

Work and Play

A Case Study of Philip Guston

- The Great Depression left the nation in a desperate state. 1929-1939
 - ❖ Unemployment rates soaring, savings lost, the banks collapsed, homes lost, and hunger ravaging the nation
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt established a federally funded program in efforts to help end the crisis by creating and providing new jobs.

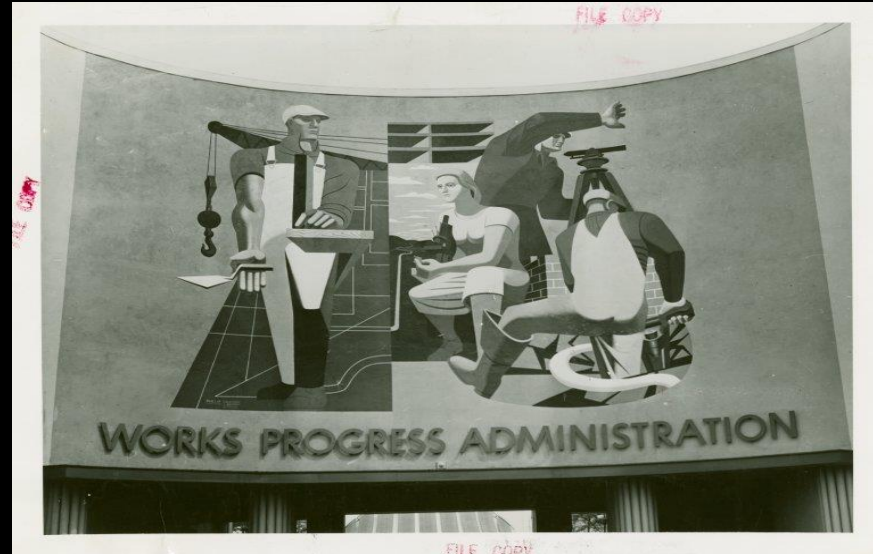
The WPA (Works Progress Administration)



Recipients and Hobbes: Youth in Work

◆ Youths gathering scrap metals near factory sites in Long Island City, Circa 1939.

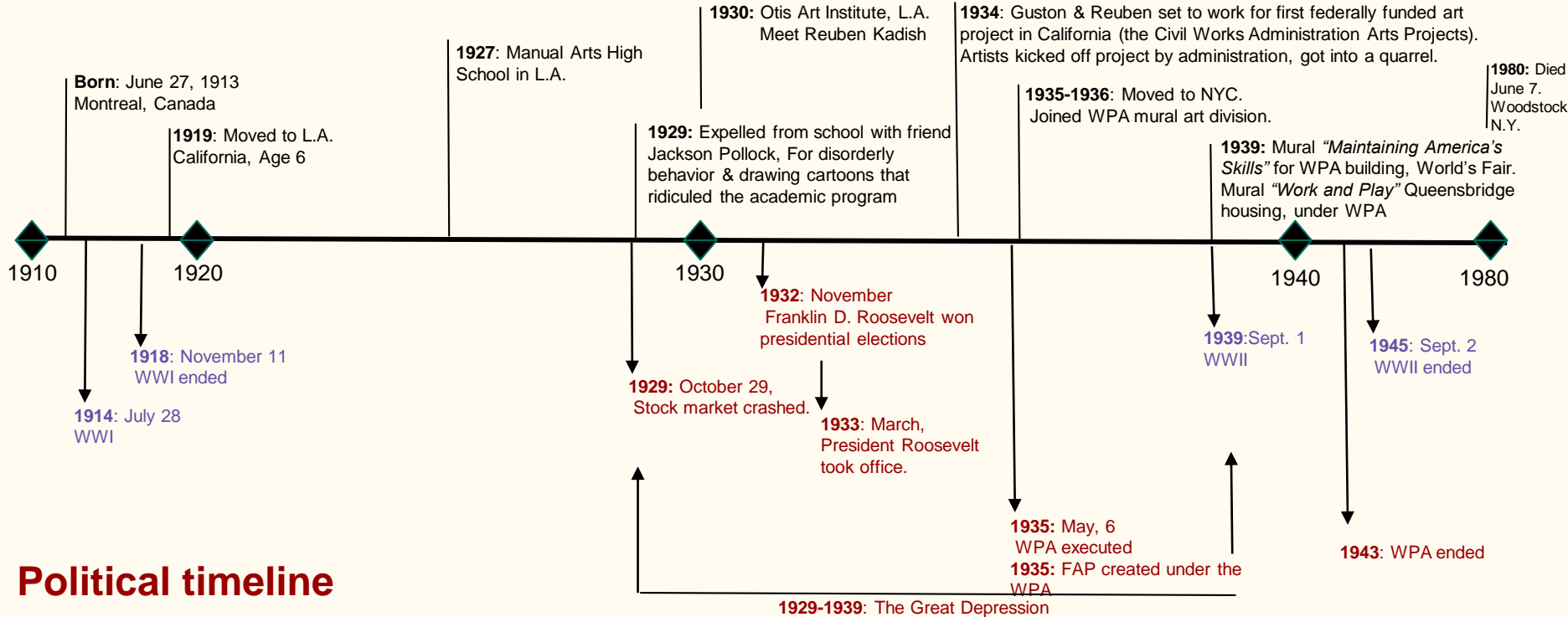
Image credit New York Public Library Archives.



◆ *Maintaining America's Skills*. Philip Guston, Mural- New York World's Fair WPA building, 1939-1940.
Image Credit New York Public Library Archives.

Philip Guston an American artist and a product of the Great Depression/WPA

Philip Guston timeline



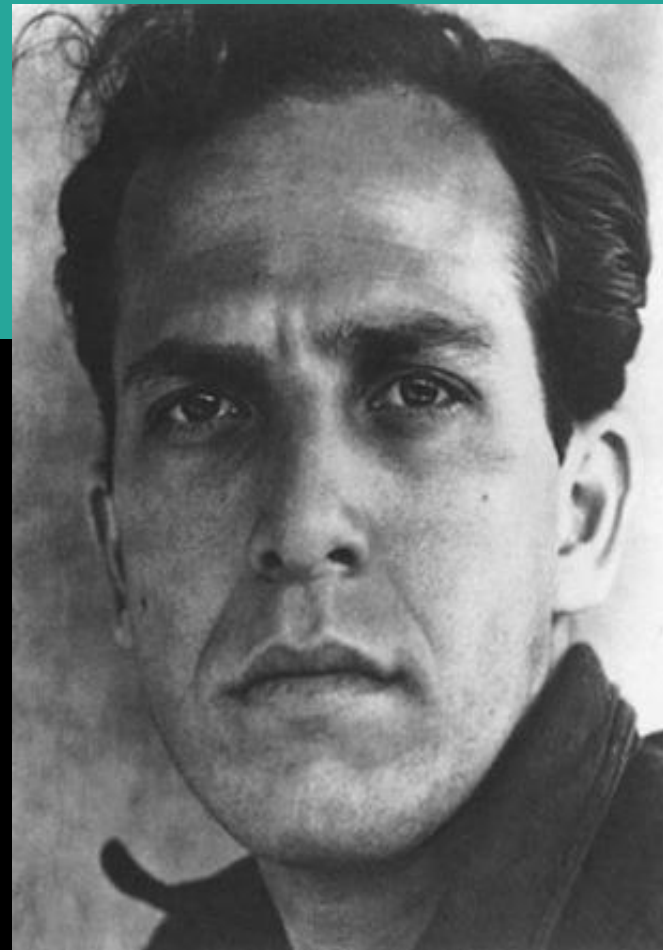
Political timeline

Philip Guston

A young, eager, passionate and rebellious artist Philip Guston was hungry to paint.

The Great Depression

- Aware of the harder realities of everyday life, witnessing the spread of the social unrest of depression, these young artists
-
- wanted to appeal to the public and create works of art that conveyed a social message, a social message concerned with the issues and problems of the time.



FAP (Federal Arts Project) 1935-1943

- Established under the WPA and director Holger Cahill in 1935
- Federally funded work program for artists and the arts
- Provided work relief, brought the arts to the public, wanted to integrate art into the everyday life of a person.

“Sell to the American people the idea that art is and should be an integral part of our civilization.”

- Edward Bruce (Treasury Dept. Washington, Advisory Committee to Treasury on Fine Arts), January 19. 1934

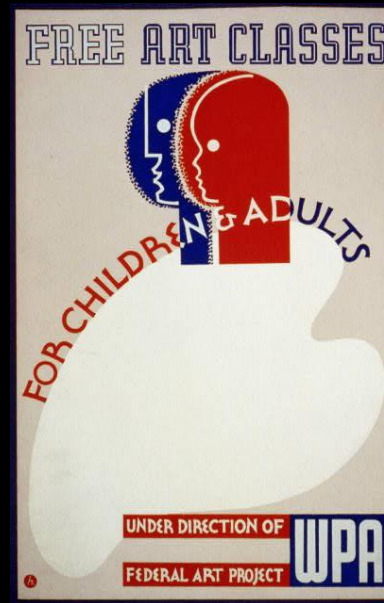
Credit Smithsonian Archives of American Art



◆ Poster for NYC, WPA art project sponsored children's festival at Community Square, 1940, Queensbridge Housing, 41st Avenue, LIC. Image Credit Library of Congress Archives.



◆ Queens Community Art Center: Students in painting class, 36-76 Roosevelt Avenue, Queens. 1939. Image Credit New York Public Library Archives.



◆ Poster announcing Free Art Classes for children & adults under FAP, WPA, circa 1936-1941, New York. Image Credit Library of Congress Archives.

How did the FAP promote idea: "Art is for everyone?"

- ❖ Created public works of art: Murals and sculptures.
- ❖ Established 100 community art centers throughout nation.
- ❖ Created exhibitions.
- ❖ Provided free art classes and art education for adults and children.

Guston working on the “Work and Play” mural



Children are watching as Philip Guston works on the Queensbridge mural. As intended by the FAP program “integrate art,” these children are receiving first hand experience in “Art.” They are witnessing and learning how art is made.

Philip Guston & Mexican Mural Movement

- Inspired by the Mexican Mural Movement (1920's):The Mexican Government hired Muralists in efforts to reunify a country torn apart by the Mexican Revolution. Large numbers of murals with nationalistic, social, and political messages were created on public buildings with the belief that art was for the education and betterment of the people.
- Guston & friends watched Mexican Muralists such as Jose Orozco & David Siqueiros hard at work.



◆ Jose Clemente Orozco, *Prometheus*, 1930, Fresco, 240 x 342 inches
Pomona College, Claremont, CA.

Image Credit Pomona College Museum of Art.



◆ David Alfaro Siqueiros, *America Tropical*, Olvera Street, 1932, CA.

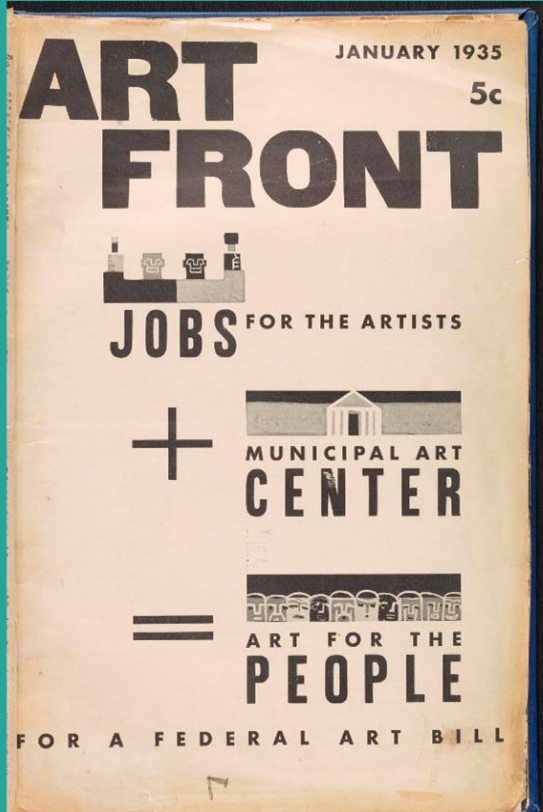
Image Credit America Tropical Interpretive Center.

Young Philip Guston with friends in Mexico



◆ Jules Langsner, Philip Guston, and Reuben Kadish with the mural *Inquisition* in Mexico, circa 1934. Image Credit Smithsonian Archives of American Art.

Artists Labor Movement



◆ Art Front, Magazine, 1934-1937
Image Credit Archives of American Art



◆ Artists' Union Rally, ca. 1935
Image Credit Archives of American Art

Artists organized a group who demonstrated and rallied for the unionization of artists. They believed that artists were workers and art was a cultural labor like any other labor job worthy of government support. The Movement also fought for the protection of their employment as well as improving working conditions.

- 1937 - Artists' Union became local 60 of the United Office and Professional Workers of the CIO.

Philip Guston & The Artists' Union

Philip Guston was interested in and studied Italian Renaissance Fresco art. When Mexican Muralist Orozco would give lectures on Giotto (Italian renaissance painter) Guston and friends such as James Brooks and the Pollock brothers would attend these lectures.

The lectures were given at the New School and at the Artists' Union.

"I was the President of the Union of 3 years...during which time, of course, I got to know most of the artists in New York...Oh, I was active with men like Stuart Davis, Arshille Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Ben Shahn, Bernarda Bryson, Philip Guston..." -Boris Gorelick, 1964. Credit Archives of American Art, Smithsonian

Institute.



◆ Reuben Kadish and Philip Guston with their W.P.A. mural, ca 1936.
Image Credit Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Queensbridge Housing

Philip Guston hard at work on the mural “*Work and Play*” for the Queensbridge community center in Long Island City.



◆ Philip Guston working on mural for Queensbridge, 1940 July 29.
Image Credit Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Site of Philip Guston’s mural “*Work and Play*.”
The Queensbridge housing complex, a WPA funded project.



◆ View of Queensbridge projects during construction, LIC, Queens, N.Y. May 15, 1939
Image Credit LaGuardia and Wagner Archives

Work and Play

Complete for the Queensbridge Houses' Community Center in 1940



◆ Guston, Philip. *Work and Play*, Queensbridge community center, 1940
Image Credit NYCHA

“The material in this mural is related to the general activities of the Community Center.” - Philip Guston, Explanation of mural in letter. Credit LaGuardia and Wagner Archives.

- **The Groups, Starting from Left to Right:**

- ⇒ The Dignity of the family unit
- ⇒ Children playing and fighting in a semi-comic aspect, in the background - debris, etc. and crime lending into
- ⇒ Demolition, planning and construction
- ⇒ Athletics
- ⇒ Musical expression, drama, gaiety
- ⇒ Health - care of the child
- ⇒ Youngsters at play, craft activity - in foreground. In background - adult education
- ⇒ The arts and crafts - Sculpture, painting, puppeteering and teaching

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Queens Historical Society



Internship

Research based
internship.

Archival research
conducted - involves
searching through
archival records.

Archival records - held
in institutions such as
libraries and museums
which are accessed on
the web or in person
by appointment.

Archives

An Archive is a collection of historical records/documents

Archives

- ❖ The La Guardia and Wagner Archives
- ❖ The Library of Congress Archives
- ❖ The Museum of Modern Art Archives
- ❖ The NYC Department of Records and Information Services
- ❖ The New York Public Library
- ❖ The Queens Library Archives
- ❖ The Smithsonian Archives of American Art



Queens Library



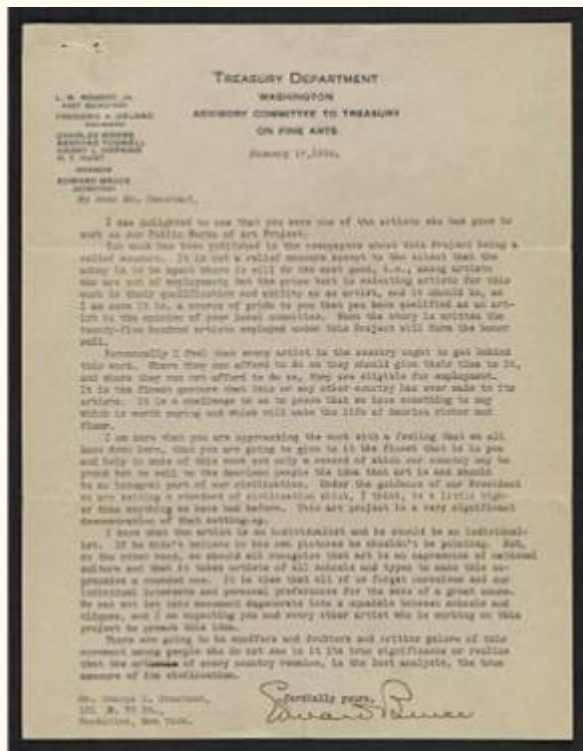
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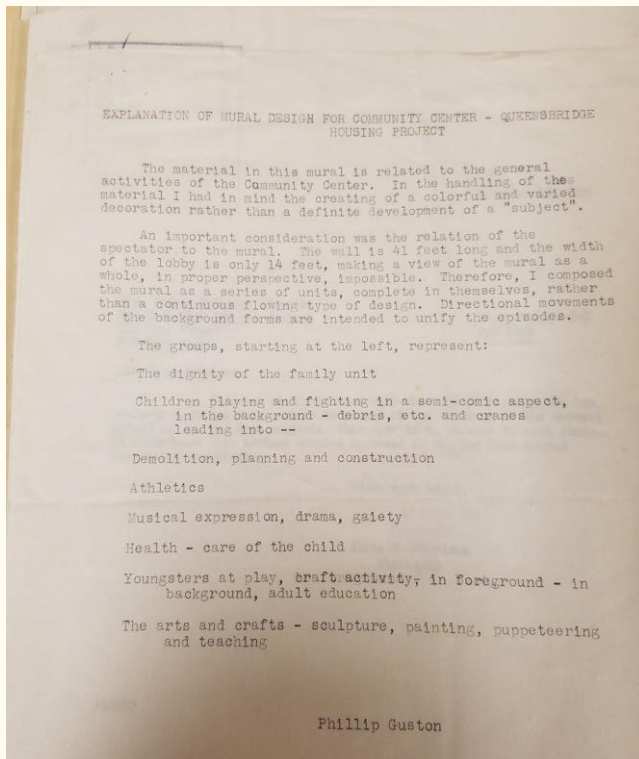
Archival Documents

Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Online

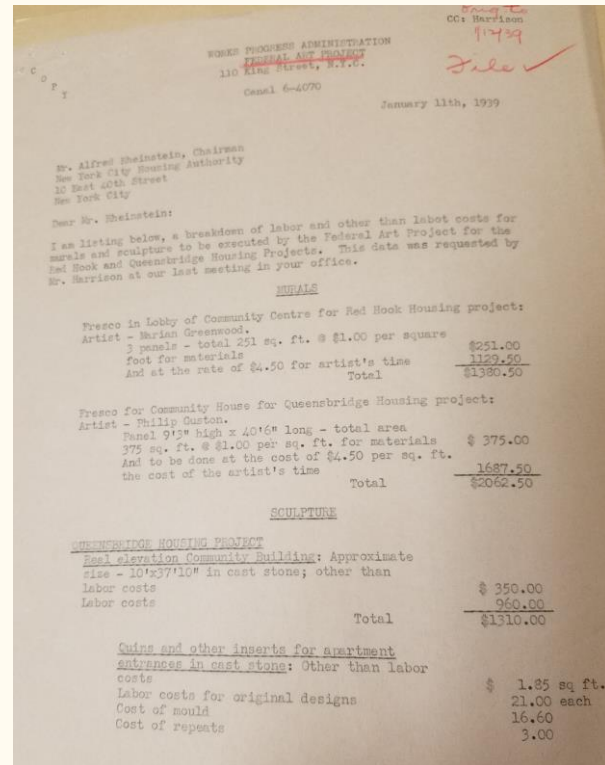
La Guardia and Wagner Archives, In person at La Guardia Community College



Letter welcoming George Constant to the WPA, 1934 Jan.17
Image Credit Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



Philip Guston explanation of mural design for "Work and Play"
Credit LaGuardia and Wagner Archives

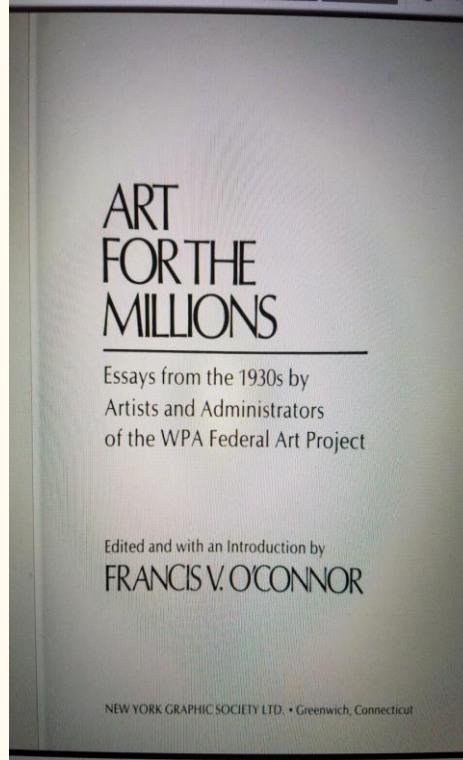


WPA labor and costs letter, 1939 Jan. 11.
Credit LaGuardia and Wagner Archives

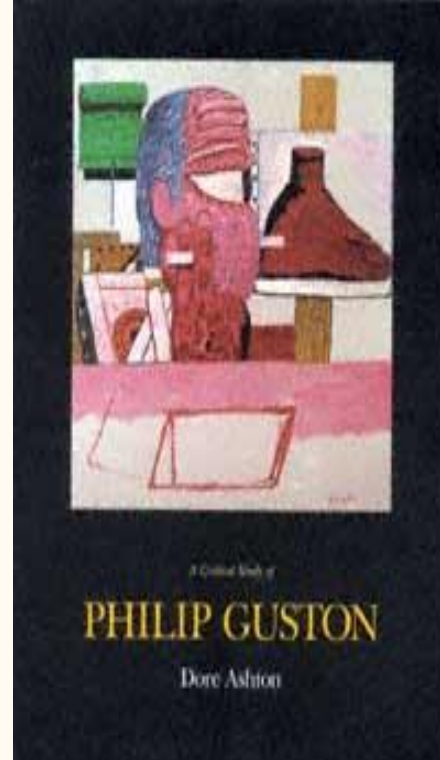
Books & Magazines Found Through Archives



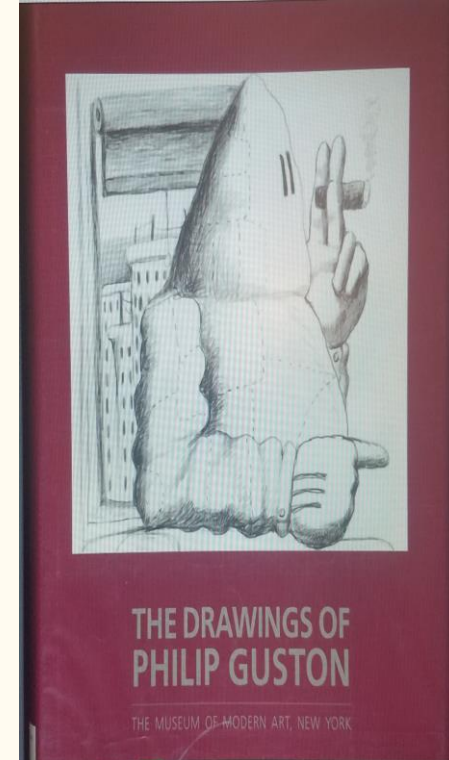
Art Front, Magazine, 1934-1937
Image Credit Archives of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution



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Book Credit Internet Archive



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