior to the late 1930s. When the Dutch Neo-Plasticist, Piet Mondrian, moved to New York in 1940, his interest in geometric simplicity and compositional clarity was embraced with genuine enthusiasm by many young abstractionists.[13] Hence, by 1940, it was clear that the artistic fervour in New York eclipsed the almost nonexistent avant-garde activities in Paris, which by June 14th of the same year, were completely obliterated when the city fell under Nazi rule.[14] The development of Abstract Expressionism in the

1940s was, therefore, also the result of a collective influence from the Europeans.

Abstract Expressionism: The Early Years

Martica Sawin attributes the growth of Abstract Expressionism in the United States to three generating factors, an Oedipal relationship with European artists, a storming of the fortresses of conservatism, and a heroic stance in need of artistic expression.[15] By the early 1940s, literary symbolism, such as those "images of sado-masochistic fantasies"[16] which were used by the Surrealists, were discarded in favour of a non-representational approach. Private galleries displayed works in the new style, while under the sponsorship of large corporations, the museums also encouraged the public to attend exhibitions. As early as 1941, Ashile Gorky was given a retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Art, and by 1945, the Abstract Expressionists, Jackson Pollock, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Rothko had all exhibited at Peggy Guggenheim's "Art of this Century" gallery, opened in 1942.[17]

Guggenheim and other wealthy patrons cultivated an elitist attitude that was, at best, indifferent to the American tradition as it existed prior to 1940. Furthermore, critics, such as Eleanor C. Munro, who also believed in the new esoteric art, contributed to the attack on realism by issuing biased statements like "Portraiture

has been a moribund business since the death of Ingres."[18] Needless to say, artists like Tooker, Cadmus, and French were considered old fashioned until as recently as the late 1970s, when the revival of interest in representational art provoked a reassessment of their work. Even so, as late as 1975, Phyllis Derfner wrote in an exhibition review in Art International that "those who find Tooker's highly literary, even poetic symbols convincing must be impatient with, or perhaps ignorant of, modernism."[19] Thus, certain disciples of the non-representational mode have continued to assert their obstinate rejection of more traditionally inclined art.

A strong sense of esotericism appears to have been as much the reason for the Abstract Expressionists' dominance as anything. The belief that only abstract art could adequately express the artist's feelings[20] was upheld by group members since 1936, when forty people coalesced to form the American Abstract Artists Association.[21] Abstraction in America (as in Europe) was based more on a philosophical attitude than it was on a style. Even so, early American abstractionists, such as Joseph Albers (who was a member of the AAA), were interested in the same kind of structured abstractions that Vasily Kandinsky used in his Compositions, rather than a less preconceived form of abstraction, based on submission to the subconscious, which later advocates of the American movement pursued so

ardently. Thus, the early abstractionists' formal notion of "building (in pure plastic creation) an aesthetic order independent of outer chaos,"[22] was radically opposed to the idea of art held by later exponents such as Kline, Pollock, and Rothko, who thought of art as unrestrained, intuitive, and introspective. By around 1940, it was clear that the latter "free form" version of abstraction dictated the disposition of the avant-garde in America.

In 1948, the formation of "The Club," which was located at 35 East Eighth Street, marked the official solidification of the ideas of the free form abstractionists as a collective.[23] "The Club" functioned as "a surrogate Parisian café,"[24] where members met and expressed a collective interest in artistic and political issues of importance. Although the members had already been known as Abstract Expressionists since 1946,[25] the term was later adopted by a New York critic, Robert M. Coates, in an article for the New Yorker magazine, in 1946, and in December 1952, Harold Rosenberg described the style as "action painting" in his Art News article, "American Action Painters."[26] Later, Henry Geldzahler labelled them the "New York School" because, like their work, it implied no single style.[27] To enhance their critical acclaim, the Abstract Expressionists cultivated an attitude toward their realist colleagues which was expressed by Jackson Pollock:

> When you try to emulate the old Masters, as Benton, Grant, Wood, and Curry had, and more

> recently painters like Joseph Levine and George Tooker - you get corn, real corn. Bits of Renaissance pastiche are still bits of Renaissance pastiche, no matter how blurred you make them.[28]

This statement appears ironic when literary and philosophical comparisons are made between Pollock and Tooker.

Pollock and Tooker: Literary and Philosophical Connections

Both Pollock and Tooker drew from the Jungian theory of collective archetypes to express an unconscious link between modern man and the ancients.[29] In the 1930s, the Marxist theory that the human condition was not specific to an individual or a group at a time and place,[30] was replaced with the language of Existentialism which permeated American culture in the 1940s and 1950s. Catch phrases, such as "ambiguity, alienation, and anxiety,"[31] easily applicable to both the work of Pollock and Tooker, became common terms. The literary associations between the two were also strong since both artists read Existential literature,[32] and perhaps the writings of David Riesman, who wrote The Lonely Crowd, in 1953, and Colin Wilson, who wrote The Outsider, in 1956.

Although the Abstract Expressionists were not interested in the idea of Humanism in the traditional sense, their own modern version adhered to the concept's fundamental interest in exalting the genius of man as a symbol of unique creativity. Since Tooker's work also

exhibits the same Humanist characteristic, both he and Pollock concerned themselves more with a personal vision than a collective effort. When the critics turned their attention to promoting a select few abstractionists in the late 1940s, radicalism gave way to liberalism, Marxism gave way to psychiatry,[33] and the analytical nature of the period was revealed in endless dissertations and chronicles.

The Critics and the Periodicals

In late 1939, Clement Greenberg wrote in the Partisan Review, "All kitsch is academic, and conversely, all that is academic is kitsch."[34] Five years later, he reasserted his statement in an article in The Nation, commenting, "Let painting confine itself to the disposition pure and simple of colour and line, and not intrigue us by association with things we can experience more authentically elsewhere."[35] Greenberg became an arbiter of American taste in the 1940s, the intellectual voice of Abstract Expressionism, and a symbol of the power of modern art criticism. He chose Jackson Pollock as his "cult-hero,"[36] whom he self-assuredly propogated as the leading exponent of a style that would become internationally pre-eminent. Many other critics and scholars accepted Greenberg's theories, corporate institutions were encouraged to participate in the cultural controversy, and the climate was set for a heated battle between those concerned with allegiance to the real and

those interested in "the ultimate purification of the temple of art from realist profanation."[37]

While periodicals such as the Partisan Review, The Nation, and Horizon propagated an Abstract Expressionist bias in their writings, the more commercially oriented Life and Fortune magazines made more selective investments in advocating the new style. Meyer Schapiro and others openly supported abstraction while it was still in its cultural infancy because, in true Marxist spirit, the paintings "symbolise an individual who realises freedom and deep engagement of the self within his work."[38] In the 1940s and 1950s, modernist critics tended to favour Abstract Expressionism for both its political and aesthetic intent.

In 1948, an exhibition review of the Carnegie Annual, by Thomas Hess for Art News, illustrates the anti-realist criticism of the time.[39] Hess gave credit to the paintings of Beckmann, Knaths, Matta, Franklin Watkins, and Kurt Seligmann,[40] who were all associated with modernism to some degree or other, while he focused his attack upon George Biddle, Thomas Hart Benton, and those "sharp focus boys," French, Cadmus, Tooker, and their patron, Lincoln Kirstein.[41] He dismissed the paintings by Kirstein's group, whom he referred to as a "Parnassus"[42] because the paintings "have the aesthetic content of a magazine illustration which, combined with the idea of cold objectivity and emphasis on tricky craftmanship, stunned all the emotional

qualities of the works."[43] Kirstein's aesthetic judgement was, therefore, challenged by Hess, who no doubt knew a lot less about Cadmus, French, and Tooker than Kirstein did.

Many minor art critics tried to break into the small circle dominated by Greenberg and Rosenberg through negative criticism of the paintings of realist artists working during the 1950s. For example, Alfred M. Frankfurter, in a review of a 1952 exhibition of contemporary French and American drawings, which included a silverpoint by Tooker and a study of a nude male by French, dismissed the American pictures as "less modern than those from France."[44] In January, 1955, in an exhibition review from the Hewitt Gallery, in New York, Parker Tyler described Tooker's oddly and insinuatingly nude world as "a literary art which is at times callously unlovely, but with stories to tell."[45] Five years later, Vivian Raynor's review of Tooker's Isaacson show (also in New York) noted his technical competence but commented that "though one may not exactly delight in this kind of painting, it is occasionaly moving to see such flawless execution."[46]

The Museums

The support of Abstract Expressionism by major American museums throughout the 1950s proved to be as controversial as its critical acclaim. Thus, at the core of the turmoil, each of the three major New York museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and

the Whitney Museum of American Art, contributed to the state of abstraction in America, which, in turn, consciously and effectively altered the aesthetic development of modernism in general.[47]

During the late 1940s, while the Russians blockaded Berlin (in 1947) and Mao Zedong triumphed over Chiang Kai-Shek and Chinese Nationalism (in 1949), the major American museums became arbiters of taste in the United States and functioned more as galleries than as repositories for historically pertinent artifacts, since works by relatively young artists were often chosen to be exhibited.

The impetus for the change in the function of the museum as a specifically modern institution was, however, as much the consequence of financial activities as it was a product of politics. The bond between the two has been explored by Eva Cockcroft in an Artforum article, entitled "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," published in June, 1974, in which she suggested that corporate-sponsored museums, governed by self-perpetuating groups of wealthy trustees, established the notion that the United States had entered a period of relative cultural prosperity worthy of international acceptance.[48]

Since the Metropolitan Museum is a fundamentally traditional institution with historical bias and the Whitney is by policy dedicated to exhibiting American art, the Museum of Modern Art became the logical choice as leading

patron of Abstract Expressionism in the United States in the 1950s. Abstraction dominated shows at the Museum of Modern Art from the late 1940s until the late 1950s, when figuration was once again, even though tentatively, acknowledged by the MoMA's 1959 "New Image of Man" exhibition, including works by Europeans, such as Francis Bacon, Alberto Giacometti, and others, as well as Leon Golub, Rico Lebrun, Nathan Oliveira, and other Americans.[49] According to Berman and Wechsler, the exhibition exposed the humanistic, existential content in art in extreme forms that emphasized the visually ugly and the intellectually pessimistic.[50] Until the "New Image" exhibition, however, many young Americans, whose work before the late 1950s had yet to reach artistic maturity, were patronized by the Museum of Modern Art and other important institutions and organizations in a calculated attempt to expose the radically experimental nature of art at the time.

The aesthetic turning point occurred fittingly enough at the beginning of a new decade. In 1949, the prestigious Carnegie International award was presented to the realist Phillip Evergood, whereas one year later the abstractionist Willem de Kooning was bestowed with the same honour. Also in 1950, the paintings of de Kooning and his abstractionist colleagues, Jackson Pollock and Ashile Gorky, were exhibited and well received at the Venice Biennale. 1950 appears as a pivotal year for the development of Abstract Expressionism's

critical popularity in America, when painters such as Pollock, Kline, Rothko, de Kooning, Gorky, and others experienced unsurpassed acclaim.

In 1951, the Metropolitan Museum of Art sponsored an abstractionist influenced exhibition entitled "American Sculpture, 1951." It was attacked by Don de Lue of the academically inclined National Sculpture Society for its overtly modernist content,[51] but defended by Lloyd Goodrich, of the Whitney Museum. The Whitney was likewise fairly supportive towards abstraction in America. In 1955, the annual exhibition, entitled "The New Decade: 35 American Painters and Sculptors", which included works by 165 artists, presented an "animated and public faced"[52] combination of realist and abstract works reflecting a comprehensive survey of American art at that time. Four years later, at the Whitney's annual, Abstract Expressionist works dominated over realist works by a notable margin.[53] This exhibition prompted Joseph Hirsch, who was an ardent realist and an experienced spokesman, to write Goodrich a letter of complaint.[54] Although Hirsch presented the collective concerns of twenty-two realists regarding the Whitney's inordinate favoritism, the commotion was soon dismissed by Goodrich and others[55] as just another incident of what we may refer to as art envy.

Throughout the 1950s, museum curators and directors organised exhibitions which were thinly disguised as

stylistically impartial, but often gave precedence to abstraction.[56] Also, the prominent New York gallery owners abandoned the diplomatic moderation used by members of their institutional counterparts and demonstrated specific aesthetic preferences. For example, in 1951, Leo Castelli and members of the original "Club" organised an exhibition, entitled the "Ninth Street Show", which included works by sixty-one avant-garde artists, while in the same year, Edwin Hewitt arranged Tooker's first one man show. Castelli's exhibition was well received; however, Parker Tyler's Art News review of Tooker's show was, as previously mentioned, less than favorable. Even so, as a realist, Tooker never really experienced a period of economic misfortune[57] even though he and other realists were not pandered to by the most influential critics of the time.

Regardless, however, by the late 1950s, Abstract Expressionism's term as cultural dictator in America was almost finished for a number of reasons. First, to be truly avant-garde for more than a decade was virtually impossible, since new movements were constantly arising. Second, the very nature of abstraction, with its only stylistic restrictions being emphasis on two-dimensionality and non-representation, thereafter encouraged a surfeit of mediocrity. Consequently, a young Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Johns became the focus of attention.

The Realists' Reaction

While the Abstract Expressionists were supported by an intellectual bias that dismissed realism for its interest in technical dexterity, many Realists in turn condemned their adversaries for overt dogmatism and partisanship. For example, Alice Neel remarked about the Abstract Expressionists, "What I can't stand is that the Abstractionists pushed all the other pushcarts off the streets."[58] Her stance was typical of many realists' reactions to their positions as the underdogs in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Furthermore, in 1945, Neel left the Pinacotheca Gallery, in New York, when the gallery's director, Rose Fried, became a staunch supporter of Abstract Expressionism.[59] She then moved her work to Herman Baron's realist inclined ACA Gallery, which is also in New York, in an effort to reclaim some of her lost dignity.[60] About five years later, Paul Cadmus made a decisive career change when he abandoned satire, became devoted to traditionalism, and drew only academic studies of nudes which concentrated on truth to visual appearances.[61] Yet, although his work now lacks pretension, his comments are still satirical. For example, while Philip Eliasoph was interviewing Cadmus for a biography to be published in 1981, the artist referred to an example of his work which was done when he was a child of four, as something "from his de Kooning period"[62] (Fig. 52). Thus, Cadmus's acid wit has

remained as unaffected by contemporary influences as his art has since the 1950s.

Neel and Cadmus were only two of many realists who shared a belief in fidelity to visual appearances as the basis for true expression. In 1953, Raphael Soyer and a small collective of devoted realists issued their first publication of a periodical known as Reality (also known as Realist) which, with Soyer as the editor-in-chief, was released sporadically until 1955. The magazine's articles and reviews attacked abstraction and proclaimed the supremacy of the realist vision.

During the period of the Abstract Expressionist's dominance of art in America, Tooker's paintings underwent no stylistic change beyond what may be described as the natural development of his competence in a medium after years of practice. Even so, Tooker often went to Abstract Expressionist exhibitions that other realist painters refused to attend.[63] Therefore, unlike Neel, Cadmus, Soyer, and many other realists, he was tolerant rather than hostile. In 1961, in a conversation with Selden Rodman, Tooker stated:

> There's always a danger in opposing the current. My feeling about non representative work is that it can be valuable as a discipline, but that it tends to become an end in itself rather than a means, and as an end in itself I can't see it. I wouldn't exactly say that it is limiting: I'd like to put the matter positively.[64]

Twenty years later, Tooker explained that he admired

the paintings of de Kooning for their energy and directness, and those of Theodore Stamos for their marvelously radiant luminescence.[65] In 1986, he went so far as to acknowledge his own debt to de Kooning and Kline, who showed him innovative ways to put a picture together.[66] In the same conversation, Tooker remarked that the negative reaction of fellow realists to Abstract Expressionism was "rather stupid and self defeating"[67] and he voiced his opinion about reactionary organisations formed by "too many painters with closed minds."[68] Thus, Tooker remained unruffled by the hysteria on both sides throughout the 1950s even though he was usually categorized as a realist painter.

The 1960s

In the 1960s, minorities cried out against harassment, feminists called for equality, sexuality was revolutionized, and the government sanctioned military activities in and out of the country, while anti-war movements proclaimed the value of universal peace, and students rioted and rebelled against the system. The United States government's anti-communist involvement with Cuba led to the Bay of Pigs incident in 1961, and the missile crisis in 1962,[69] civil rights rallies provoked race riots that continued periodically to the end of the decade; and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy in 1963,[70] Malcolm X in 1965,[71] Robert F. Kennedy in 1968,[72] and Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968,[73] further indicated the precarious political

and social situation in America at the time. Furthermore, the violence in Southeast Asia was made real to the American public in 1965, when the United States bombed North Vietnam and the Vietnam war became the first televised war in history.

In literature, the angst of young Americans was verbalized in novels, such as Joseph Heller's Catch 22, from 1961, or Jack Kerouac's On the Road, of 1957. In 1963, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique exposed a different kind of social injustice Also, while "conceptual", "kinetic", "systematic", and "structural" developed as catch phrases in the arts, the mainstream revolved around various movements like Pop, Op, and Super-Realism, while the realist vision remained stoically unaffected.

Tooker as an Esoteric Humanist

Throughout the 1960s, while Tooker was confronted with the wild antics of Pop, his paintings once again remained unchanged by the new style. During the 1970s, however, his painting Ward (1970-71) (Fig. 53) is a direct reference to the after effects of the Vietnam war, as well as the scandalous treatment of the old and the sick in the United States.[74] Furthermore, the presence of trance-like figures in Supermarket (1973) (Fig. 54) indicates that Tooker still pursued themes of social consciousness in his art. Yet, although he continued to paint pictures that were either socially conscious or more intimate, relating to his

earlier Window, Mirrors, and Lovers series, Tooker's growing preoccupation with spiritual themes inspired by traditional religious works predominated by the mid 1970s, when he converted to Catholicism.[75]

Tooker's most significant religious work since 1976 is an altarpiece, entitled The Seven Sacraments (1980) (Fig. 55), which was commissioned in October, 1979, by Father Forrest Rouelle, of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Windsor, Vermont. When St. Francis established his Franciscan Order in 1209 AD, his followers transcribed the New Testament with emphasis on the poetic and dramatic elements of the story, focusing on the relationship of Virgin and child, which drew attention to the full human and poetical significance of man.[76] Thus, the very nature of the church's focus is consistent with Tooker's humanist tendency.

Shortly after he accepted Rouelle's offer, Tooker left for Spain to study from a collection of traditional sources for the theme. He stayed overseas for six months, and upon his return presented Rouelle with an intricate series of preliminary sketches that refer to Piero della Francesca's Misercordia altarpiece (Fig. 56) and, once again, the distinct sculptural forms of Agostino di Duccio.[77] The panels were completed within a year, and ceremoniously dedicated to the church on Epiphany, on January 6th, 1981, when, according to Rouelle, they were received first "with absolute silence for the unveiling, and

then a burst of applause at the end."[78]

Tooker's Seven Sacraments is perhaps best described as representative of the artistic, philosophical, and spiritual maturity of his career and life. The panel's stylistic simplicity indicates Tooker's near absolute control of his medium, while the figures' quiet dignity and tranquility proclaim a constancy of purpose. Thus, since 1980 was the year of the postmodern explosion in America, it is evident that Tooker once again remained unaffected by the stylistic pull of the avant-garde. Yet, the philosophical tenets of the new movement may be seen as related to Tooker's own humble doctrine. Postmodernism is based on an eclectic cross-cultural assimilation of traditional elements derived primarily from architecture and sculpture, while Tooker's paintings represent the same conceptual motivation only on a more intimate and limited scale. And so, the very nature of art appears to be developing once again towards the maturity that it possessed during the Renaissance, when objectivity, responsibility, and dignity were inherent.

Footnotes

[1]Ezra Pound from "L'Art, 1910," Twentieth Century Poetry and Poetics. Edited by Gary Geddes (Toronto, 1973), 24.

[2]For example, Thomas Cole, George Inness, Albert Bierstadt, and Frederick Edwin Church.

[3]For example, William Harnett, Thomas Eakins, and Eastman Johnson.

[4]Ian Bennett, A History of American Painting (London, 1973), 163.

[5]Lee Nordness and Allen S. Weller, eds , Art USA Now (New York, 1963), 349.

[6]Dore Ashton, The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning (New York, 1973), 99.

[7]Richard McLanathan, Art in America: A Brief History (London, 1973), 186.

[8]Ashton, 112.

[9]Only works of art by Americans are purchased by the Whitney Museum of American Art.

[10]Robert Short, Dada and Surrealism (London, 1980), 30.

[11]Ashton, 79.

[12]Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley, 1968), 314.

[13]Alexander Calder was particularly influenced by the paintings of Piet Mondrian. At a symposium held on 5 February 1951 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in conjunction with the exhibition "Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America," Calder stated, "My entrance into the field of abstract art came about as the result of a visit to the studio of Piet Mondrian in Paris in 1930." Chipp, 561.

[14]Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art (Chicago, 1983), 49.

[15]Martica Sawin, "Realism and Realities," Art Journal, Vol. 42, Summer 1982, 159.

[16]Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change (London, 1980), 260.

[17]Ashton, 118.

[18]Eleanor C. Munro, "Private Faces in Public Places: the Whitney Annual," Art News, Vol. 54, December 1955, 35.

[19]Phyllis Derfner, "New York," Art International, Vol. 19, March 1975, 40.

[20]Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1980), 113.

[21]John I.H. Baur and Lloyd Goodrich, American Art of the Twentieth Century (London, 1962), 110.

[22]Baur and Goodrich, 110.

[23]Ashton, 196.

[24]Ibid., 198.

[25]The term, "Abstract Expressionism," was first used by Alfred H. Barr, in 1929, to refer to the paintings of Kandinsky produced between 1910 and 1920. Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 177.

[26]Harold Rosenberg, "American Action Painters," Art News, Vol. 51, December 1952, 22.

[27]Geldzahler, 179.

[28]As quoted in Seldon Rodman, Conversations with Artists (New York, 1961), 83.

[29]According to Ashton, Pollock was one of the many abstractionists influenced by Jung's interpretation of the visionary mode (as opposed to the psychological mode), in which the experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is not familiar (123). Pollock himself stated that he was "particularly impressed with their [the Surrealists] concept of the source of art being the Unconscious." As quoted in Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley, 1968), 546.

[30]Hills and Tarbell, 114.

[31]Ibid., 113.

[32]Ashton, 178, and Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[33]Guilbaut, 165

[34]Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," Partisan Review, Vol. 6, Fall 1939, 40.

[35]As quoted in an article in The Nation, 1944, in Hills and Tarbell, 130

[36]Guilbaut, 194

[37]Linda Nochlin, "The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law," Art in America, Vol. 61, November-December 1973, 97.

[38]Maurice Tuchman, New York School The First Generation (New York, 1971), 21.

[39]Just as the pro-realist anti-modernist critics of the preceeding generation, like Thomas Craven, voiced their opinions.

[40]Thomas B. Hess, "The Carnegie Likes the Real Thing," Art News, Vol. 47, November 1948, 51.

[41]Ibid., 15.

[42]Ibid., 16.

[43]Ibid., 15.

[44]Alfred M. Frankfurter, "Double Drawing Festival: The Great Tradition from France - A Modern Style in Chicago," Art News, Vol. 51, November 1952, 56.

[45]Parker Tyler, "Reviews and Previews George Tooker," Art News, Vol 53, January 1955, 56.

[46]Vivian Raynor, "Reviews and Previews George Tooker," Art News, Vol. 59, April 1960, 55.

[47]The Museum of Modern Art came very slowly to the support of abstract art.

[48]Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," Artforum, Vol. 12, June 1974, 40 Since Cockcroft also stated (in the same article) that "America's involvement with foreign intellectuals is partially motivated by espionage" (40), perhaps her hypotheses should

be taken with a pinch of salt.

[49]Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960 (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), 109.

[50]Ibid., 109.

[51]William Hauptman, "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade," Artforum, Vol. 12, October 1973, 50.

[52]Munro, 34.

[53]Abstract Expressionist works dominated over realist works by a notable margin even though the term "Pop Art" had been in use since 1954, and Claes Oldenburg, Wolf Vostell, Robert Rauschenberg, and others were experimenting with the concept of live performances, or "Happenings," as early as 1958.

[54]Hills and Tarbell, 130.

[55]Ibid.

[56]The catalogue for the 1959 Whitney Museum of American Art annual exhibition illustrates that Abstract Expressionist works notably out-number the realist works.

[57]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[58]Patricia Hills, Alice Neel (New York, 1983), 80.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[62]As quoted in Philip Eliasoph, Paul Cadmus: Yesterday and Today (Miami, 1981), 83.

[63]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[64]As quoted in Rodman, 210.

[65]Berman and Wechsler, 169.

[66]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid.

[69]Erik Barnouw, Tube of Plenty The Evolution of American Television (New York, 1975), 290.

[70]Ibid., 332.

[71]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[72]Barnouw, 413.

[73]Ibid., 411.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Tooker became a Roman Catholic and a parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi Church, in Windsor, Vermont, in 1976. Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985 Windsor is approximately eight miles from Tooker's home, north of Hartland.

[76]Roger Fry, Vision and Design (New York, 1960), 133.

[77]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[78]Thomas Garver, George Tooker (New York, 1985), 123.

CONCLUSION

> We must not mistake the history of techniques, or the history of artists, for the history of art."[1]

As we have seen, a good deal of the academic research about George Tooker and his colleagues has been accomplished within approximately the last ten years. Tooker has only recently received recognition for over forty years of dedication to his work, which may be explained as the result of an ideological bias.

According to Gombrich, the history of artists from Alberti and Vasari on has been told in terms of a progression, with significance alloted to the work of art in proportion to its subsequent influence.[2] Hence, those who write about art tend to avoid discussion of those artists on the cultural periphery, such as Tooker, and instead "deal more persuasively with words than paintings."[3] Thus, modern art history is a field which deals with a linear development, or a chain link method of joining one group or movement to the next. Although this notion is theoretically sound, any deviation from the norm renders such an analysis inaccurate.

Artists like Tooker, therefore, who chose to pursue realism when abstraction was the popular style, have had to deal with the consequences of negative criticism for many years. Yet beyond all the intellectual discussion about the

difference between realism and abstraction, a real problem arises when we try to divide the two methods into their various guises.

Realism may account for Naturalism, Social Realism, Magic Realism, Neue Sachlichkeit, some Surrealism[4] and the ultra-sharp hard edged focus paintings of the 1970s, while abstraction may account for Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism, and some Surrealism. Thus, both approaches are clearly pluralistic and, therefore, may not be distinguished by theoretical intent, but by the fact that while realism is essentially associative, abstraction is often symbolic.[5] Even so, there is symbolism in realism, and associations in abstraction. Furthermore, since neither term defines one specific movement, we are faced with the same problem that Tooker experiences being labelled as a Magic Realist because it is too vague to reflect his true intention

Tooker's intention has always been simple. He has always wanted to paint pictures in the manner to which he has grown accustomed, regardless of the fact that the very existence of realism until recently remained as a "bugbear to modernists, who were trying to exert the authority of the absolute."[6] Thus, by looking back at the work of Tooker's career, we must confront art historical bias and dismiss its prejudices about realism in the 1940s and 1950s.

It is clear that the paintings of George Tooker belong to the cultural periphery of art in America in the

twentieth century. Yet, even so, perhaps his greatest contribution to art history lies in the fact that he is foremost a humanitarian. I believe that Paul Cadmus, Jared French, and Lincoln Kirstein initially supported and encouraged Tooker in his creative endeavours for that very reason. After Cadmus and French introduced him to the technique of egg tempera painting, in 1944, it was clear that Tooker did not intend to use the method for Cadmus's form of moralizing satire, or French's interest in the psychological nature of man. He used it rather to indicate a genuine concern for mankind, whether it was illustrated in an overtly socially conscious work, such as The Subway (Fig. 17), or in a depiction of an intimate interaction, like Lovers II (Fig. 16).

When Tooker became involved with Cadmus and French, in 1944, he inadvertantly became part of a very small and esoteric group which Hyatt Mayor once referred to as the Fire Island School of Painting.[7] They made frequent trips to the island for summer vacations, where the location and its relative isolation inspired them to produce an on-going series of semi-mystical photographs, known as PAJAMA pictures. Although each artist also painted a number of pictures based on the PAJAMA photographs, those paintings represent only a small portion of their oeuvre.

After 1950, when PAJAMA ceased to exist,[8] both Cadmus and French made major changes in the aesthetic content of

their work. During the mid 1950s, Cadmus abandoned painting scenes of vulgar images of humanity en masse, and instead focused on creating accurate depictions of academically inspired nude studies of men and women as an overt reaction to the concurrent domination of the Abstract Expressionists.[9] Sometime around 1964, French forsook figuration and turned towards abstraction in an attempt to clarify his interpretations of Jungian theories.[10] Yet, Tooker has remained undaunted by the pull of cultural assimilation because his own outlook suggests an alternative to the concept of change which is based on a timeless philosophy.

Tooker's work implies that art which reflects a sincere devotion to ideas of political, ethical, and spiritual significance may exist concurrently with art propagated by those interested in trends, regardless of time or place. His technical affinities lie with the work of the Renaissance masters, and the basis for his social expression may be associated with the tradition of the American Social Realists of the 1930s but, as an individual, his paintings have evolved their own insight.

Tooker is an individual in context. His work represents a meaningful assimilation of both past and present concerns. Thus, despite the variety of artistic activities which shaped the development of art in America from the 1930s to the present, Tooker adhered to an original

tenet that clearly separates him from his contemporaries. Beyond style, he chose an inherent social consciousness linked with a profound spiritual consciousness to express a unique vision of twentieth century man, with the social aspect supported by his milieu, and the interest in religiosity reinforced by his study of the Renaissance.

Tooker is now well known in spite of the profusion of cultural distractions throughout his long career. Furthermore, his timing is impeccable since Tooker is close to famous in a time when the concept of individuality itself is famous. For example, today, in New York, both Keith Haring's simple figurative compositions and Julian Schnabel's expostulations in broken crockery are hailed as definitively modern. Yet, neither artist professes an affinity to a specific movement. The intent is clear, individuality represents true creativity. Tooker's own intention, which conforms to this proposition, emphasises a more humanitarian aspect since his personal belief is that the potential for mankind's evolution is revealed with one's own dedication to others, and in patience, humility, and responsibility. Tooker himself provided me with the best example of his devout, unassuming nature when I asked him to explain his reaction to the growing popularity of his work and he replied "I don't really know much about it."[11]

Footnotes

[1]As quoted by Bernard Berenson in Daniel V. Thompson's The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting (New York, 1956), 7.

[2]As quoted in an article by Martica Sawin, entitled "Realism and Realities" in Art Journal, Summer, 1982, 157.

[3]Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 178.

[4]Linda Nochlin, "The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law" in Art in America, September/October, 1973, 54.

[5]Ibid., 55.

[6]Hilton Kramer, "The Return of Realism" in New York Times, March 12, 1978, section 2, 1.

[7]As quoted by Mayor in Lincoln Kirstein's Paul Cadmus (New York, 1984), 63.

[8]P. Morrin, "Pajama Game: The Photography Collection of Paul Cadmus" in Arts Magazine, December, 1978, 119.

[9]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

[10]As quoted by Jared French in an article entitled "Artists on Their Art" in Art International, April, 1968, 54.

[11]Tooker, in conversation, 14 November 1985.

Figure 1: Kenneth Hayes Miller, Nude by A Penthouse Window, c.1929-1939.

Figure 2: Reginald Marsh, Coney Island Beach, 1947. Egg tempera, 30 1/4 x 48 in.

Figure 3: Paul Cadmus, Coney Island, 1935. Oil on canvas, 81.9 x 92.07 cm.

Figure 4: George Tooker, Coney Island, 1948. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 19 x 26 in.

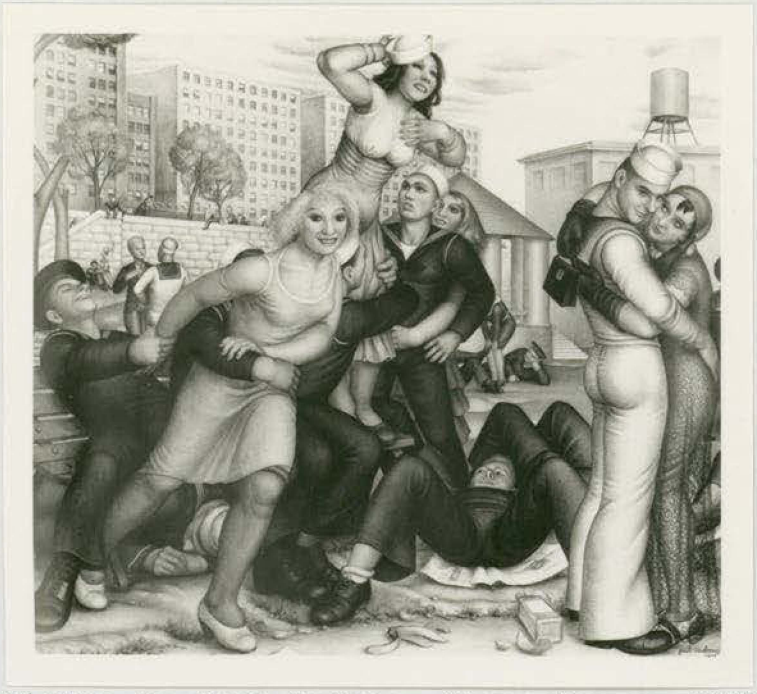

Figure 5: Paul Cadmus, Shore Leave, 1933. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 91.44 cm.

Figure 6: Paul Cadmus, The Fleet's In!, 1934. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 152.4 cm.

Figure 7: Paul Cadmus, Sailors and Floosies, 1938. Oil and tempera on linen on pressed wood panel, 63.5 x 101.16 cm.

Figure 8: Paul Cadmus, Male Nude (NM 149), 1979. Crayon on toned paper, 23.5 x 47.63 cm.

Figure 9: Paul Cadmus, What I Believe, 1947-1948. Egg tempera on pressed wood panel, 41.28 x 68.58 cm.

Figure 10: Jared French, The Sea, 1946. Egg tempera, 24 1/2 x 36 in.

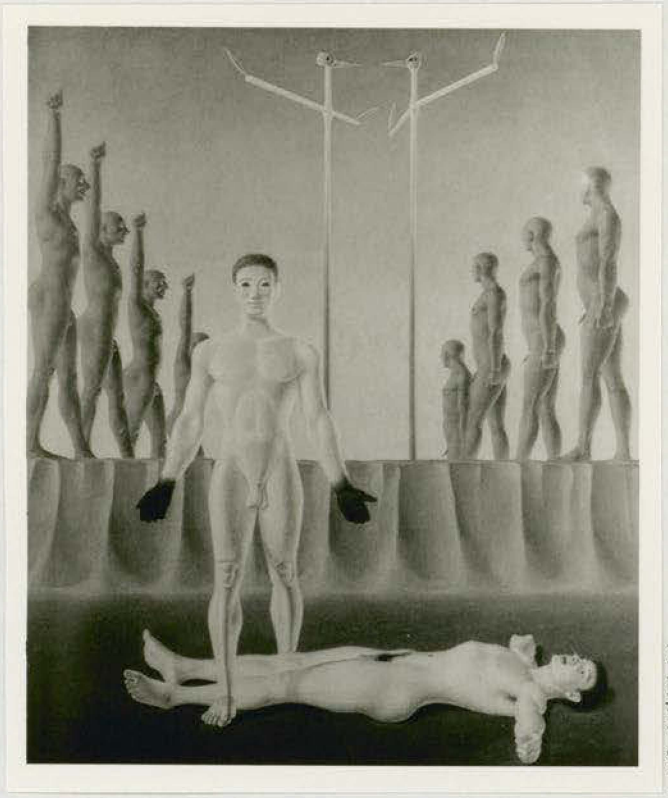

Figure 11: Jared French, Murder, 1942. Egg tempera on composition board, 17 1/4 x 14 5/8 in.

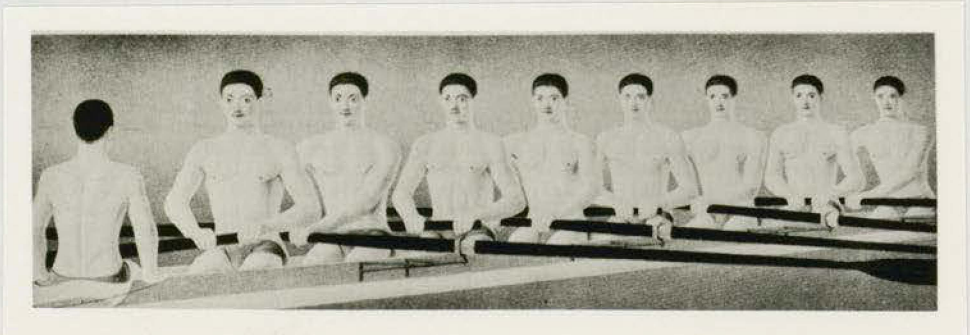

Figure 12: Jared French, Crew, 1941. Egg tempera on composition board, 9 1/2 x 30 5/16 in.

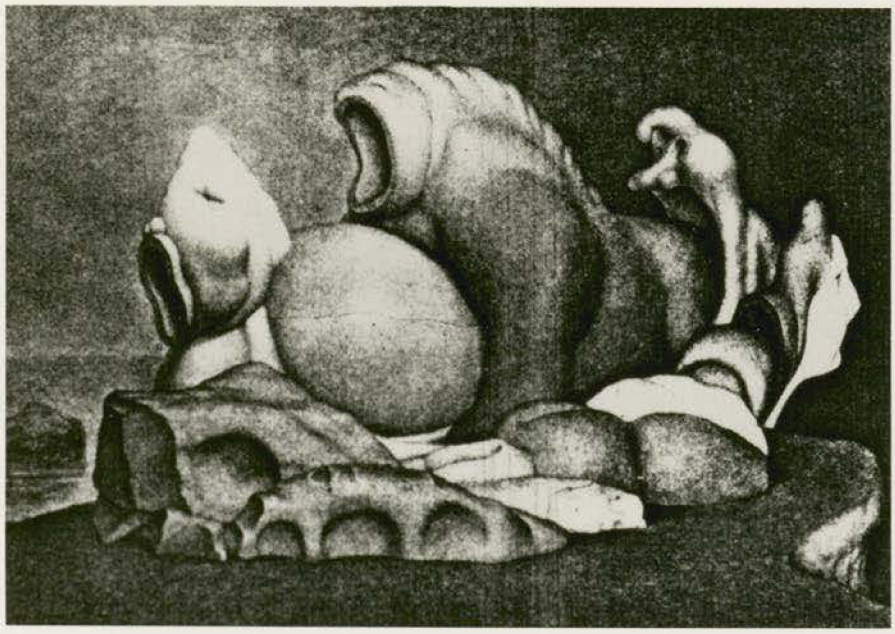

Figure 13: Jared French, Nest (Syzygy), 1968-69. Pen and ink, 28 1/4 x 41 1/2 in.

Figure 14: George Tooker, Window II, 1956. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 24 x 18 in.

Figure 15: George Tooker, Mirror II, 1962. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 20 x 18 in.

Figure 16: George Tooker, Lovers II, 1960. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 22 x 26 in.

Figure 17: George Tooker, The Subway, 1950. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 18 x 36 in.

Figure 18: George Tooker, Government Bureau, 1956. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 19 5/8 x 29 5/8 in.

Figure 19: George Tooker, The Waiting Room, 1959. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 24 x 30 in.

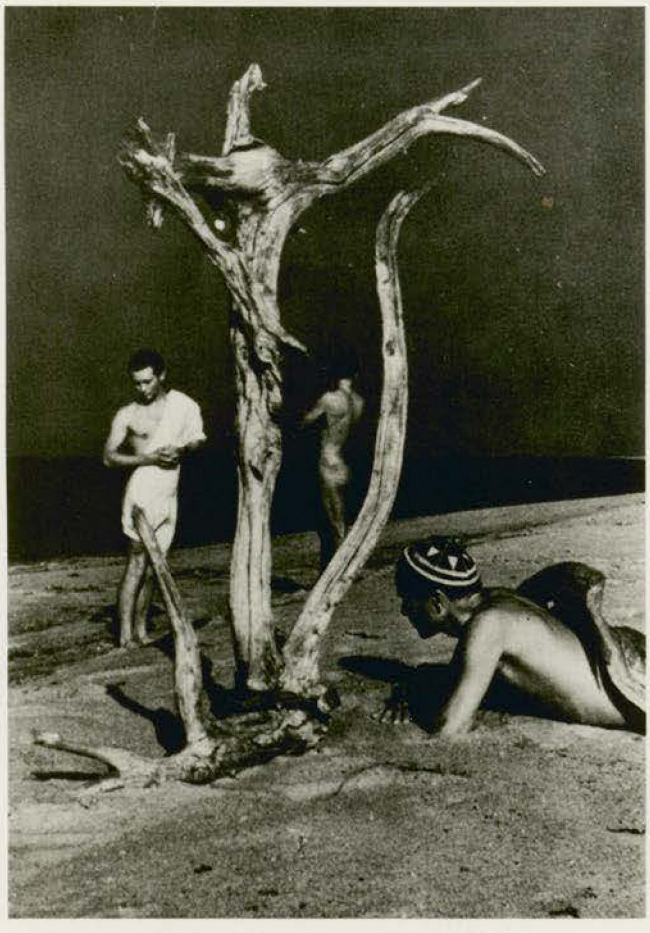

Figure 20: Photograph of George Tooker, Jared French, and Monroe Wheeler (L to R), c.1945.

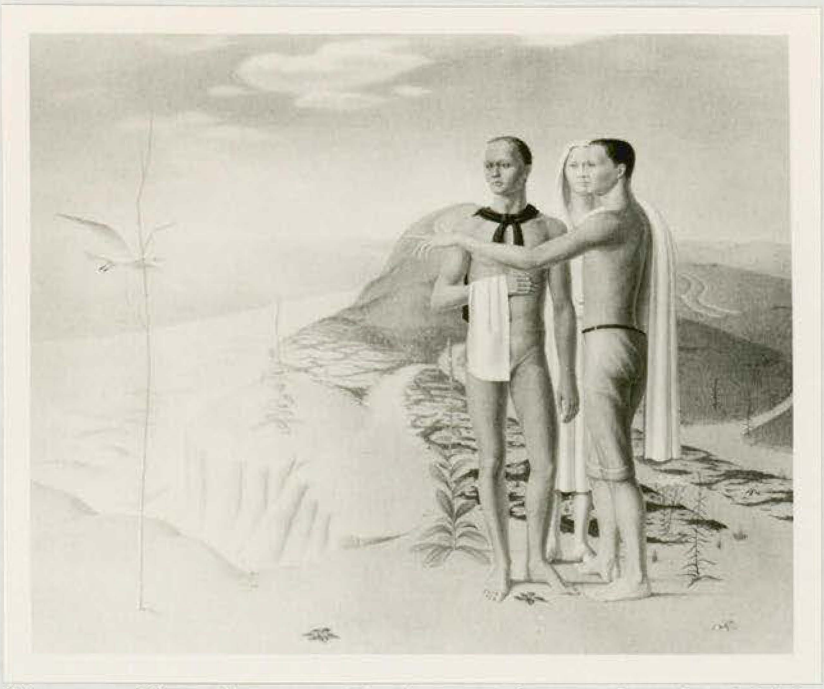

Figure 21: George Tooker, The Island, 1946. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 15 1/4 x 18 1/2 in.

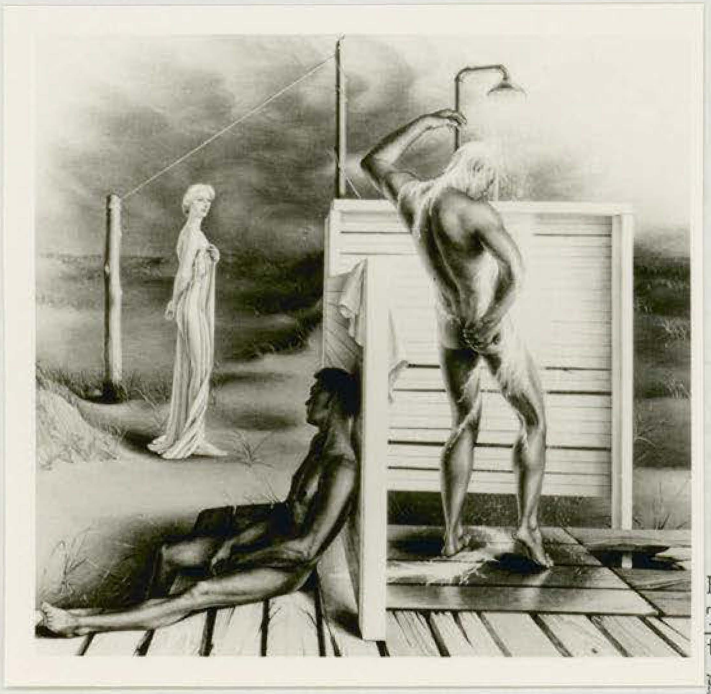

Figure 22: Paul Cadmus, The Shower, 1943. Egg tempera on pressed wood panel, 38.73 x 39,37 cm.

Figure 23: Jared French, Three Women and a Lifeguard, 1938.

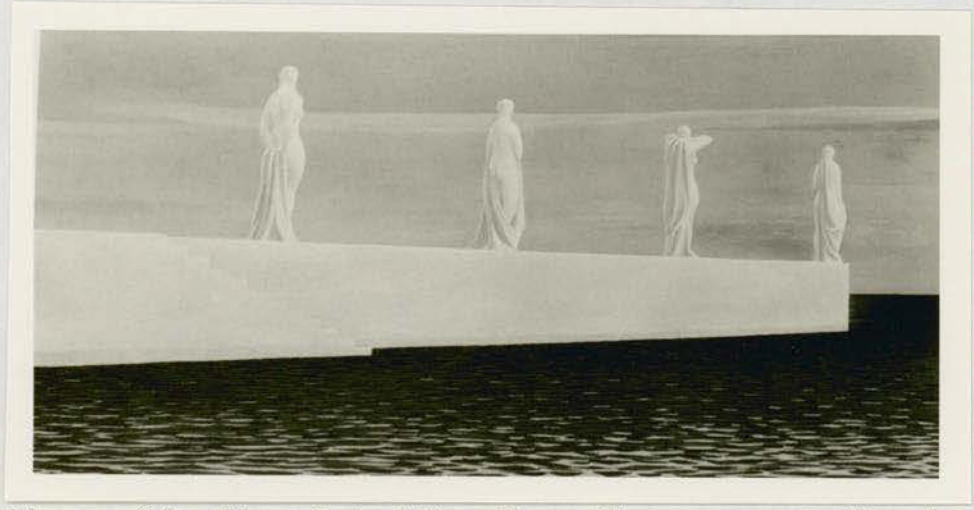

Figure 24: Alex Colville, Four Figures on a Wharf, 1952.
Casein tempera, 35.5 x 71.1 cm.

Figure 25: Paul Cadmus, Fantasia on a Theme by Dr. S., 1946. Egg tempera on composition board, 13 x 13 in.

Figure 26: George Tooker, Sleepers II, 1957. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 15 1/4 x 27 3/8 in.

Figure 27: George Tooker, The Artist's Daughter, 1955. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 24 x 12 1/2 in.

Figure 28: George Tooker, Sleepers I, 1951. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 18 x 30 in.

Figure 29: George Tooker, Cornice, 1949. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 24 x 16 in.

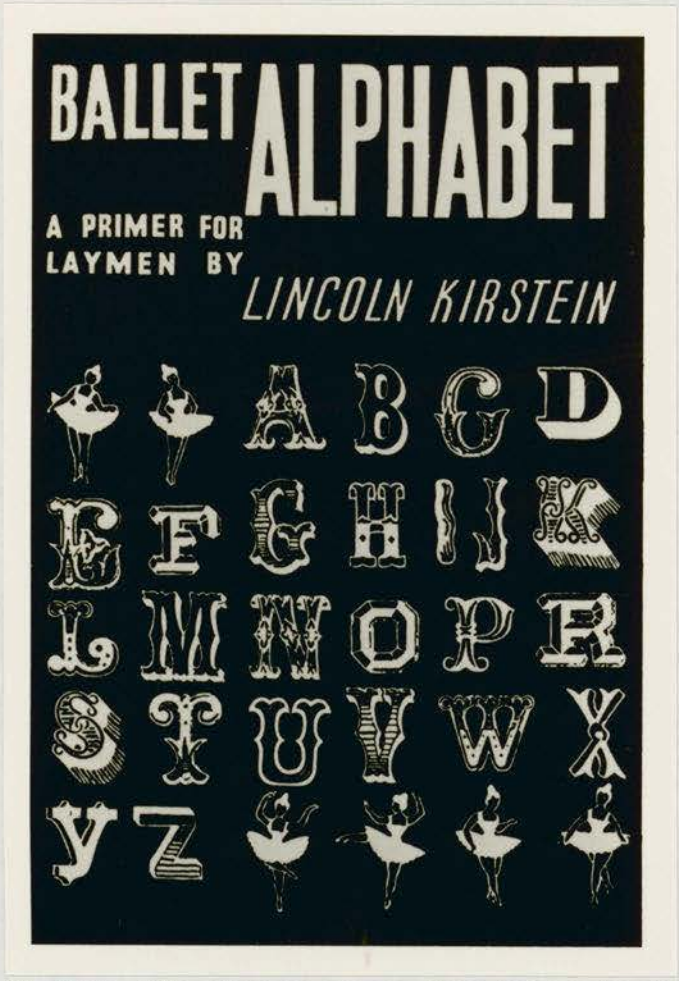

Figure 30: Cover page for Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Alphabet, with illustrations by Paul Cadmus, 1939.

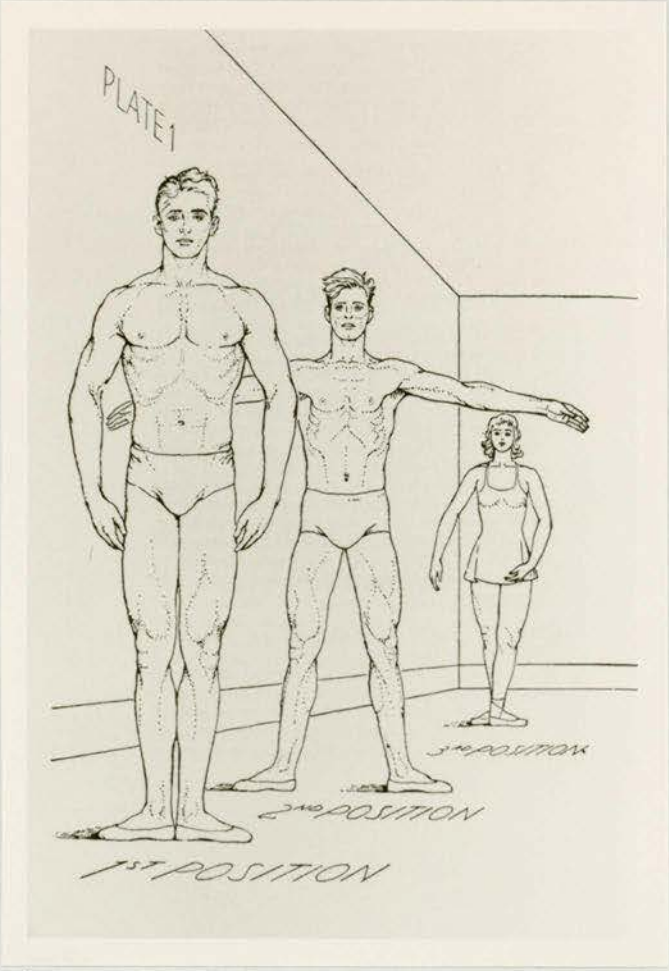

Figure 31: Plate One; illustration by Paul Cadmus for Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Alphabet, 1939.

Figure 32: George Tooker, Festa, Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 21 1/2 x 17 1/4 in.

Figure 33: Otto Dix, Dr. Mayer-Hermann, 1926.
Oil and tempera on wood, 58 3/4 x 39 in.

Figure 34: Adolf Ziegler, The Judgement of Paris, c.1937.

Figure 35: Carl Schwalbach, The Wise and Foolish Virgins, c.1937.

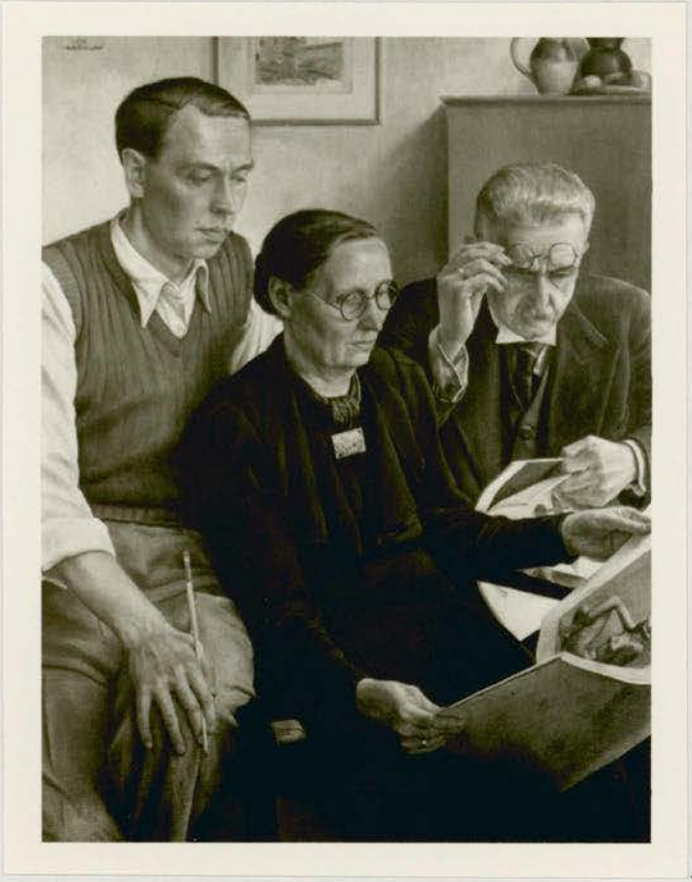

Figure 36: Udo Wendel, The Art Magazine, c.1937

Figure 37: Giotto di Bondone, Two details from the Massacre of the Innocents, from the Life of Christ Panels, Arena Chapel, Padua, c.1305. Fresco.

Figure 38: George Tooker, Men and Women Fighting, 1958. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 24 x 30 in.

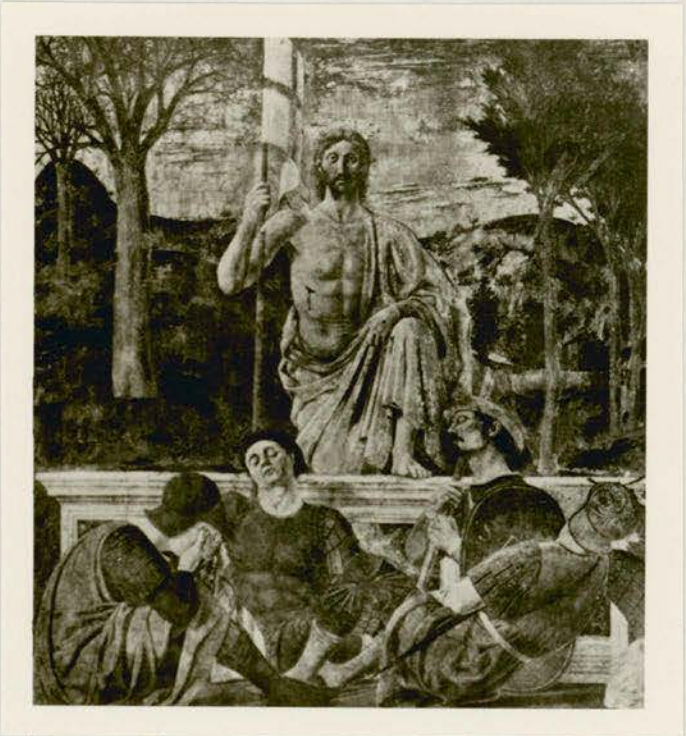

Figure 39: Piero della Francesca, Resurrection, c.1454. Palazzo Communale, Borgo San Sepolcro.

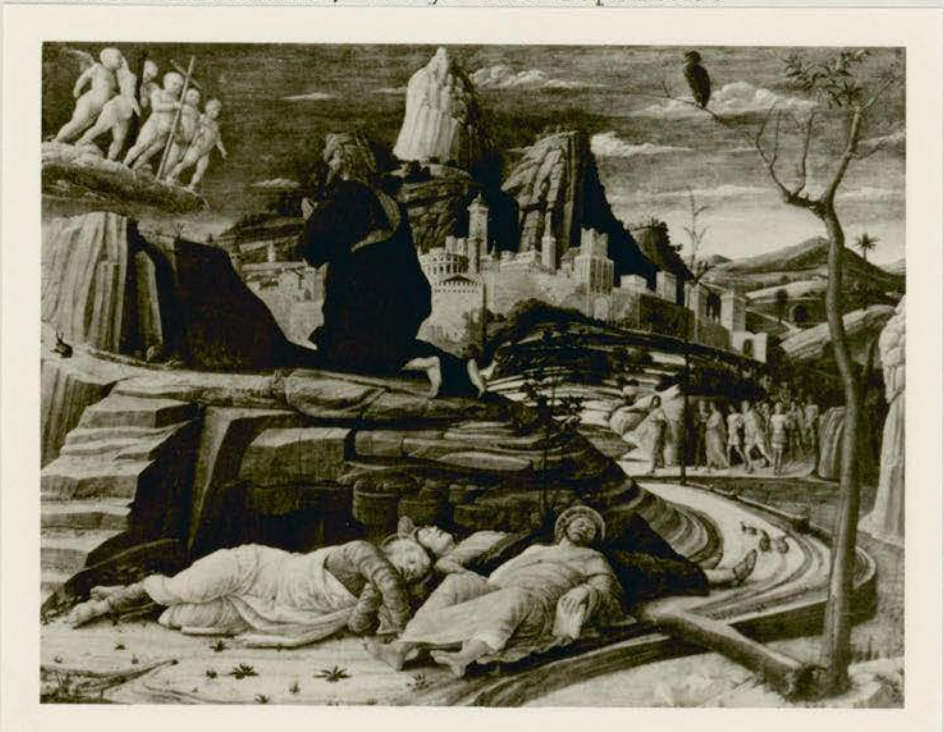

Figure 40: Andrea Mantegna, The Agony in the Garden, c.1460. Panel, 24 3/4 x 31 1/2 in. National Gallery, London.

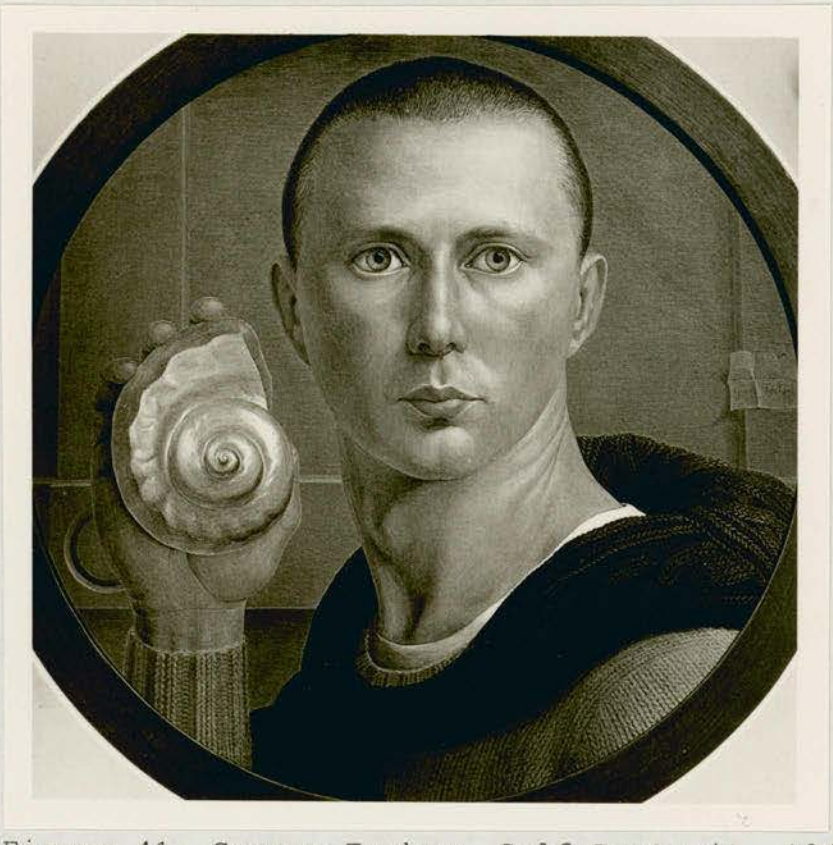

Figure 41: George Tooker, Self Portrait, 1947. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 16 1/2 in. diameter.

Figure 42: Bronzino, Portrait of Lucrezia Panchiatichi, c.1540. Panel, 40 3/4 x 33 in. Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 43: Quentin Metsys, Unequal Pair, c.1515-1520. Panel, 16 1/2 x 24 3/8 in.

Figure 44: George Tooker, The Bird Watchers, 1948. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 26 1/2 x 32 1/2 in.

Figure 45: George Tooker, Supper, 1963. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 20 x 24 in.

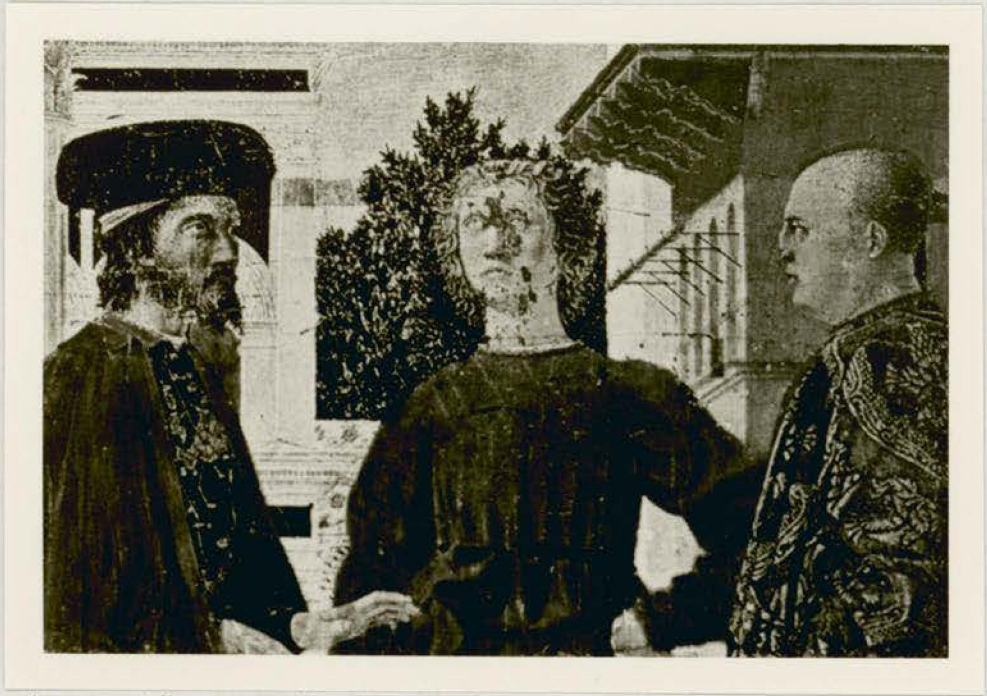

Figure 46: Detail from Piero della Francesca's Flagellation of Christ, 1460s. Panel, 23 1/4 x 32 in. Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino.

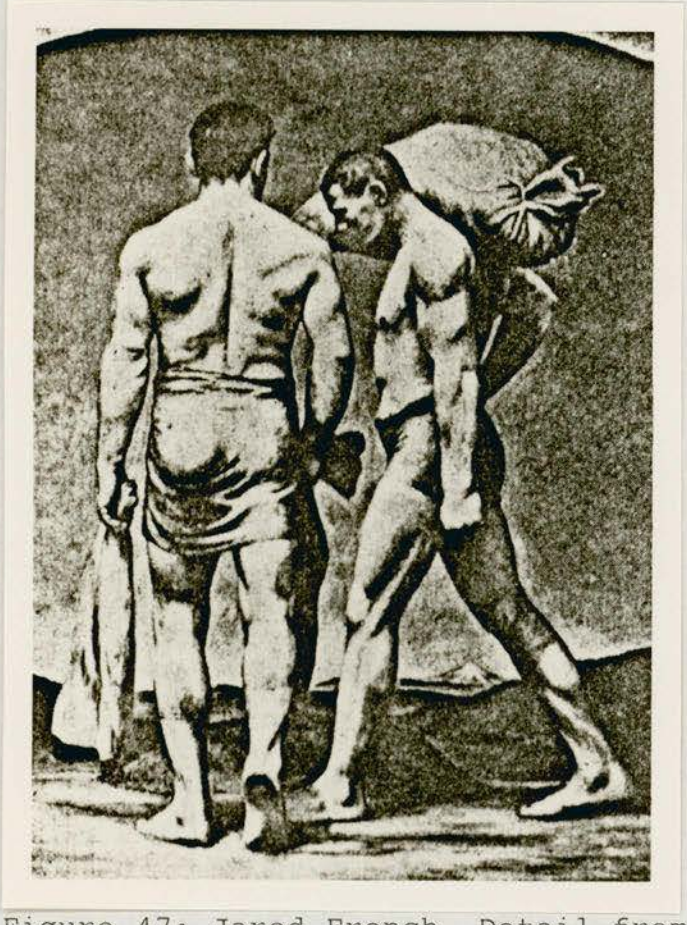

Figure 47: Jared French, Detail from The Tropics, 1935-1939. Panel from the Origins of Food mural.

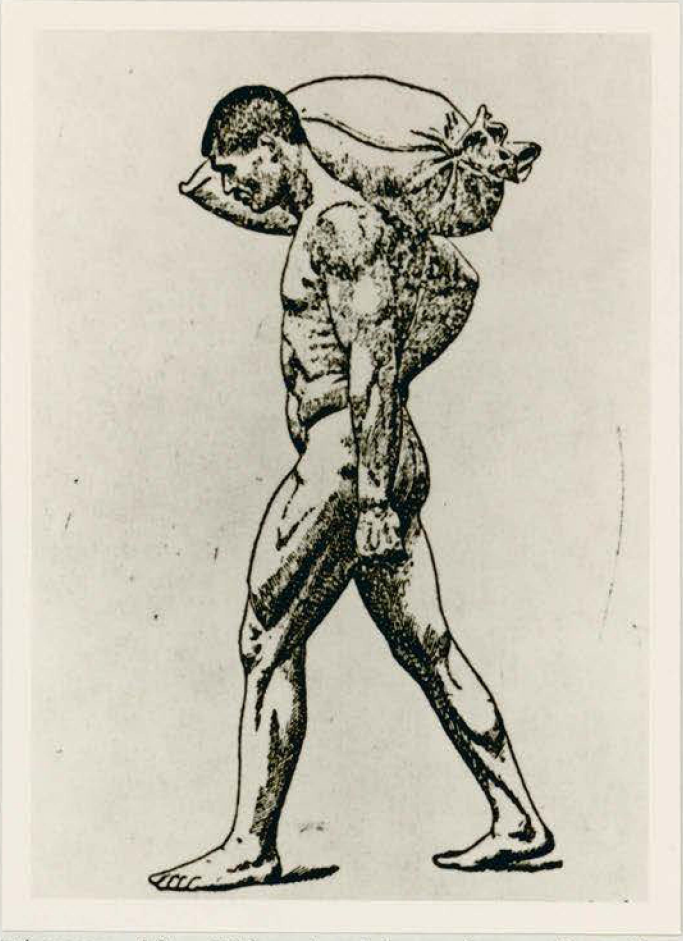

Figure 48: Illustration from Dr. Paul Richer's Physiologie Attitudes et Mouvements, published in Paris, 1921.

Figure 49: Paul Cadmus, Pocahontas Saving the Life of Captain John Smith, 1938. Oil and tempera on canvas, 208.28 x 411.48 cm.

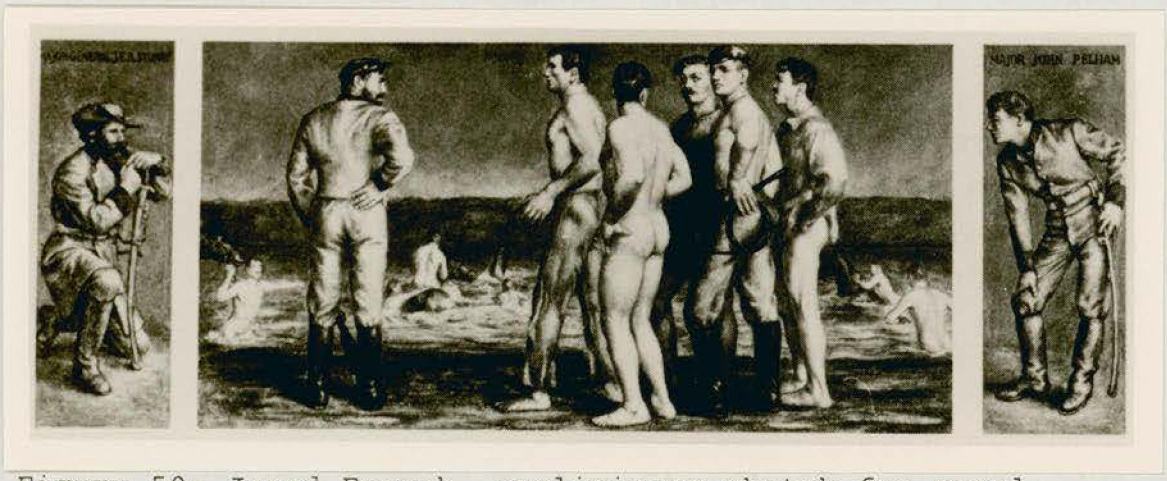

Figure 50: Jared French, preliminary sketch for mural entitled Cavalrymen Crossing a River, 1937.

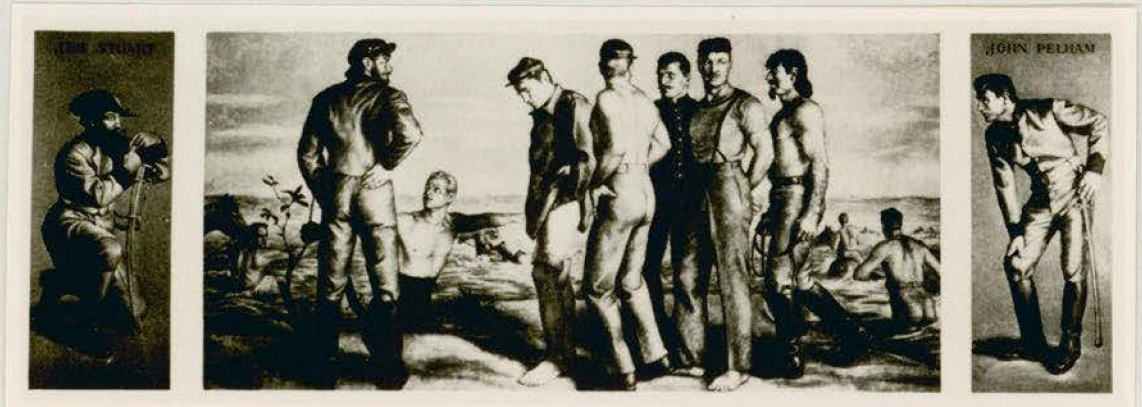

Figure 51: Jared French, final version of mural entitled Cavalrymen Crossing a River, 1937.

Figure 52: Paul Cadmus, Woman, 1909. Crayon on wrapping paper, 8 1/8 x 6 1/2 in.

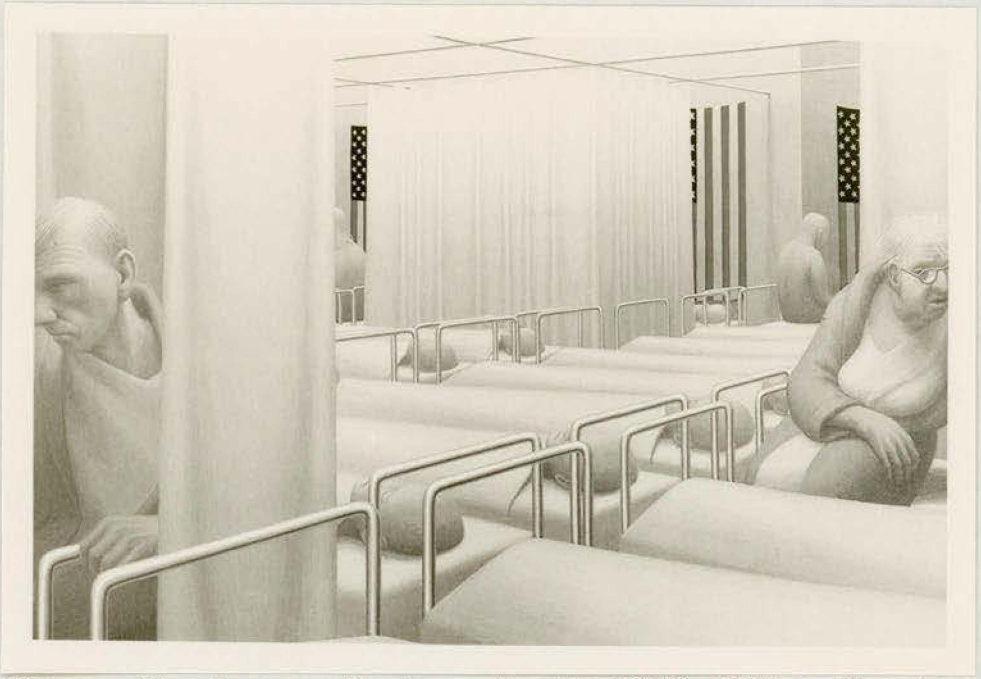

Figure 53: George Tooker, Ward, 1970-1971. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 19 3/4 x 29 1/2 in.

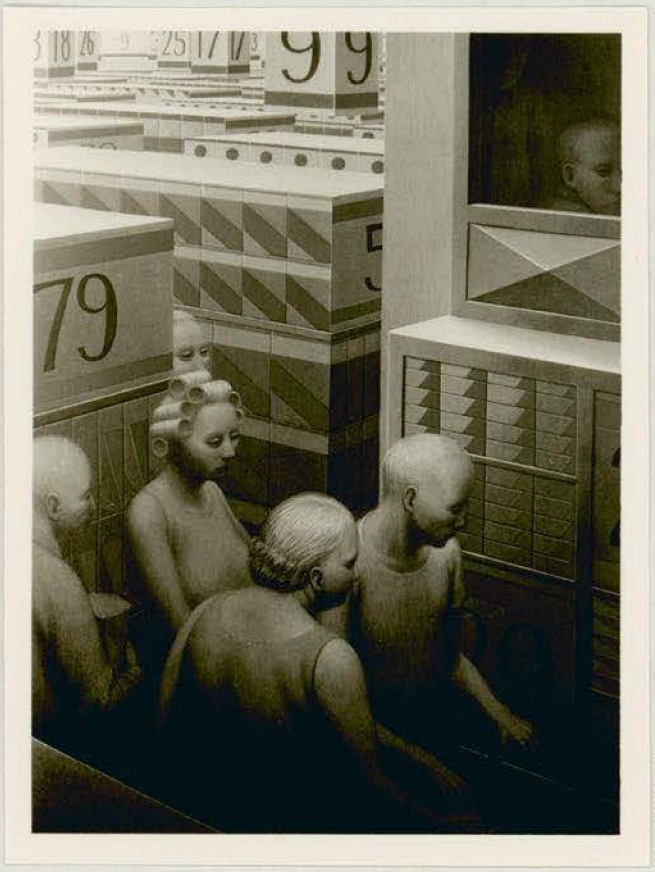

Figure 54: George Tooker, Supermarket, 1973. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 23 x 17 1/4 in.

Figure 55: George Tooker, The Seven Sacraments, 1980. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 42 x 132 in.

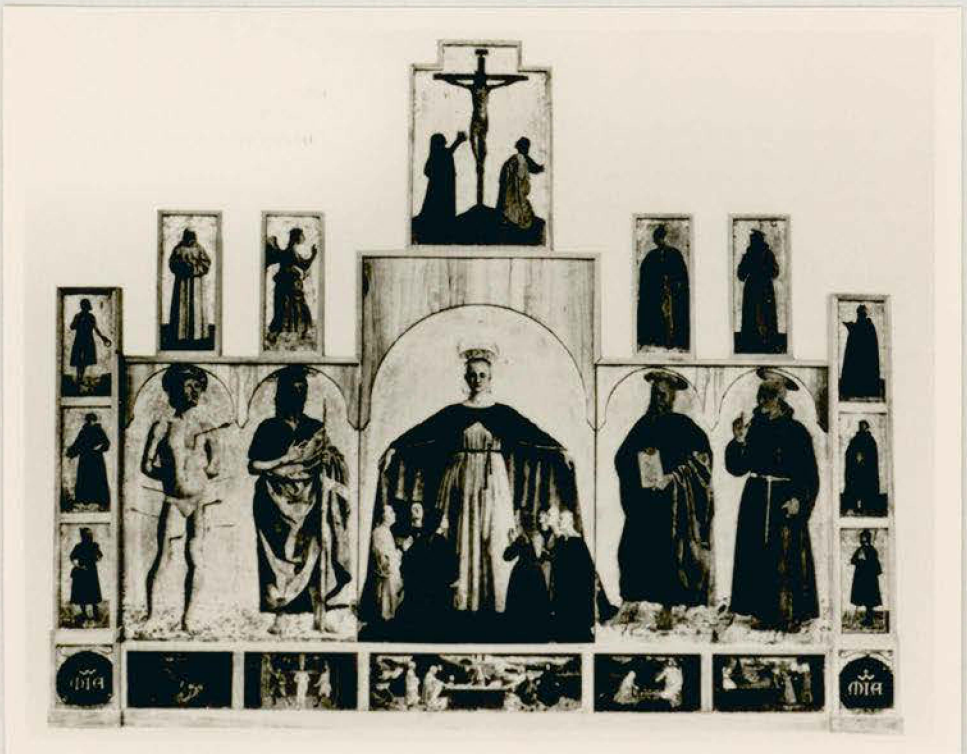

Figure 56: Piero della Francesca, Misercordia Altarpiece, c.1445. Panel, 8 ft. x 10 ft. 6 in. Pinacoteca, San Sepolcro.

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APPENDIX 1

GEORGE TOOKER, EXHIBITIONS

Major One-Artist Exhibitions

1951 Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, N.Y.

1955 Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, N.Y.

1960 Robert Isaacson Gallery, New York, N.Y.

1962 Robert Isaacson Gallery, New York, N.Y.

1964 Durlacher Brothers, New York, N.Y.

1967 Durlacher Brothers, New York, N.Y.

Jaffe-Friede Gallery, Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

1974-1975 George Tooker: New Paintings: 1947-1973. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Il.;
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, N Y.,
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, In.

Selected Group Exhibitions

1947-1969 George Tooker has exhibited in the Whitney Museum Annuals, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1950 and 1952, and at the Venice Biennale in 1956. He has been included in more than seventy group exhibitions between 1944 and the present, the most recent of which were:

1982 Selected Works on Paper: Marisa del Re Gallery, New York, N.Y.

Homo Sapiens, The Many Images: Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Arts, Ridgefield, CT.

1983 Born in Brooklyn: The Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dreams and Nightmares, Utopian Visions in Modern Art. Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

1984 Contemporary Artists in Vermont. Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT.

VITA

Surname: WIGMORE Given Names: JODI ANN

Place of Birth: Fredericton, N.B Date of Birth: April 27, 1962

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA B.C.	1980	to 1981
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA, B.C.	1981	to 1986
	____	to ____

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.A.	1984	University of Victoria
	____	

Honours and Awards:

Publications:

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GEORGE TOOKER: A REASSESSMENT OF THE ARTIST

Author [redacted]
(Signature)

JODI ANN WIGMORE
(Name)

24 July 1987
(Date)