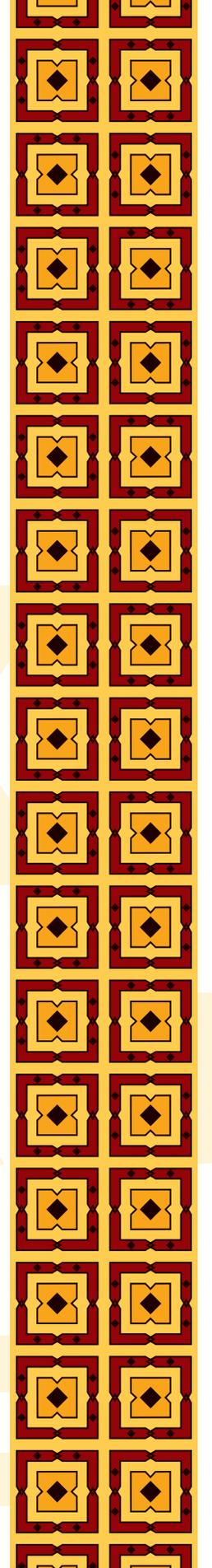






Centre William Rappard

WORKS OF ART AND OTHER TREASURES



A Crossroad between Diplomacy and the Arts

According to the architect of European unity Jean Monnet, “the spatial arrangement of the workplace influences the mind”.²⁷ When George Épitaux worked on the planning and construction of the Centre William Rappard, governments, institutions and individuals in many countries were hoping to find a new way forward following the end of World War I. Many governments joined the League of Nations and the International Labour Office (ILO) in the hope of achieving better understanding among nations and a peaceful future. This chapter is an introduction to the architectural and artistic wealth of the Centre William Rappard, which derives largely from donations by governments and institutions. It describes in detail the main works of art, providing background information and insight into their origin, interpretation and reception.

Detail of wooden carving by Swedish craftsmen in Room X, formerly the office of the Chairman of the ILO Governing Body. The Government of Sweden donated the wooden carving and the original furniture on 29 May 1925.

S *i vis pacem cole justitiam* (if you desire peace, cultivate justice) is written on a document which lies underneath the Centre William Rappard, placed there during a formal ceremony on 21 October 1923 together with some coins and three foundation stones, representing workers, employers and governments. This pacifist statement amends the centuries-old *Si vis pacem para bellum* (if you desire peace, prepare for war) by the Roman military strategist Flavius Vegetius Renatus in his *De re militari* (circa 4th century AD), which was very influential in the Middle Ages in Europe.

The reworking of the Roman saying reflects the new period of hope when the Centre William Rappard was inaugurated. Albert Thomas and other officials in the League of Nations and the ILO voiced the need of Western countries to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, as well as to avoid social revolution within their own borders.

The Swiss government was one of the first to support these peace efforts with a concrete contribution. By donating the Villa Bloch, with its 3.4 hectares of breathtaking park on the Geneva lakeside in 1923, it marked the starting point for future gifts by other governments and institutions. Prominent Genevan and French families, including Pictet, Odier, Menet, Du Roux, La Rochefoucauld, Rouff and Bloch, had formerly owned the property. It was transferred to the Swiss Confederation in 1921 by the arms and ammunition manufacturer Jules Bloch, as a payment of his income tax debt on war revenue. The Swiss government donated the Villa Bloch and its land to the League of Nations on 18 June 1923. This extraordinary contribution was followed by many other Swiss gifts, in particular the building’s monumental statues “Justice” and “Peace” by Luc Jaggi. This marked the beginning of an ongoing tradition of international organizations receiving donations, which has continued ever since.

As the first headquarters built for an international organization in Geneva, it is not surprising that governments and institutions were willing to contribute to the decoration of the Centre William Rappard and commissioned works of art to represent their interests. They perfectly understood the importance of gift-giving as a hallmark of diplomacy.

Politics of gift-giving and concealment

The reasons for governments and institutions to present gifts and the nature of those gifts are closely linked to the ideological, political and cultural thinking prevalent at the time the donation was made. In the Centre William Rappard, some donations result from opposing views. The foremost example is the magnificent “Dignity of Labour” by Maurice Denis on the left side of the main staircase, presented by the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (ICTU) in 1931. This donation was made in reaction to Albert Hahn Jr.’s ceramic Delft Panel in the entrance hall, a gift of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU, also known as the Amsterdam International) in 1926.



Map of Brazil laminated in gold by ▶
Jean Desnos (1910-1950), illustrator,
painter and maker of art deco furniture.
The Map of Brazil and furniture were
presented by the government of Brazil
to decorate Room C ("Brazilian Room").

What prompted the Christian unionists to commission this new mural was the total absence of religious symbols in the Delft Panel. The dialogue between these two works of art reflects the debates at that time between the materialist view of the labour movement and the social values promulgated by the Roman Catholic and other Christian churches, which were very active in the first decades of the ILO.

The Delft panel was installed in January 1927 in the entrance hall of the Centre William Rappard. As the building expanded and with the arrival of other occupants, some works of art were relocated while others were covered, lost or even destroyed. In 1936, for example, the 2,000 tiles of the Delft Panel were carefully dismantled and reassembled in its current location. In 1975, the GATT Director-General Olivier Long requested that the panel be covered up. As it represents the ILO's founding statement of peace and social justice, he felt that "the presence of this panel was inappropriate in a building which [is] now to be the headquarters of the GATT".²⁸ It was not until April 2007 that the wooden boards concealing the tiles were removed and the Delft Panel was once again put on public display. The alleged inappropriateness could have been due to his desire to build a unique institutional identity for the GATT. However, it may have also been the result of antagonistic ideological and political values in both organizations within the context of the Cold War.

Whether for ideological or practical reasons, when the ILO left the Centre William Rappard in 1975, several of the artworks were relocated to the newly constructed building in Grand Saconnex. However, ILO Director-General David Abner Morse and members of the Governing Body as well as Swiss and Geneva representatives considered that some of the works of art should remain in place to preserve the historical character of the building. For example, the Portuguese tiles by Jorge Colaço on the first floor and the murals by Maurice Denis and Seán Keating on the main staircase were not moved. ■■■





Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

■■■ Even so, there were discussions between the GATT and Geneva city officials about covering up Denis's "Dignity of Labour" which were ostensibly influenced by the GATT's need to attract new members from the Middle East and among the OPEC member countries.

The "Pygmalion" painting by Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera, presently in the bar area of the *Salle des Pas-Perdus* (which was originally the Correspondents Room) was considered "inconvenient" by the GATT authorities and was panelled over, most likely to conceal the nudity of the painting. The dazzling murals by Dean Cornwell in the "Gompers Room" (Room A) were removed and stored in the gardeners' villa in 1975. Already in ILO times, some officials thought that the Cornwell murals were "too monumental" and disproportionate to the dimensions of the room, and therefore rather intimidating to delegates working in it.²⁹ The GATT authorities went ahead and took down the murals, probably wary of the reactions from trade delegates to the work's overt message and to the nudes by Cornwell.

Detail of stonework above
one of the entrance doors to Room
Wyndham White (Room W).



Ornate door handles at the entrance ►
to the *Salle des Pas-Perdus*.
The geometric floor patterning is
visible in the background.

The mural series "The Triumphant Peace" by Gustave-Louis Jaulmes, commissioned by the ILO and installed in 1940, was also hidden and panelled over in the 1960s, supposedly to give the *Salle des Pas-Perdus* better acoustics and a more sober atmosphere than the one reflected by the joyful scenes in the mural. ILO and GATT officials interpreted literally the meaning of the old maxim, *ars est celare artem* (it is art to conceal art).

Forty years later, the search began to unearth the works of art that had been covered up. Fiona Rolian and Remo Becci of the ILO, Victor Do Prado and Robert Luther of the WTO, together with other staff members and art experts, finally removed the wooden and linen panels used to hide various works of art that are now on display once more.

Approaching the Centre William Rappard

From the first view of the building at Avenue de la Paix, with its tower appearing above the trees, to the elegant statues "Peace" and "Justice" on the main entrance, to the corridors and halls soberly decorated with geometrical shapes and the rooms with colourful paintings, the initial impression for visitors may be a building displaying many disparate works. On closer inspection, the building captivates the visitor with its decorative detail. It is the subtlety of its decoration that gives the Centre William Rappard its unique appeal.

The buildings and artworks of the Centre William Rappard and its park date back to 1785, when the original Villa Rappard was built, and continue to evolve with the construction of a new annexe due for completion in 2012. Following the foundation of the present building on 6 June 1926, there has been a whole series of donations commissioned by institutions and governments (Brazil, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland and Spain among other countries). Only in one case, Gustave-Louis Jaulmes's murals, was the ILO the commissioning patron.



The artworks address their viewers, whether staff members, delegates or visitors, in different ways. In some cases, the viewer is kept at a distance, in other cases directly addressed. The works donated by labour unions are especially emphatic in conveying a clear message.

Most of the murals in the Centre William Rappard can be characterised as narrative and realist painting. Whether religious, mythical or historical, they tell a story about the relations between and within societies, the teaching of precepts and, especially, the attitudes and behaviours of workers, their families and their employers. Sometimes the artists used aspects of portraiture and landscape techniques but the emphasis is in the narrative structure that prompts the viewer to discover new ways of judging human activity. The method is realist, appealing to references that can be easily identified by most viewers. Analysing them in detail helps us to understand the ideological background of the donor of each work and the position of the artist as a worker within certain boundaries.

Gender and personifications

Through the artwork in the Centre William Rappard, the viewer can observe the evolution from a male-dominated world of politics and labour in the 1920s and 1930s to a greater equality between the sexes in the later paintings. Male artists created all the works of art in the building. The aesthetic tendencies of the period included the male figure standing for strength and the female for emotional values. At the same time, a greater balance was evident in government agencies, labour unions and international organizations, with increasing participation of women in professional, managerial and leadership positions.

Whether female or male, models of youth and health prevail in the human landscape of these works of art. While a few older characters may be identified, almost all are young adults, in good physical shape and generally handsome. In some cases, children and babies complete the circle of life visible in the paintings.

Most of the people depicted are representations of labour in its diverse forms. Typically, they symbolise different professions (Léon Perrin, Seán Keating), the fruits of labour (Luc Jaggi), unionism (Maurice Denis), or labour itself (Jorge Colaço, Albert Hahn Jr., Dean Cornwell).

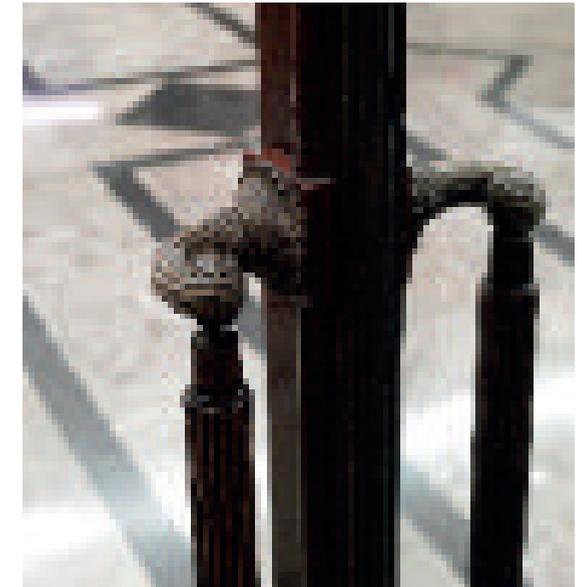
However, not all of them play the same roles. This is apparent in the Cornwell and Keating murals and Colaço's tiled panels, where we can identify manual and skilled workers, supervisors and foremen, and other indicators of the hierarchical organisation of labour and society.

However, a number of the people in the works of art are not related to labour. They derive from classical mythology, representing the unifying strength of common ideals such as peace, unity and progress.

So what is the main message from the artworks in the Centre William Rappard? Beyond the aim of decorating the building, what are the artists, commissioning agents, governments and institutions, and workforce of the international organizations telling us through these works of art? If there is a common answer to these questions, it concerns identity.

The works of art are a tribute to the values and attitudes of the period and the social sphere in which they were conceived and executed. A manifest desire represented in the artwork is the need for peace and social harmony following a period of war and social revolution, and the aspiration for justice. Several murals offer images of spiritual values, full employment, empowerment, health and women's rights, which were more a wish than a reality for most working people when these artworks were created. The classical murals in the *Salle des Pas-Perdus* are perhaps the most striking example of identity narratives. Created at the time of the Second World War, in a country isolated and threatened by its powerful neighbours, the murals were installed in 1940, only months before the ILO left the building for its haven at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Beyond the seemingly peaceful scenes in "The Triumph of Peace" and the other murals by Jaulmes, there is an underlying expression of frustration, fear and deprivation experienced in Geneva during this time.

The artwork of the Centre William Rappard provides multiple examples of hidden want and desire. From the sober architecture of the building, symbolising the restrained and solemn atmosphere that would mark international Geneva over the years, to the richest representations in paintings and sculptures, the issue of identity present in the works of art would provide the context for more than 80 years of international relations in labour and trade. ■



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Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

1924 • LUC JAGGI

Peace and Justice

For most visitors to the Centre William Rappard, the first sight of the building is framed by the two imposing statues flanking the main entrance – “Peace” (on the left, facing the building) and “Justice” on the right. Seen against the wider framework of the bas-relief decorations on the door, above the windows and on the walls, they give the main entrance a solemn monumentality.

Offered by the Swiss Confederation on 28 November 1924, these statues were sculpted by the Geneva-born artist Luc Jaggi. “Justice” depicts a young woman with a serpent at her feet. She is sitting upright on a stone block, with a dove on her left hand. Robes cover the left arm and part of her body, and her hair is braided. She is looking northwards, approximately in the direction of another female figure, “Peace”, with a child at her feet who is offering her an olive branch. “Peace” is sitting on a bundle of wheat sheaves, and is looking at the olive branch.

Instead of representing “Justice” in the traditional way as a blind woman holding a scale and a sword – like most images of Themis, the classic Greek goddess of justice and law – the artist incorporated a dove and a serpent. In art, women have often been associated with a serpent or dragon. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the serpent symbolises lying and deceitfulness, while the main goal of justice is to reveal the truth. While the serpent stands for false allegations, the dove represents

truth. The serpent and the dove can be found on ancient vase paintings as well as in sculpted stone reliefs from classical Greece.

“Peace” is seen receiving an olive branch, a traditional symbol of friendly and long-lasting relations between societies. Motherhood is seen as an important aspect of peace, since social harmony is based on family relations, of which the mother-child relationship is central. According to Virgil, the olive is *placitam pacis*, “agreeable to peace” – since its slow growth means that it can only be planted in times of peace or stability.³⁰ Furthermore, peace is associated with nurturing growth and abundance symbolised by the wheat sheaves.

Positioning the statues on either side of the steps leading up to the entrance means that the viewer must pass in between them. The artist conceived the viewer as being tried by “Justice” and “Peace” to prove his or her commitment to these values. Therefore, entering the building becomes an initiation ritual by which the visitor dedicates his commitment to the ideals of justice and peace. It is in effect a rite of passage.

Luc Jaggi was also responsible for the decorative work on the door and above the window frames. This work includes an eclectic collection of symbols of the arts, trade, theatre, agriculture and industry. It also includes musical instruments, an anchor and a caduceus – a staff entwined by two serpents and surmounted by wings – that refers to the Greek god Hermes (or the Roman Mercury).

Hermes is the protector of merchants, shepherds and gamblers. In Roman mythology, Mercury is the symbol of commerce and negotiation, fair exchange and reciprocity. Not surprisingly, the artist included a direct reference to commerce within the labour imagery, which pre-dates the arrival of the GATT in the building. In doing so, Jaggi and his patrons undoubtedly had in mind the historical relevance of labour in relation to trade, its social benefits and its abuses, such as the slave trade and the exchange of slave-produced goods and services. ■

The stone statue of “Justice” by Luc Jaggi (1924), 2.15 m high, 2.05 m wide. ▶



OMC WTO



- ◀ The stone statue of "Peace" by Luc Jaggi (1924), 2.15 m high, 2.05 m wide.
- ▶ Main entrance to the Centre William Rappard, "Peace" (left), "Justice" (right) and carved door and window frames by Luc Jaggi (1924).

Luc Jaggi (1887-1976) ■

Luc Jaggi was born on 28 October 1887 in Geneva, the son of Swiss and French parents. He studied architecture at the École d'arts et métiers in Geneva, and continued in Rome and Paris until his return in 1909 to open a workshop in the Servette area of Geneva. The city commissioned many of his works to embellish public spaces in the city. These include the "Taureau" executed in granite in the park of the Natural History Museum, and other sculptures in Geisendorff park, Golette park, the Botanical Gardens, Place Neuve and Place Cornavin ("Rêverie"). In France, Jaggi's impressive sculpture "La pleureuse", in Termignon, Haute Maurienne, is widely praised as a memorial to those who died in the First World War. ●





Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures



◀ The hammer-bearing Nereid by Léon Perrin (1925), one of the plaster ceiling panels in the Library, 1.45 m high, 1.7 m wide.

▼ A rural female worker by Léon Perrin (1925), 80 cm diameter, stone bas-relief on the west façade.



Agricultural worker by Léon Perrin ►
(1925), plaster ceiling panel in the
Library, 1.7 m high, 1.45 m wide.

1925 • LÉON PERRIN

Decorative Sculptures

The ceiling panels in the library of the Centre William Rappard and the roundels on the façades of the original building depict both realist and stylised images of labour, family and mythology. The library panels are made of plaster and illustrate different trades (construction, agriculture, metalwork, carpentry), a mother and child accompanied by books, and classical allegories (a faun with goat, a hammer-bearing Nereid). The 18 stone roundels (seven on the west façade, eight on the east and three on the south courtyard) represent other professions (woodcutter, typesetter, joiner, miner, tractor driver, stoker, lathe operator, agricultural labourer, fisherman among others). The professions depicted cover the most common manual jobs and are representative of the most visible labour unions at the ILO during its first decades.

These decorative sculptures were directly commissioned by the architect George Épitoux. Léon Perrin (1886-1978) of La Chaux-de-Fonds, Neuchâtel, worked with Georges Aubert and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (better known as Le Corbusier). The Léon Perrin Museum exhibits the artist's work at Château Môtiers, Val-de-Travers in Neuchâtel. ■





1925 • EDUARDO CHICHARRO y AGÜERA

Pygmalion

"The Director [Harold Butler] was startled with the view of the Spanish painting by Chicharro in the Correspondents Room. He wishes that it be removed and placed in a less visible location."³¹ This internal communication of an ILO officer regarding Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera's "Pygmalion" is just one example of a series of exchanges involving this artwork: between the myth and the work of art, between the models and their depiction, between the artist and the patron, between the painting and the viewer. In fact, Harold Butler's "wish" was fulfilled in the most radical way: "Pygmalion" was covered with wood panels and thus hidden from view from at least 1951 to 2007, when the painting was displayed once again to the public. What kind of art would provoke such a reaction from the ILO and later the GATT authorities? Was it the nudity or the representation of the myth that offended their sense of morality?

In this narrative oil painting, Chicharro illustrates the well-known Ovidian story of Pygmalion, the sculptor who falls in love with his statue of a female figure.³² Pygmalion makes a wish to Venus that the ivory sculpture would change into a real woman. The goddess grants him this wish and sends Cupid to kiss the statue's hand, so that it comes to life (later authors named the woman as the nymph Galatea). The sculptor and his creation married under Venus's blessing and had a son, Paphos.

A few elements distinguish this symbolist painting by Chicharro from the mainstream depiction of the myth. Venus's messenger Cupid takes the form of four birds that are kissing the statue's body. The imploring statue-maker looks like a female Pygmalion, and the only masculine presence in the workshop is a half-carved sculpture of a man without head and missing one leg. The most remarkable aspect of the painting is its temporal quality. While most artists portray Galatea either as a silent figure (Paul Delvaux, 1939) or as a woman already human and loving her creator



◀ "Pygmalion" by Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera (1925), 3.12 m high, 1.67 m wide, oil on canvas.

Detail ▶

(René Magritte, 1928), in this case the painting depicts the exact instant of the awakening.³³ This gives the painting a sense of eternity without past or future. It is the precise moment when the goddess provides the statue with a soul, evoking the experience of religious conversion. This moment is accentuated by the artist's use of light, dividing the painting between the dark area in which Pygmalion is kneeling and praying and the glow surrounding the awakening body of his beloved statue.

On 14 May 1925 the Spanish government presented "Pygmalion" to the ILO as a gift to decorate the new building. It is unlikely that the painting was commissioned with the ILO in mind. There is no direct reference to labour, peace, politics, development or any other aspect of international relations. If there is any relevance to international rules in this work, it is perhaps in the form of human and divine agents bringing to reality the ideals of peaceful relations among persons and nations. ■

Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera (1873-1949) ■

Madrid-born Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera, a graduate from the School of San Fernando, was a disciple of Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida. An outstanding portraitist (including Alphonse XIII among his subjects) and landscape artist, Chicharro was influenced by Spanish Modernism. He was famous for his treatment of exotic subjects and his symbolist interest in light and colour. Founder of the Spanish Association of Painters and

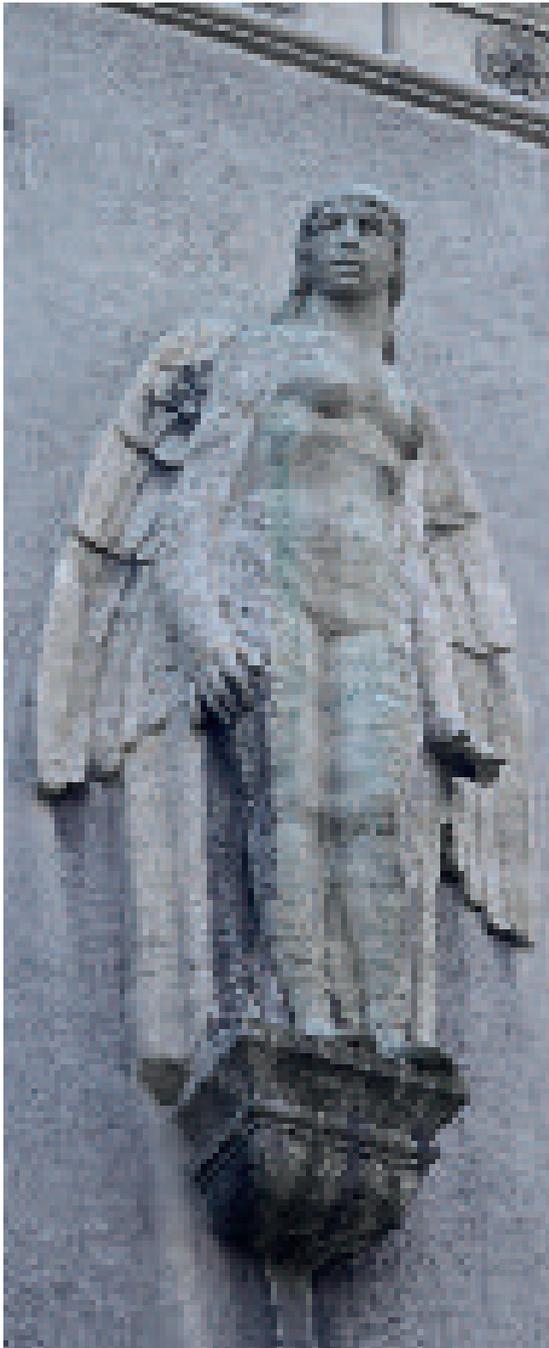
Sculptors, Eduardo Chicharro worked in Rome, where he was later appointed Director of the Royal Spanish Academy. It was in that city that he painted this version of "Pygmalion". Later on in his life, he returned to Spain where he received numerous important awards, including gold medals for his famous paintings "Las uveras" and "Armida". Among his followers were his son, the painter and poet Eduardo Chicharro Briones, and the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. ●





Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures



- ◀ A stone statue of "Genius" by Maurice Sarki (1926), approximately 4.3 m high, 50 cm wide.
- ▶ "Three Graces" by Maurice Sarki (1926), each one 3 m high, 72 cm wide, stone bas-relief.

The monumental "Genius" by Maurice Sarki on the north façade of the Centre William Rappard was sculpted in stone at the time of the building's construction and placed on a platform on the external wall of the library. Measuring 4.3 metres high, it spans from the third to the fourth floor. The "Genius" is a nude figure of a winged human, with the face of a young man yet a female body. Unfortunately, during the construction of the fourth floor the thumb of its right hand and all the fingers of its left hand were detached. Sarki's "Genius" is looking fiercely to the lake side and seems to be ready to take flight and commence combat, as if perturbed by the dangers threatening the edifice.

Although the representation of *genii* can take various forms, not many are shown winged. In Roman religion, the genius is the deity of a person, institution or place. The *genius loci* is the pervading spirit of sacred places or public buildings. From a pantheist viewpoint, the genius can be seen as the divine nature in every person, place, object or event. In early Christian literature, and later also in Islam tradition, guardian angels were depicted after the proscription of the genius cult.³⁴ However, the guardian angel is not a god but God's messenger while the genius is the spirit of the protected person or place.

"Hear me, illustrious Graces, mighty nam'd, from Jove descended and Eunomia fam'd / Thalia, and Aglaia fair and bright, and blest

1926 • MAURICE SARKI

Genius and Three Graces

Euphrosyne whom joys delight / Mothers of mirth, all lovely to the view, pleasure abundant pure belongs to you." ³⁵ Thalia, Aglaia and Euphrosyne are known collectively in Roman mythology as the *Gratae* (*Kharites* in Greek mythology). Sometimes shown as two, sometimes many more, the Graces normally number three and are depicted as beautiful women. As goddesses of inspiration, festivity, charm and fertility, they are the attendants of Venus. In art, the Graces are a classical representation of feminine beauty dating as far back as AD 115, and are usually depicted holding hands, embracing and dancing in a circle.

The "Three Graces", sculpted by Maurice Sarki, embellish the west façade of the Centre William Rappard. They are located between the doors of the former *Salle des Commissions*, where they form an elegant backdrop to the steps leading down to the terrace and the lakeside park. In keeping with tradition, the "Three Graces" are depicted as nude young women and are decorated with stylised art deco patterns, with two of the sculptures raising an arm in a symmetrical fashion. Both "Genius" and the "Three Graces" were commissioned by the architect George Épitaux to decorate the original building.

Born in Tiflis, Georgia, Maurice Sarki [born Sarkissov] (1882-1946) was a painter and sculptor and follower of Auguste de Niederhäusern in Paris. He taught in the *École des arts industriels* in Geneva, and died in France, a member of the Taizé religious community. ■





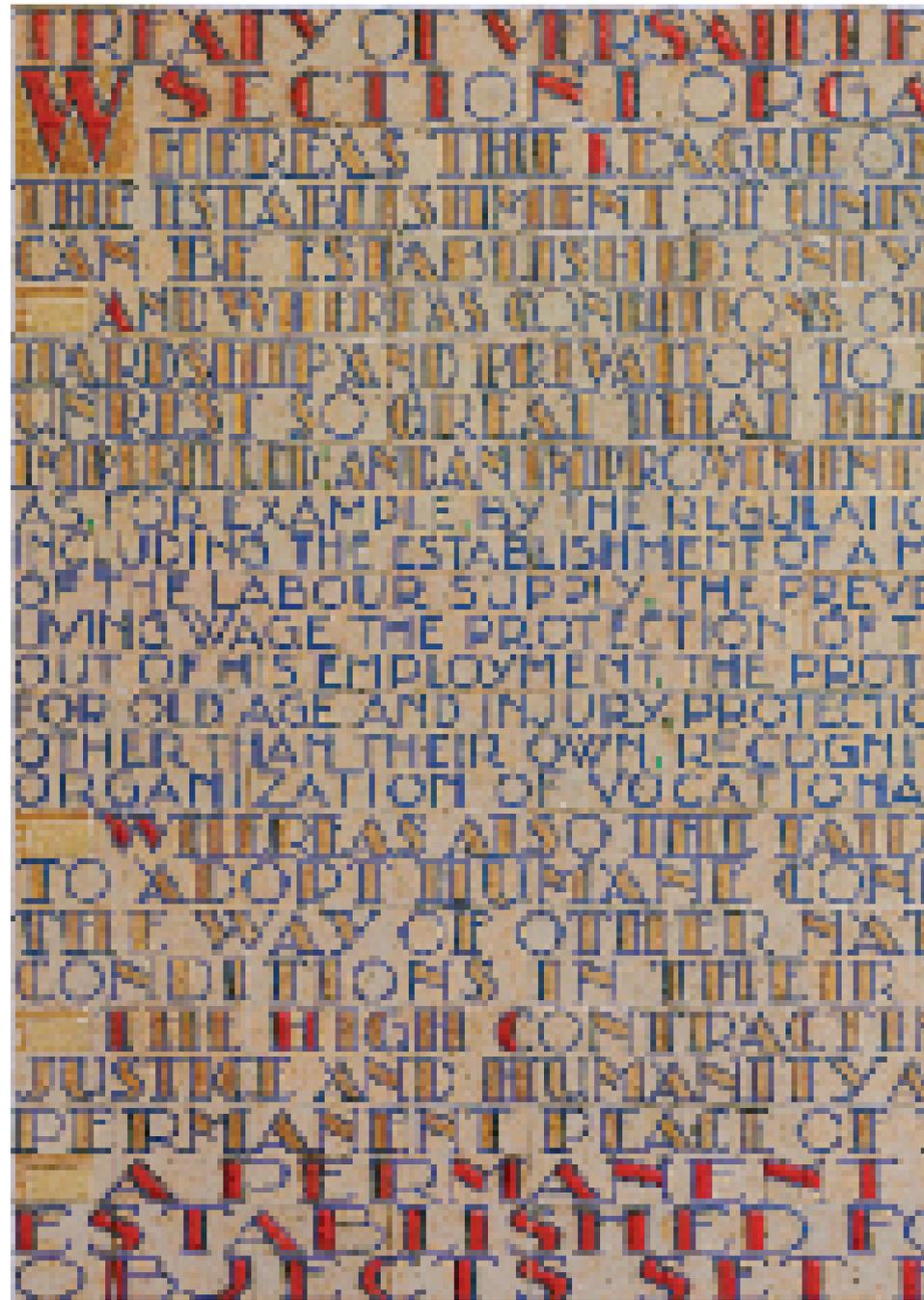


◀ Ceramic panel by Albert Hahn Jr. (1926), 3.28 m high, 4.72 m wide, consisting of some 2,000 hand-painted ceramic tiles, average 8 cm high, 10.5 cm wide.

1926 • ALBERT HAHN JR.

Ceramic Panel

The ceramic panel behind the reception desk in the main entrance to the Centre William Rappard was designed by Albert Hahn Jr. The text is written in four languages: French (upper-left), German (upper-right), English (lower-left), and Spanish (lower-right). It consists of an extract from the Preamble to Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles, which establishes the principle that universal peace is possible “only if it is based upon social justice”, and that the peace and harmony of the world require the improvement of working conditions. The signatories of the Treaty, “moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world” agreed to the establishment of the ILO. Additional text on the bottom of the panel expresses in Dutch that the panel was “offered by the International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, on behalf of approximately 14,000,000 organised workers”.³⁶ All the text is solidly typeset in upper case, in an elegant art deco style. ■■■



◀ Detail.

Albert Hahn Jr. (1894-1953) ■

Albert Hahn Jr. [born Albert Pieter Dijkman] was the stepson and disciple of the illustrator Albert Hahn, an outstanding cartoonist in the Netherlands. He graduated in 1916 from the Quellinus school of decorative arts in Amsterdam. From 1915, Albert Hahn Jr. contributed illustrations to *De Amsterdammer* and *De Notenkraaker* (an anti-Nazi satirical magazine), to which he contributed more than 1,000 covers and political caricatures. He also designed posters and other materials – many of them for the Dutch Association of Trade Unions (NVV) and the Social Democratic Workers’ Party (SDAP). He also published his own books of illustrations. Albert Hahn Jr. died on 23 January 1953 in Amsterdam. ●



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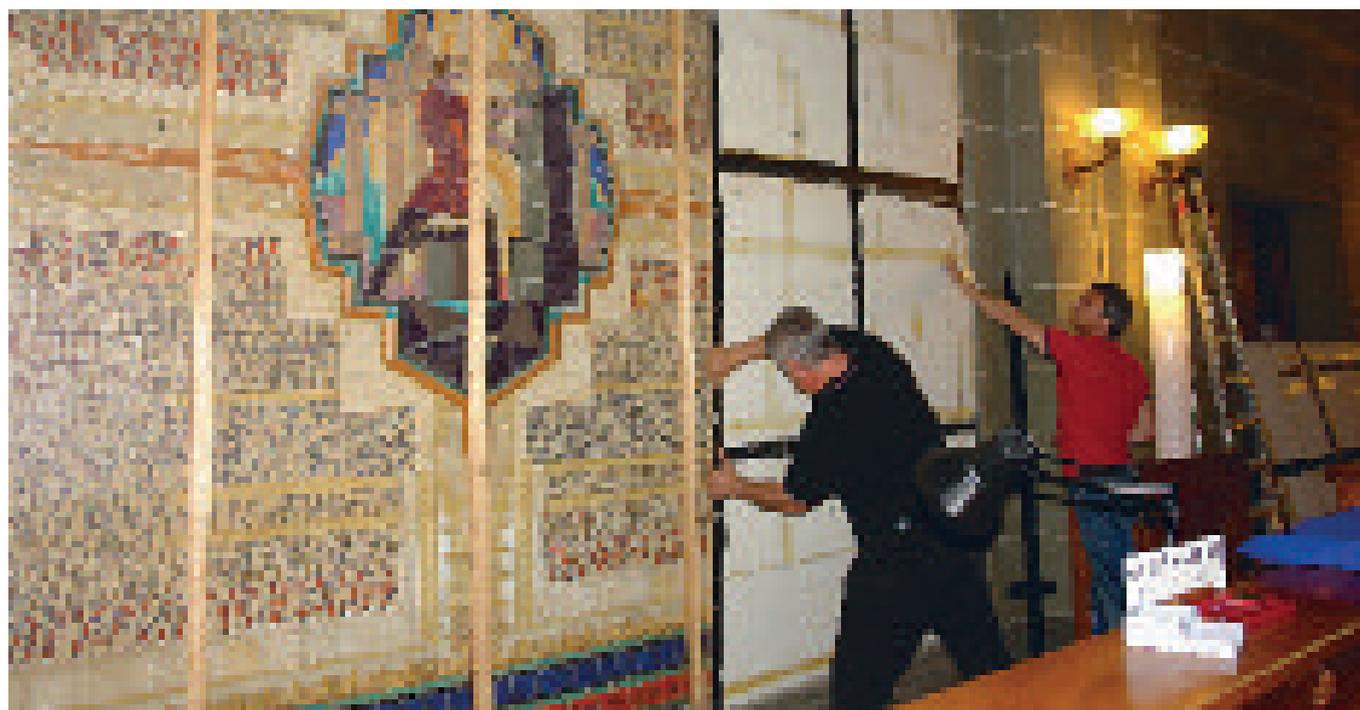
Preamble to Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles

Whereas the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice; And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship, and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required: as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children,

young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organisation of vocational and technical education and other measures; Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries; The high contracting parties, moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world, agree to the following: A permanent organisation is hereby established for the promotion of the objects set forth in the Preamble. ●

Ceramic panel by Albert Hahn Jr. (1926), detail of construction worker on the central section of the panel. ▶

Technical Services staff uncovering Albert Hahn Jr.'s ceramic panel in November 2007. The panel had been kept covered up for many decades. ▼



■■■ The powerful central image is of a male construction worker, dressed in red, laying down the foundation bricks of the building. The image combines elements of social realism, art deco and cubism and, when seen with the text, has a caricaturist quality. The unmistakably masculine figure personifies the power of the international unionist movement in the 1920s.

The panel consists of more than 2,000 individual tiles of approximately 10.5 x 8.5 cm (numbered on the back for ease of assembly). The tiles were manufactured by the Dutch factory De Porceleyne Fles (known as Joost Thoof & Labouchère from 1876 to 1940).

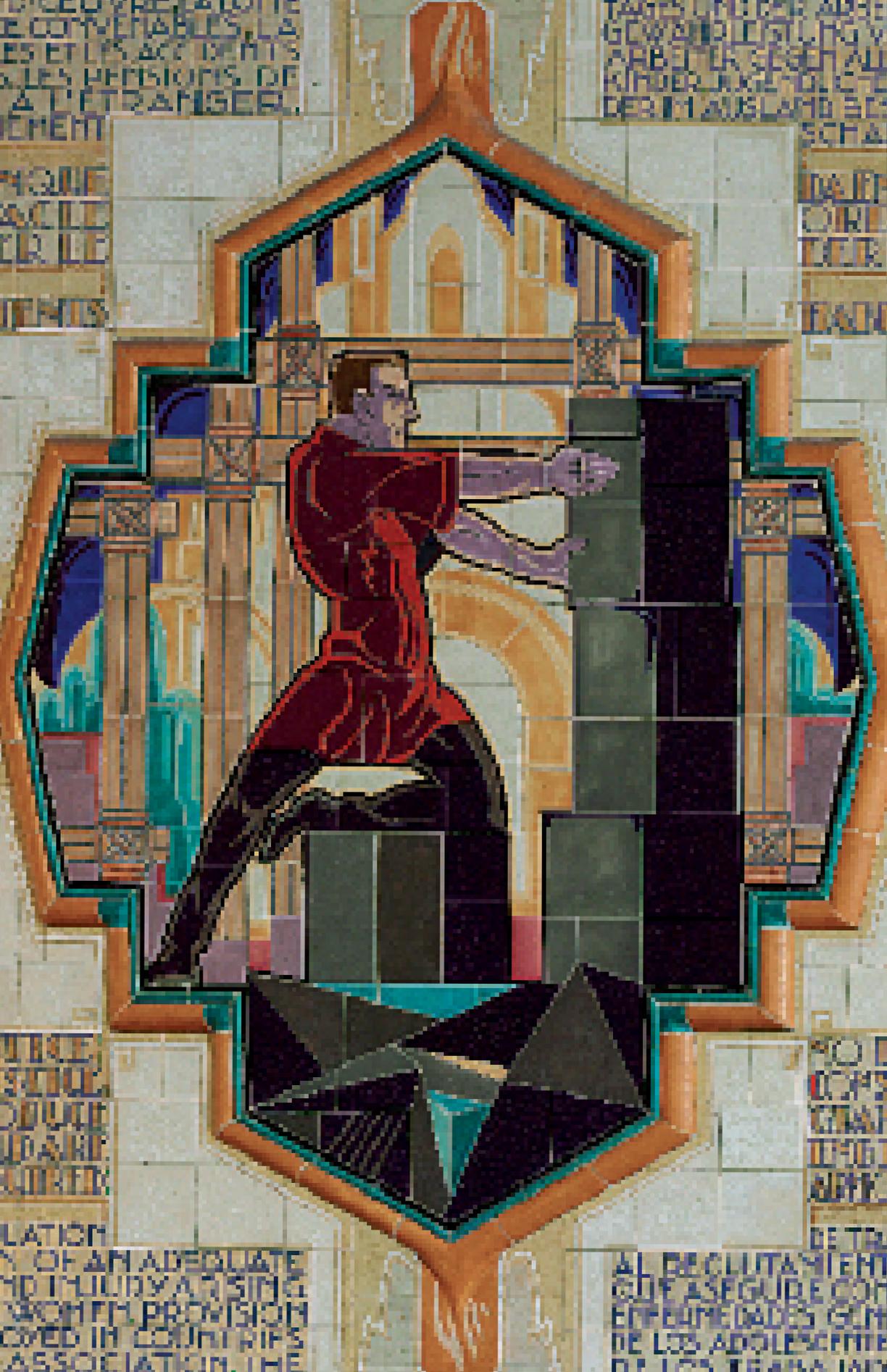
The artist was commissioned to create the panel by the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), also known as the Amsterdam International or the Yellow International. The International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres, which later became the IFTU, was established in 1901 by European trade union centres politically affiliated with the socialist Second International. By the time Hahn Jr.'s panel was installed at the Centre William Rappard in 1926, the IFTU had been ripped apart by nationalist and ideological feuds as well as by competition from Christian and Communist workers' movements, and was in financial crisis. In Hahn Jr.'s tile panel, the text conveys a message beyond the meaning of the words. It can also be "read" through its qualities of shape, colour, and proportion relative to the figure of the manual worker. In fact, the artist succeeds in giving the text the dominant role in the work of art.

The selection of French, German, English and Spanish for the text is not without significance. English, French and Spanish were the official languages of the League of Nations, whereas the German language was added, as explained by IFTU General Secretary Jan Oudegeest, because Germany was on the verge of joining the League, and "the Germans have contributed much more than half of the gift's value."³⁷ ■

ARTICLE PREMIER DE LA CHARTE INTERNATIONALE
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Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

1926 • GILBERT BAYES

The Blue Robed Bambino

A fountain with a statue named the “Blue Robed Bambino” by the British artist Gilbert Bayes was presented to the ILO by the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union (NSFU) of the United Kingdom in 1926. It was located in the inner courtyard of the Centre William Rappard until 2011, when it was moved due to renovation work. It is due to be repositioned in the surrounding park.

The statue, also known as “Child with Fish”, is of a boy wearing a blue tunic and holding tenderly a green fish with oversized fins and the leaves of a water lily. Water flows from the fish’s mouth into a circular fountain. The boy is looking down while standing on a square pedestal in the centre of the fountain.

On the base of the pedestal, two relief panels depict a sailing boat (on the front) and a steamship (on the back). Six additional water spouts in the shape of fish heads surround the fountain. The base is inscribed with “O stream of life run you slow or fast / all streams come to the sea at last” on the front, and “Presented by the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union – 1926” on the back. The name of the artist as well as the manufacturer Royal Doulton are carved on the side of the pedestal.

The boy is aged four or five and is affectionately holding the fish in the same way a small boy would hug his favourite pet. Probably

influenced by Andrea della Robbia’s Renaissance ceramic work, Bayes’s “Blue Robed Bambino” is somewhat reminiscent of representations of the Madonna and Infant Jesus, albeit in a very different environment.

The verse inscribed on the base was written by the artist, although there may have been some religious inspiration.³⁸ The implication is that all mankind, regardless of origin and deeds (“run you slow or fast”), are destined to “the sea at last”, that is eternal life. There is an obvious biblical reference to the role of Jesus as fisherman of souls as well as to the fraternity and common fate of the workers.

“Blue Robed Bambino” is part of the children series created by Gilbert Bayes. “The Water Baby” (1927) and “The Mermaid” (1938) follow a similar theme. The first “Blue Robed Bambino” fountain was exhibited several times following its success at the Paris Exhibition of 1925, where it was seen by ILO Deputy Director Harold Butler. Butler later wrote to the NSFU, which commissioned Bayes to create the fountain statue for the Centre William Rappard. ■



The north courtyard with fountain and statue of the “Blue Robed Bambino” by Gilbert Bayes, as displayed before renovation work began in 2011. ▶

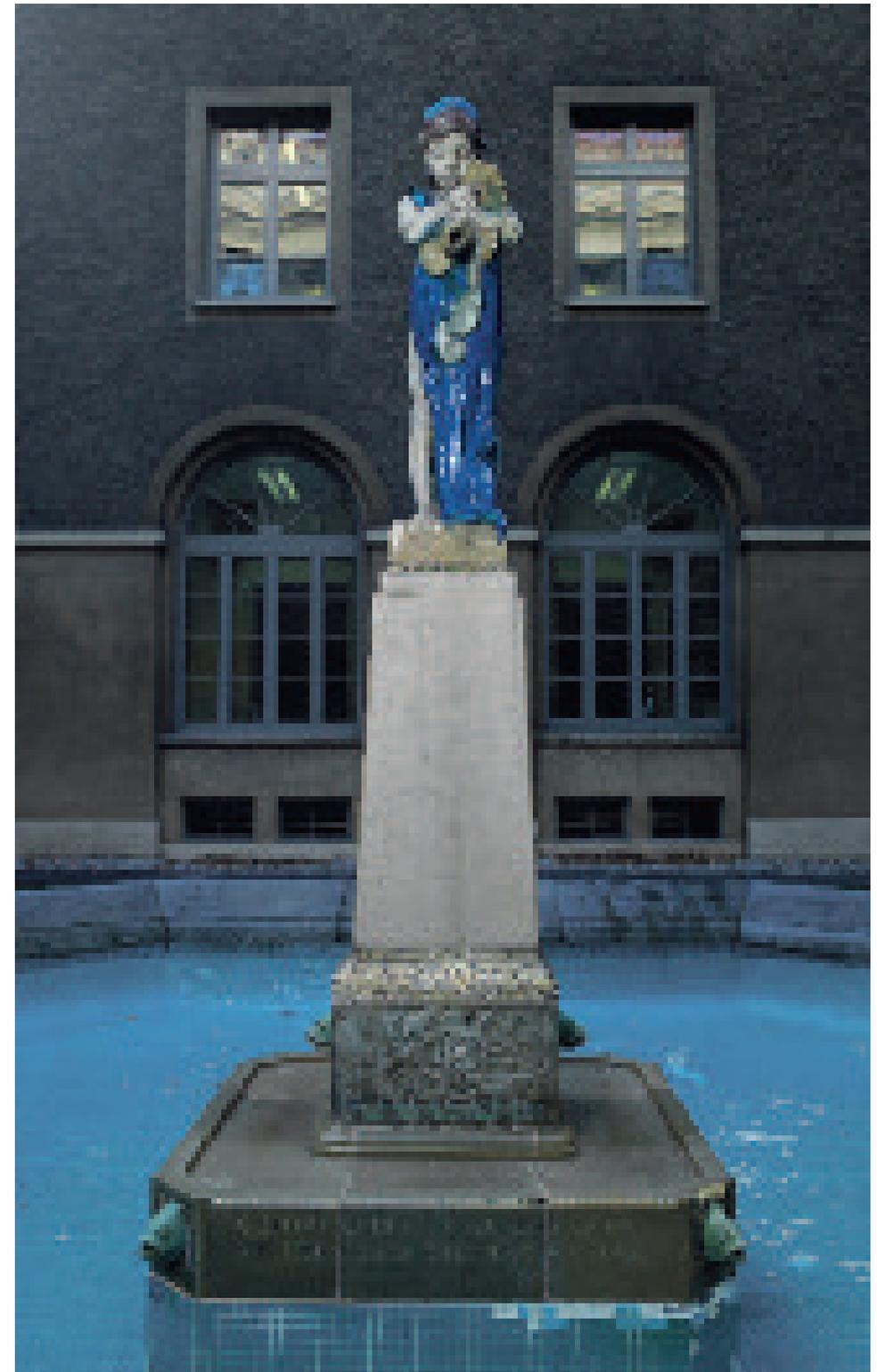


◀ The stone statue of the “Blue Robed Bambino” by Gilbert Bayes (1926), 1.06 m high, 30 cm wide.

▶ The ceramic base depicts a sailing boat and includes an inscription by the artist: “O stream of life run you slow or fast / all streams come to the sea at last”.

Gilbert Bayes (1872-1953) ■

Gilbert Bayes, a renowned member of the New Sculpture movement in early twentieth-century England, was born in North London into a family of artists. He taught at Camberwell School of Art and by 1911 received the first of a series of significant commissions, the Great Seal for King George V. He gained public acclaim with his work entitled “Peace”, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1917, followed by “War” one year later. He later joined the Art Workers Guild, of which he became Master in 1925. Bayes served as President of the Royal Society of British Sculptors during the 1930s. His best-known work is the ornate “Queen of Time” (1908), which supports the clock above the main entrance of Selfridge’s Department Store in Oxford Street, London. Bayes’s monumental frieze “Pottery through the Ages” (1939) is displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It is widely regarded as one of the best examples of British sculpture of the 20th century. Gilbert Bayes died on 10 July 1953. ●





- ◀ "Fishing" by Jorge Colaço (1928), 2.52 m high, 2.05 m wide, glazed ceramic tiles.
- ▼ "Agriculture" by Jorge Colaço, 2.52 m high, 2.05 m wide, glazed ceramic tiles.





1928 • JORGE COLAÇO

Fishing, Grape Picking and Agriculture

Jorge Colaço's *azulejos* (panels of glazed tiles) depict shared human effort within a work environment. Displayed at the top of the staircase on the first floor of the Centre William Rappard, "Fishing" (*Pesca*), "Grape Picking" (*Vindima*) and "Agriculture" (*Lavoura*) represent food production through typical scenes of Portuguese rural life. They were presented to the ILO by the Portuguese government in August 1928.

"Fishing" shows a fishermen's boat breaking through the waves as it sets sail for the high sea. Against the backdrop of a cloudy horizon with a few seagulls overhead, the panel places at centre stage the boat and the men rowing hard. The *meia lua* (half-moon) rowing boat is the traditional fishing vessel from the Aveiro coastal region of Portugal, with a characteristically tall prow and stern. Eleven fishermen are visible in the boat, one of them sitting on the prow beside the fishing net (probably to offset the force of the waves) and the others rowing. They are young to middle-aged men, with all but one wearing headgear. Four are wearing the traditional fisherman *barrete* or stocking cap.

The central panel, "Grape Picking" represents grape-picking and transport of the grapes as the first parts of the winemaking process. In the background is a village and wooded hills, while in the foreground a cart driven by a yoke of oxen is carrying a heavy load of grapes along a cobbled road. Three women and two men are making great efforts to ensure that

the cart can progress along the road. On the right-hand section of the panel, villagers are busy picking grapes and loading another cart. Two women are picking grapes in the vineyard, while men and women (one of them with a baby) in the background are busy with other tasks.

In the right-hand panel, "Agriculture", a young woman is giving a pitcher (containing wine or some other drink) to a thirsty shepherd while a dog oversees his flock of sheep. In the background, a labourer is ploughing the field with two oxen, while another sows seeds. As in the case of "Grape Picking", the woman is wearing a headscarf and is barefooted while the men wear boots. All four wear hats for protection from the sun.

The drama of labour is the common feature in these three panels. The subjects look strained as their work demands great physical and mental effort. They are exploiting the fruits of the earth and the sea, but they must struggle against the forces of nature to obtain them. The religious references are evident in the choice of common biblical scenes of fishing, grape picking and agriculture.³⁹

Men and women work closely together in equal numbers even if they play different roles. There is a good working relationship among the subjects and there are no visible hierarchies (apart from the absence of footwear in the case of the women). ■



▲ Detail of "Fishing", by Jorge Colaço.



Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

"Grape Picking" by Jorge Colaço, ►
1.98 m high, 5.55 m wide.

Jorge Colaço (1868-1942)

Jorge Colaço was born in the Portuguese consulate in Tangier, Morocco, into a French-Portuguese family of musicians, playwrights, sculptors and painters. In 1879 he entered the Arts School of Lisbon and subsequently studied painting in Madrid. In 1903 he became interested in the ancient technique of *azulejos* (from the Arab *al zulaydj*), a typical Moroccan style of mosaic based on painted and glazed ceramic tiles. The *azulejo* technique was originally introduced to the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century. Jorge Colaço developed his craftsmanship with the support of his friend James Gilman,

owner of *Fabrica de Loiças* in Sacavém, Portugal. Colaço created significant works designed for public buildings, churches, railway stations, private residences, marketplaces and gardens. Through family and professional contacts, he received numerous commissions for public works in Portugal, France, England, the Vatican City, California, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Goa and Mozambique. Among them are the breath-taking panels at São Bento railway station in Porto (about 20,000 tiles on 551 square metres) portraying famous scenes of Portuguese history. Jorge Colaço died on 23 August 1942 in Lisbon. ●







Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

1931 • MAURICE DENIS

The Dignity of Labour

The Dignity of Labour” depicts a Christian perspective of industrial relations. On the left side of the main staircase of the Centre William Rappard, the mural by Maurice Denis shows Jesus in his workshop in Nazareth talking to a group of workers. The painting was commissioned by the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (ICTU) and presented to the ILO on 9 June 1931, in the presence of the Director Albert Thomas and delegates from 40 countries who participated in the 15th session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva.

Some 3 metres high by 6 metres wide, Denis’s mural focuses on Christ preaching to his fellow workers. Against a background of vineyards and grape picking typical of rural France, the principal characters are Jesus and the workers and, to a lesser extent, Mary and Joseph. Jesus is situated in the centre, seated on the workshop’s low wall, surrounded by carpenter’s tools, a wheel and some work in progress. His somewhat feminine appearance is emphasised by his lightly-tanned skin and long hair. He is barefoot and wearing a long and loose-fitting pale red tunic. His fine hair frames his meek and compassionate expression as he addresses the audience, raising his right hand and crossing his feet as if pondering on something puzzling.

“The Dignity of Labour”
by Maurice Denis (1931), 2.8 m high,
6.25 m wide, oil on canvas.

While Jesus is not directly addressing his parents, Joseph and Mary are looking attentively at their son. Joseph is depicted as a mature bearded man wearing a long tunic and the traditional *keffiyeh* scarf and *agal*. In the tradition of Christian art, the Virgin Mary looks significantly younger than Joseph. She is kneeling and is wearing a blue tunic, white shawl and dark blue headscarf, while her hands are busy knitting. Two other women in the foreground are sitting on a bench at Jesus’s feet and looking up at him. With the exception of four other women (with pitchers on their heads) and perhaps others in the vineyard and farm in the background, all the other people in the painting are male. Female labour appears to be limited to domestic service, in line with religious art in general.

Among the 16 men listening to Jesus (apart from Joseph), there is a mixture of manual and skilled workers, evident from their clothing: manual workers are wearing hats, open-collar shirts, vests and blue overalls or are bare chested, while the skilled workers are wearing neckwear and look pensive. Their ages vary from the teenager dressed in a long-sleeved white shirt to the mature worker standing in the middle, with hat and white moustache. Jesus appears to be addressing the workers at sunset – the ideal moment for them at the end of a long day to listen to the sacred word, and to reflect on what they are hearing. In this peaceful setting only the people in the background are active, busy picking grapes, while those in the foreground are absorbed by the spiritual message.

“The Dignity of Labour” can be seen as a juxtaposition of elements from different times and places. The most obvious anachronism is the clothing, with some people dressed as they would have been in Jesus’s time while others are wearing clothes from the period when the mural was painted. The carpentry tools are also anachronistic. The pliers, hammer, saw, plane and axe do not resemble those that Jesus would have used during his lifetime as a carpenter and are more in keeping with the contemporary clothing. The third juggling of time concerns Jesus’s ministry. It is generally accepted that this started when he left his home and workshop in Nazareth to follow John the Baptist. However, in this mural Jesus is already depicted as the Messiah preaching to the crowds, even though he is still accompanied by his parents and seemingly in Nazareth. There is also spatial interplay in the mural, with the carpentry workshop evoking Palestine while in the background there is a vineyard that





◀ “The Dignity of Labour” by Maurice Denis. Detail including the figure of Jules Zirnheld (white moustache), ICTU vice-president.

■■■ could be in the region of Bordeaux, where the artist was living. The architectural features of the workshop and the farm are also reminiscent of the French rural style of the first decades of the twentieth century rather than Palestine during Jesus’s life.

The elements (dress, tools) from two different periods separated by nineteen centuries, as well as the mixed landscapes of Nazareth and Europe, combine to represent the timeless nature of Christ’s words and to emphasise their enduring and universal qualities. At the time following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and other Marxist and atheistic movements, the ICTU and the artist proposed Christian values as a means of resolving labour conflicts and of achieving harmony in social relations.

In 1928, ICTU executive members decided to make a donation to the ILO “capable of emulating the large panel (the Preamble) presented by the IFTU [Albert Hahn Jr.’s Delft Panel] and installed two years before, and to assert ‘highly and fully’ the Christian message.”⁴⁰ The Dutch-born schoolteacher and Catholic politician Petrus Serrarens, first Secretary-General of the ICTU, consulted with French unionist Gaston Tessier and contacted Maurice Denis in February 1929. Well-known for his religious realist paintings, Maurice Denis met in Paris with his friend Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the ILO Governing Body, and proposed to work on “Christ in his Nazareth workshop with a ‘Palestinian’ décor.”⁴¹

The idea was initially opposed by members of the ICTU executive committee who favoured a less evidently Christian subject so as to accommodate the religious neutrality of German trade unions. However, inspired and supported by Arthur Fontaine, the artist’s concept prevailed and was approved by ILO Director Albert Thomas. Maurice Denis showed his appreciation to Thomas for his “involvement in this affair and I thank you for having persuaded the Christian unions.”⁴²

To appease the ICTU committee, he used photos of their leaders as models, including the above-mentioned Tessier and Serrarens (sitting



“The Dignity of Labour” by Maurice Denis. Detail including labour leaders Gaston Tessier, Petrus Serrarens (both seated on the left), Bernhard Otte (arms crossed), and Herman Amelink (foreground, hands behind his back).



on the far side of the mural and dressed in brown suits). Others shown include Bernhard Otte (president of the German Federation of Christian Trade Unions, standing in the background with arms crossed, and in a dark suit), Herman Amelink (ICTU treasurer and Dutch trade unionist, standing with his hands behind his back, in the foreground) and Jules Zirnheld (ICTU vice-president, standing near Jesus with his left hand on his lapel, p. 56). Christian unionists Heinrich Fahrenbrach and Adam Stegerwald were probably also the models for other people in the painting. The figure of Christ was based on Denis's wife Marthe Meurier, and the teenager standing at the front of the left-hand group could be the artist's son.

Depicting well-known people in the contemporary labour movement in Europe, who were at the same time the patrons of the work of art, creates the effect of realism while emphasizing the anachronisms and juxtapositions of disparate elements displayed in the painting. Moreover, Maurice Denis had wanted to entitle the mural “Christ talking to the workers”. Other possible titles were “The Carpenter of Nazareth” or “Christ in Nazareth”, but Fontaine and Serrarens insisted on the title “The Dignity of Labour”. Their aim was to almost sanctify industrial relations, seeing Christ as “the only one capable of giving labour its dignity ... the only one inspiring Christian unionism.”⁴³

Other works by Maurice Denis in Geneva are “The Life of Saint Paul” mural (1916) in St. Paul's parish church in Cologny, the sketches for “The Loneliness of Christ” stained-glass windows (1918) and for “The Baptism of Christ” mosaic (1923) in the same church, and the “Fiat pax in virtute tua” mural (1938) painted for the Assembly Hall of the Palais des Nations. In Thonon-les-Bains, Denis painted the “Marie Médiatrice” mural (1940) in the chapel of the Institute du Sacré-Cœur de Crète, and “The Way of the Cross” murals in the St François de Sales basilica (1943). ■

Maurice Denis (1870-1943)

Born in Normandy, Maurice Denis (1870-1943) was the son and only child of a non-believing employee of the Chemins de l'Ouest railways. The family lived together in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, until Denis was sent to the Lycée Condorcet in Paris, where he received a classical education. As a teenager, Denis took art classes and affirmed his Catholic faith. After high school, he received training at the Louvre, the Julian Academy and the National School of Fine Arts in Paris. With Paul Sérusier, Maurice Denis co-founded the “Nabis”, a group of post-impressionist artists that was active in France in the last decade of the nineteenth

century. They were inspired by Paul Gauguin's paintings, and sought spiritual inspiration in oriental philosophies and other esoteric sources. From the 1890s, Denis's art became more decorative and he received numerous commissions for painting large murals in private houses. Denis juxtaposed historical images with more modern elements. He combined legends from the Middle Ages with images of contemporary women at leisure in their gardens, and used nuanced colours to emphasise a sense of reverie. After travelling to Italy, Denis became interested in landscapes and this would have a lasting impact on his oeuvre. Both the early death of his wife and

the horrors of the First World War led him to dedicate his talent to religious art. He was a fervent Catholic, member of the Third Order of St. Dominic, and co-founder of the Sacred Art Workshop. His murals in churches and public buildings often emphasise religious subjects. As a nationalist and Catholic, Maurice Denis was a religious traditionalist and hostile to the Republic. After the First World War, he was at the height of his fame and his work was shown at important exhibitions such as the Venice Biennial (1922) and the Pavillon de Marsan in Paris (1925). Maurice Denis was the victim of a road accident in Paris in 1943 and died in the Cochin hospital on 13 November of that year. ●



58 • Centre William Rappard: Home of the World Trade Organization, Geneva



1940 • GUSTAVE-LOUIS JAULMES

In Universal Joy, Work in Abundance and The Benefits of Leisure

In June 1939 the ILO commissioned Gustave-Louis Jaulmes to decorate the walls of the newly constructed *Salle des Pas-Perdus*. The artist submitted a proposal to paint four murals representing “the Triumphant Peace in Universal Joy [that] produces Abundance and the Joy of Living.”⁴⁴ The description became the individual titles for the murals. Jaulmes completed his work in early 1940, about four months before the ILO left the building for its wartime haven at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

The panel entitled “In Universal Joy” (“*Dans la joie universelle*”) portrays a group of young women and children holding palm branches and walking towards the viewer. Two girls in the foreground are clutching a palm branch and holding hands while doves flutter at their feet. In the background are fruit trees decorated with leafy garlands that also cover a pergola on the left. Behind the procession of women and children are old-fashioned sailboats moored in a quiet harbour. Mountains are also depicted along with a radiant sky. The second panel, “Work in Abundance” (“*Le travail dans l’abondance*”), depicts grape picking. Men and women carry baskets of grapes accompanied by a horse-driven two-wheeled cart laden with grapes. Meanwhile a scantily

clad young woman taking a break from her work talks with a cheerful boy, while other women carry agricultural produce. In the background are trees silhouetted against a golden sky.

In the right-hand mural, “The Benefits of Leisure” (“*Le bienfait des loisirs*”), the scene is of men, women and children talking, playing and gathering fruit in a terraced garden with a pergola. On the right, a low wooden gate leads to countryside in the background, including farmland, trees and a country village in a landscape typical of northern Italy or French Gascony. A couple holding a baby are standing on some stone steps and looking contentedly at their child. The fourth mural, “The Triumphant Peace” (“*La paix triomphante*”), was originally placed on the right of the main entrance to the Correspondents Room. No longer on display, it was possibly removed and stored away somewhere when the cafeteria’s bar was extended in the early 1960s. It depicted a woman driving a classic four-horse carriage. A cheerful crowd is greeting her with garlands and banners.

Most of the subjects are barefoot and dressed in classical sleeveless tunics. They look young, healthy and happy. The pastoral scenes in Jaulmes’ allegorical murals perpetuate a particular style of ■■■

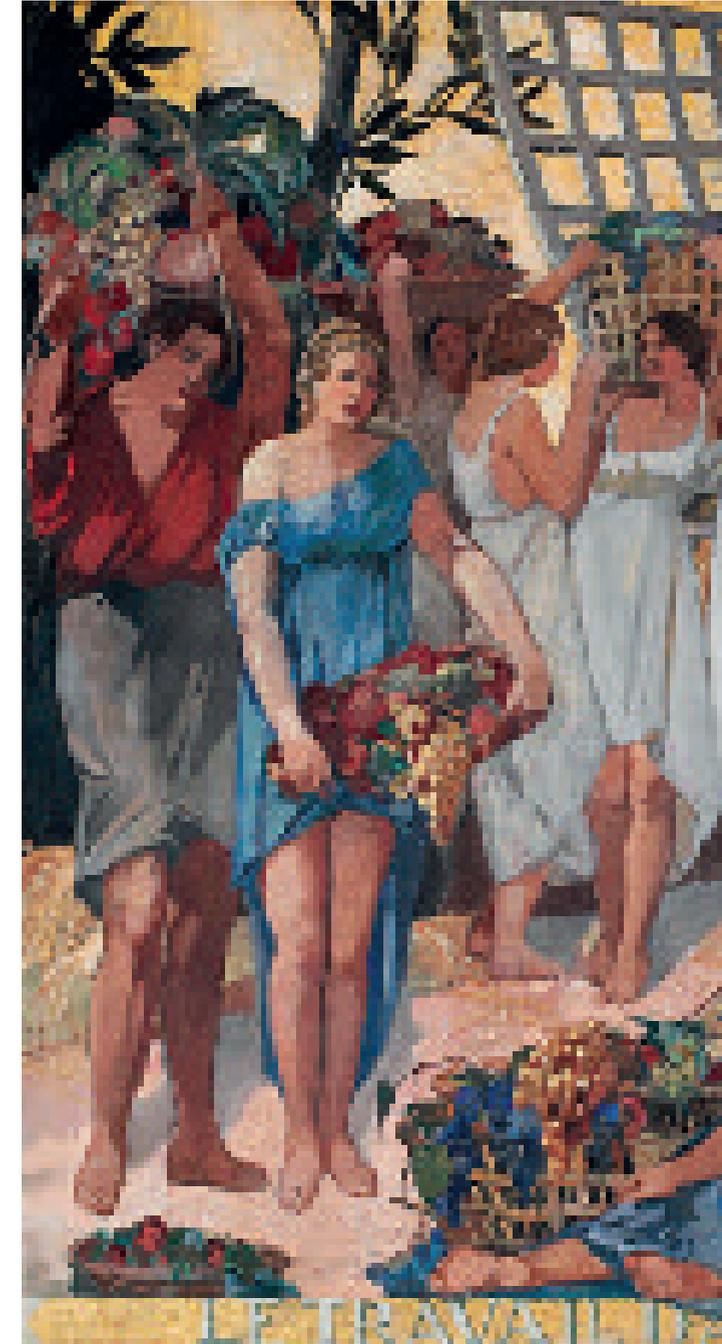
◀ La *Salle des Pas-Perdus* with the three surviving murals by Gustave-Louis Jaulmes, 1940.

▶▶ “In Universal Joy” (left), “Work in Abundance” (centre), “The Benefits of Leisure” (right) by Gustave-Louis Jaulmes (1940), each measuring 2.49 m high, 2.85 m wide, oil on canvas.



Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures







Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures



◀ “The Triumphant Peace” by Gustave-Louis Jaulmes, sketch for the missing mural that initiated the series (detail).

■■■ representation common to late neoclassical art. Conceived during the period between the wars, the ideals of peace, friendship, family, abundant nature and celebration are all apparent in the paintings. Symbols such as the doves and palm fronds, as well as the relaxed facial expressions of the people depicted, are reminders of the need for peace in Europe at that critical time, during which the horrors of war were a constant, looming threat. Likewise, peaceful relations within society, which is only too vulnerable to the upheavals of war and social revolution, are portrayed through the harmonious rapport between the subjects.

Alongside the general atmosphere of celebration, a return to traditional family values is symbolized through the presence of children living in harmony with their parents. Nature, rather than industry or man-made products and machinery, is ever-present in these murals. The aim of the people depicted is not only to harvest the fruits of nature, but also to celebrate harmony with the environment. Whether they are at work or relaxing, the people in the murals display general contentment. Priority is given to the enjoyment of life, in which work has its place as a rewarding activity, and to harmonious family relationships. There is a total absence of social or labour conflict.

The sense of harmony, the return to nature, and the prospect of new horizons evoked by elements such as the sailing ships ready to depart for new locations suggest values that would become prevalent in the 1960s. At the same time, the murals are a reminder of the idealism among upper- and middle-class circles in the late 1930s in Europe, that believed that social and nationalistic conflict would be overcome through better understanding within and among societies.

Other than a few specific tasks in “Work in Abundance” performed by men (e.g. the man leading the horses), gender roles are defined solely in terms of family and friendship. Likewise, there are no visible social or professional hierarchies in the murals, implying the achievement of *égalité*

Gustave-Louis Jaulmes (1873-1959)

Gustave-Louis Jaulmes was born in Lausanne, Switzerland. His parents were a French Protestant minister and the daughter of a British Methodist missionary. Jaulmes served in the French army in the First World War and in the propaganda service of the French Ministry of Arts. He studied architecture in the National School of Fine Arts in Paris but in 1902 he switched to painting and decorative works. In the Julian Academy, Jaulmes learned the neoclassic style. For the

victory celebrations in July 1919, he received commissions for the Champs-Élysées and the Arc de Triomphe. As co-founder of Compagnie des Arts Français, Jaulmes produced in an art deco style a diverse series of decorations, including murals, paintings, advertising posters, book illustrations, sketches for decorative tapestry, as well as Sèvres pottery, furniture and even theatre curtains. He was admitted into the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1944. Gustave-Louis Jaulmes died on 7 January 1959 in Paris. ●

“Work in abundance” by ▶
Gustave-Louis Jaulmes, detail.

through economic and social cooperation. This may be considered as a reaction against the Marxist notion of class struggle. Moreover, everybody in the paintings seems to share in the ownership of the means of production: the land and crops, the cart, horses and baskets. People are certainly not shown as being divided into proletarians and bourgeois – labour and capital – in revolutionary conflict.

In the four panels, the title plays an intrinsic role in the work of art. Having already decided on the titles at the time of developing the sketches, Jaulmes wanted the viewer to interpret his murals in a specific way. This may reflect the uncertainty and lack of security predominant at this time in Geneva and at the ILO.

In these paintings, labour is not conceived as a dynamic activity, as it is in the murals by Dean Cornwell, Seán Keating or Jorge Colaço, let alone as a source of conflict, as it is in the scenes of Diego Rivera’s “Detroit Industry” (1933) for example. For the artist, labour is associated with a relatively static and peaceful activity, or at least with enjoying the fruits of nature and social harmony. Harvesting the land and enjoying the sensual rapport with nature are shown as the ideals of labour. Work is depicted as being inextricably entwined with leisure.

Even though Jaulmes’s decorative panels were a direct commission from the ILO, they were covered up in the early 1960s, ostensibly to improve the acoustics within the room. They were briefly uncovered and then recovered at the time of the building’s hand-over to GATT in 1975. The double layer of canvas was finally removed on 31 March 2007 and the murals have now been restored to their former glory.

Among Jaulmes’s best-known works are decorations in the Villa Kérylos in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the Municipality of Arras, the “Kiss” room at the Rodin museum in Paris, the Theatre of Carcassonne, the Synagogue of Boulogne Billancourt, the Evian Royal Palace and Casino, and the Town Hall of Paris Fifth Arrondissement. ■





Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

1955 • DEAN CORNWELL

Murals

Murals by Dean Cornwell. Detail of the central section including allegorical representations of the New World (blonde-haired figure, left), Labour (male figure, centre) and the Old World (dark-haired figure, right).

One of the two missing sections of Dean Cornwell murals, depicting a film set and dancers.



On a bright springtime afternoon of 1 April 2007, Dominique Plaza and Jukka Piitulainen, staff from the administrative division of the WTO, and Pierre Joubert of FIPOI⁴⁵ noticed five rolls of large canvas in the recesses of the old gardeners' villa in the grounds of the Centre William Rappard. The rolls of canvas were not in good shape, and extensive cleaning and restoration was needed to reveal what was hidden underneath.

After examining the canvas, WTO officials and ILO archivists realised that they were the spectacular murals painted by Dean Cornwell that had been put on display in June 1956 in the Samuel Gompers Room, previously known as the Workers' Room (Room A). The dazzling colourful nature of the scenes of labour and human activity portrayed by the artist is the reason why they were so admired after their installation, and probably why they were taken down some twenty years later as they were considered to be too much of a distraction. They subsequently remained hidden away from view for three decades.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) commissioned Cornwell to paint the murals as a gift to the ILO in 1938. Due to the Second World War and his commitment to other projects, Cornwell did not finish these paintings until 1955. When the ILO left the building 20 years later, the Cornwell murals were removed. Five of the seven sections were reinstalled in 2008, while two sections still remain missing today.

The original idea for the commission came from ILO Director-General Harold Butler, who contacted trade union leaders in the United States to explore the possibility of a donation of furniture and decorations for the Workers' Room, which he specified would be decorated "on American lines."⁴⁶ The AFL took a leading role in the donation and its execution, and informed President Franklin D. Roosevelt who conceived the decoration as "an interpretation of our American civilization in the Workers' Room at the ILO."⁴⁷

In September 1938 Cornwell submitted his sketches covering the subjects of commerce, industry, office work and the arts. The AFL and the ILO approved the sketches and sent photographs of workers and labour groupings to be used as models. Officials in both organizations pressed to have the murals ready by June 1939. Meanwhile, Cornwell was busy with other commissions and the war intervened. However, the AFL agreed to pay the amount requested (initially USD 15,000) for the murals and for the furniture of Room A.

It was not until June 1953 that Dean Cornwell could "go ahead full steam on the murals for the Gompers Room."⁴⁸ During the following year and up to October 1955 he painted them in his workshop in New York, and in November sailed to Europe with the murals to assist in the installation and final re-touching in Geneva. "I am delighted with Mr. Cornwell's paintings", wrote the ILO Director-General David Morse, "they are works of art of which both the ILO and the American Federation of Labor may well be proud."⁴⁹ The murals were solemnly dedicated on 29 June 1956 with the presence of the ILO Governing Body and the president of the AFL-CIO George Meany, the press and public.

The large central section (over 10 metres wide and 3 metres high) of the mural is irregularly shaped to fit around the entrance door and bookshelf in Room A. In the centre of this section (p. 65), two women are shown descending from heaven carrying a torch, and flanked by a worker. A shower of stars is raining down on the worker, as if to liberate him. He is dressed in a leather apron and sturdy shoes, and has an oversized hammer at his feet. Broken chains hang from his wrists and lie beside his left foot. The women, one with blond hair and the other dark haired, are young, healthy, and bare-breasted. ■■■





Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

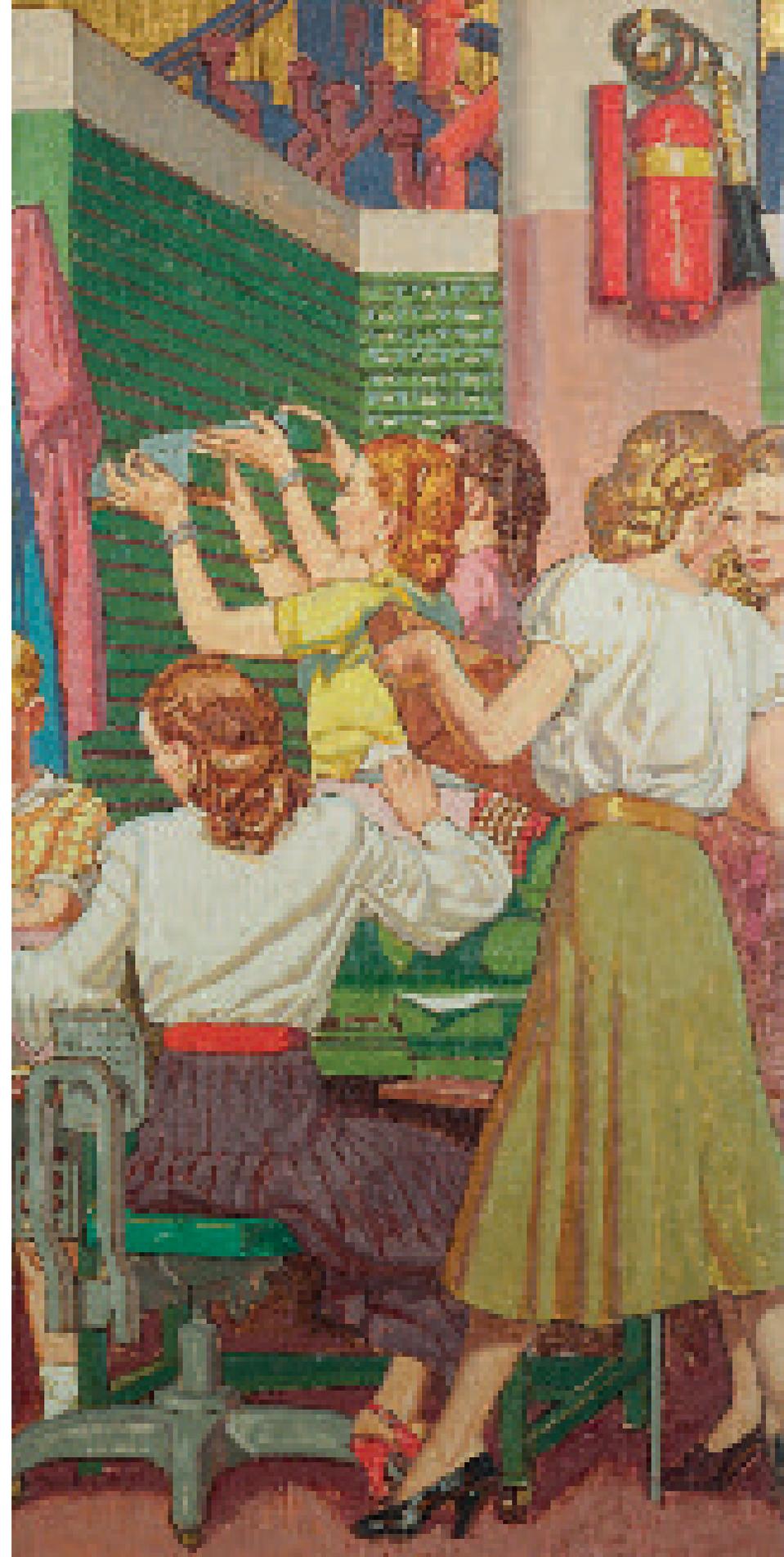


■■■ Bearing shields and with long cloaks trailing behind them in the wind, they are portrayed as goddesses. The dark-haired woman appears to be passing the torch to her blond counterpart. The power generated by the two goddesses appears to unleash the energy needed by mankind for work and procreation. At their feet can be seen a globe showing the North Atlantic Ocean, North America and Europe (with Ireland erased or joined to England). Also shown are pliers, set squares, a compass and a miniature caravel.

The references to the “discovery” of America point to the encounter between the Old World and the New World. The positioning of the continents and the women suggest that the dark-haired woman represents Europe, seen as the Old World, and that the fair-haired woman is America, perceived as the New World. In the artist’s view, Europe brought to America the instruments of modernization and progress, and now the Old World is literally passing the torch to the New World.

Working in the “old” (European) way is associated with constraints or even slavery, like the ancient builders of Egypt’s pyramids whereas in America workers are free from social hierarchies and limitations. Labour, personified by the worker, looks towards America and turns his back on Europe. By looking to his right, he indicates the flow of energy across these murals from right to left (in contrast to the conventional practice of moving from left to right). This is emphasised

Murals by Dean Cornwell. ▲
Detail of the central section
depicting skilled and manual
workers on a construction site.





- ◀ Murals by Dean Cornwell.
Section representing office workers,
1.58 m high, 70 cm wide.

by the direction of the airplanes, for example. In fact, the direction of progress is shown from the perspective of those depicted in the painting, who generally face the viewer and for whom the movement is, as per convention, from left to right.

Workers or slaves appear at the bottom of the mural and are shown pulling something very heavy towards the centre. In contrast, the fertility suggested by the goddesses' bare breasts and by their youth and vigour indicate the sexual energy of those in the New World in which future generations will live thanks to the efforts of the current generation of workers.

Several other scenes are shown in the murals, all of them depicting realistic and contemporary work situations. Among them are workers constructing a dam (including the only persons of darker skin in the mural) and various forms of transport, such as airplanes, ships, trains, trucks, and cars, symbolising the modernisation of transportation. Safety at work is a recurrent theme, illustrated by the gloves worn by many of the manual workers as well as their headgear and by the inscription "Safety First" on a cement mixer.

Other trades shown include construction workers, painters, skilled workers such as a surveyor using a theodolite and an engineer talking to a supervisor with the aid of a plan, as well as workers on a construction site, in a foundry, and in a car workshop. Other workers include miners, brick-layers, manual workers, women using sewing machines, and secretaries. Also shown in the mural are boys helping their parents, a schoolgirl, supervisors and their workforce, a stern teacher, glamorous dancers, musicians and the artist himself who appears as a customer in a barber's shop (depicted in one of the missing sections). In all, a total of 195 people appear in these murals. They are predominantly male but women are also shown playing roles in offices, workshops, schools and in the arts.

Dean Cornwell's murals on labour are an important contribution to the representation of industrial life and society in the post-war period in the United States. Full of vigour, this mural firmly conveys the attitudes and values deeply rooted in the capitalist mentality of industry leaders in the United States in the 1950s. The implicit parable of the liberating power of labour symbolises the Fordist formula, in which mass production and product standardization lead to higher wages and an increase in consumption, thus allowing a better way of life for the working class. This message comes across through the contented nature of the workers, their physical health, youth (with few exceptions) and robustness, as well as through their clothes – none of the people are shabbily dressed – their jewellery (watches, earrings) and the women's make-up and manicured nails.

In these murals, Cornwell used the multiple-scene narrative technique of cartoons, representing simultaneously activities taking place at different times or locations. He illustrated the ancient slaves at the bottom of the central section, along with the caravel and sailboat, which are the only elements of historical evolution.

The "symphony" of work, machinery, industry and progress can almost be heard, celebrating the harmonious nature of industrial and labour rules. Human energy is an integral part of the painting, depicted through the vigorous, lively attitudes of the people at work. ■■■

- ▶▶ Murals by Dean Cornwell. Section originally placed on the western wall of the Gompers Room (Room A), representing mining (left), manufacturing and car-making (centre), and textile workers (right). 1.6 m high, 5.5 m wide, oil on canvas.

- ▼ Murals by Dean Cornwell (1955). Detail of the central section depicting construction workers and the partially visible inscription "Safety First" on a cement mixer.



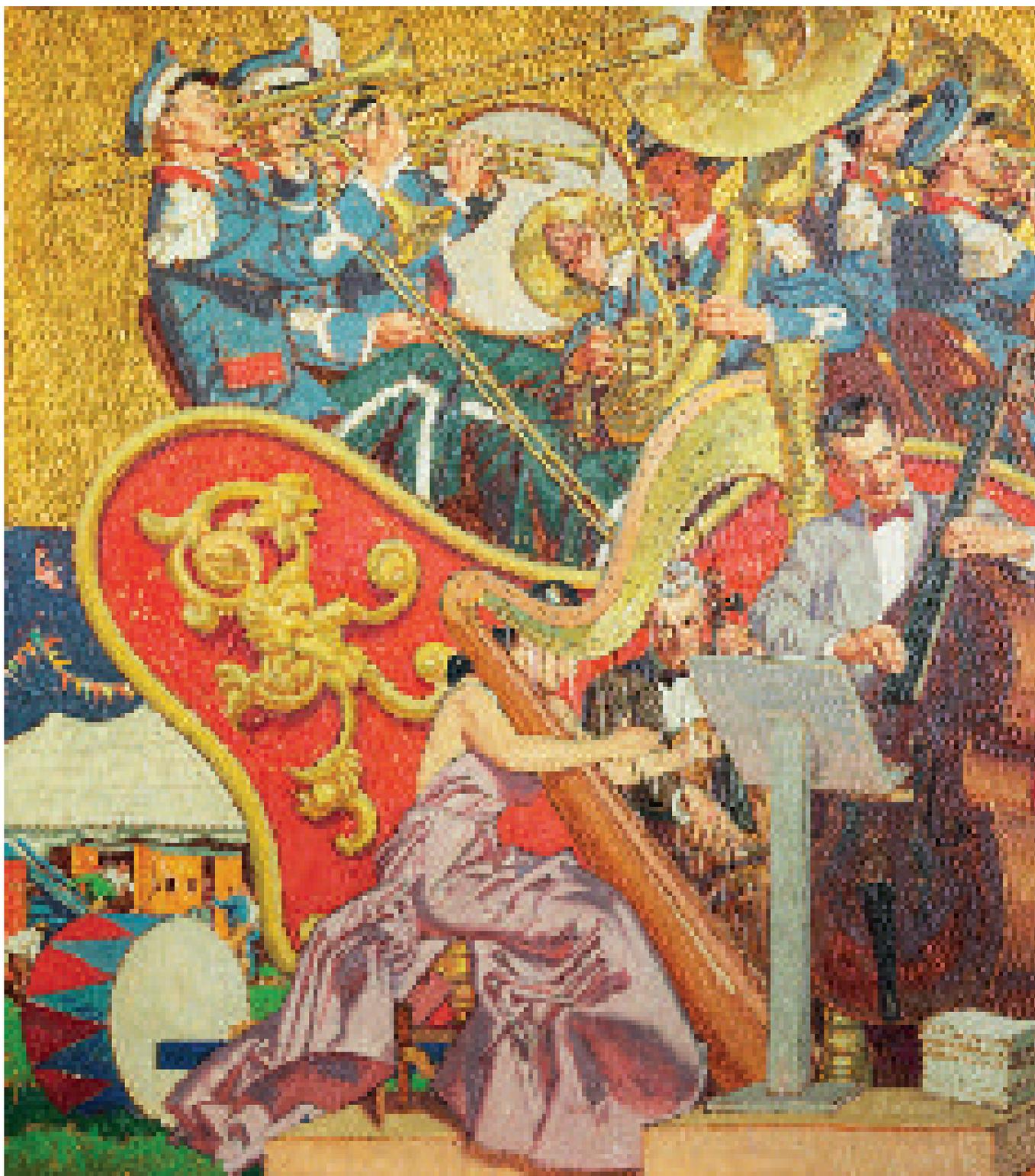


Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures







◀ Dean Cornwell murals. Section depicting musicians and a circus, 1.58 m high, 1.43 m wide.

Dean Cornwell (1892-1960) ■

Recognized in the early Cold War period as the “Dean of Illustrators” among artistic circles in the United States, Dean Cornwell was born in Louisville, Kentucky. He studied at the Chicago Art Institute in 1911 while already taking small commissions as commercial illustrator to draw window displays and cartoons for the press. During the 1920s and 1930s, he regularly published illustrations for advertisements, articles and serialised stories in high-circulation magazines and newspapers. His illustrations reflected the hopes, attitudes and principles of the US middle-class men and women, such as the readers of *Cosmopolitan*, *Heart's* and *Harper's Bazaar*. From the early 1930s, Dean Cornwell sought to develop his decorative techniques and was trained in mural painting. Cornwell's best-known murals can be seen in the central rotunda at the Los Angeles Public Library, the Lincoln Memorial Shrine in Redlands, California, the

Tennessee State Office Building in Nashville, Tennessee, the Eastern Airlines Building in Rockefeller Plaza, the US Post Office in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and the Raleigh Room at Hotel Warwick in New York City. Cornwell signed the murals at the Centre William Rappard and other works with the suffix “N.A.”. This stands for National Academy, an honorary association of artists and a leading school of fine arts in New York, where he studied and taught, and of which he was elected Academician in 1940. Since Cornwell was too old to serve in the Second World War, he created many patriotic posters and propaganda pieces during that period. After the war, he continued illustrating commercial pieces for General Motors, Seagram's, Coca Cola, Goodyear and other companies that funded his more ambitious mural projects. Dean Cornwell died on 4 December 1960 in his studio apartment on West 67th street, New York. ●



◀ Dean Cornwell murals.
Section showing a school
scene, 1.58 m high, 49 cm wide.

▶ Dean Cornwell working on
the final details of the central
section, September 1955.

■■■ Movement is conveyed through the multiplicity of scenes and the individual actions of each person. This movement symbolises progress towards a better future, where there are better working conditions for workers and their families and thus for society as a whole.

Many people are depicted in the murals but they share some common features. Most are white and Western (only two African-Americans can be identified and there appear to be no indigenous, Hispanic or Asian people). They all have clearly differentiated roles, which fit together seamlessly; it would appear that the ideal society is made up of this effortless jigsaw of work. They are predominantly young to middle-aged adults. The exceptions are a baby and two boys. Older people are hardly represented at all. They belong ostensibly to working and urban middle classes.

The people in the murals are healthy and capable of strenuous activity. In fact, everyone in the mural is active. They look satisfied and generally happy, or at least show a self-confidence and sense of fulfilment in carrying out their work. Even those in the most demanding trades, such as the workers using pneumatic drills, have a focused and self-assured manner. Universally, they appear to be happy with their lot. It is important to note that none of them rebel against the social order. In fact, they are positively contributing to society by fulfilling their roles in life.

All of the subjects perform their jobs to the best of their ability and in the safest possible way. Their progress in life depends on the long chain of actions in which they are involved. Their roles in society correspond to their places on the assembly line, and they appear to be determined to play these roles successfully. Skilled workers, teachers, musicians and artists are seamlessly integrated into a larger social and labour network. Hierarchies are not determined by birth but by the workers' role in labour, in offices or in artistic and educational occupations. ■





Centre William Rappard

Works of Art and Other Treasures

1961 • SEÁN KEATING

Irish Industrial Development

On 19 June 1961, Jack Lynch, at that time Minister of Industry and Commerce, formally presented on behalf of the Irish government the mural “Irish Industrial Development”. It is located in the main stairway of the Centre William Rappard, on the wall facing Maurice Denis’s “The Dignity of Labour”.

Ireland has been a member of the ILO since its admittance to the League of Nations in September 1923, less than two years after the Irish Free State was founded and with the wounds of the subsequent Civil War still open. An ILO invitation in 1926 to contribute to the decoration of its new premises was well received by the young Irish government, whose delegates proposed a stained-glass window, known as the “Geneva Window”, by the artist Harry Clarke.

For three years, Clarke worked on creating this window, inspired by the Irish Literary Renaissance of the early twentieth century, in particular by the images of Irish folklore portrayed by William B. Yeats and other writers. The “Celtic Twilight” was depicted with references to legends and the inclusion of texts from famous Irish revivalist writers, but the patrons at the Irish Ministry of Industry and Commerce objected to the finished work and ruled that the government was not disposed to accept it for its original purpose. In particular, there were complaints about one of the characters depicted, Liam O’Flaherty’s “Mr Gilhooley”, who “equipped with glass of malt, has a bleary eye levelled on a lightly clad female.”⁵⁰ In another window panel, a bottle of Guinness was

apparent and in general they interpreted the work as displaying “liberal ideas” and a lack of religious elements. The sudden death of the artist on 6 January 1931 in Switzerland after returning from medical treatment in Davos resulted in the end of the project. The “Geneva Window” was retained by the Ministry in Dublin, and was never sent to Geneva because of the alleged implications of “sex, drunkenness and sin”.⁵¹

Many years later, in April 1957, new contacts between the Irish government and the ILO (represented by Michael O’Callaghan) resulted in the idea of an institutional gift being revived. Thirty years after Clarke’s ignominious rejection, his friend Seán Keating was commissioned in 1959 to undertake a new work. In May 1960, Keating travelled to Geneva to inspect the hanging space and returned again in 1961 to install the mural panels before it was officially unveiled during the 45th session of the International Labour Conference.

With flamboyant flair, “Irish Industrial Development” presents a traditional view of Ireland and, at the same time, a positive perspective of the country’s development. The artist continued in the same vein for his work for the Irish Pavilion at the New York World Fair, which depicted in a highly realistic manner the country’s building prowess.

Art historian Joseph McBrinn remarked that placing “Irish Industrial Development” in front of “The Dignity of Labour” “would fit perfectly into the larger scheme of the ‘néo-traditionniste’ Catholic mural painting espoused by Denis.”⁵² He points to the striking ■■■

“Irish Industrial Development”
by Seán Keating (1961), 3.58 m high,
6.25 m wide, oil on wood panels.





◀ View from the side staircase leading up to the mural.

■■■ visual and ideological affinities between Denis's and Keating's religious-political murals, particularly those in the Centre William Rappard. "Irish Industrial Development" also has close connections with Dean Cornwell's murals regarding the depiction of social hierarchies between workers and employers.

Seán Keating's mural depicts various scenes of industrial and agricultural development in Ireland using the multiple-scene approach of simultaneously showing events that are taking place at different times or locations.

On the left, a group of four workers are working with electricity cables. Also on the left, shown under a construction ladder, the artist includes a portrait of himself looking directly at the viewer with a portrait of Jack Lynch looking upwards. In the foreground a group of three scientists in laboratory coats are working, with a toolbox at their feet. In the centre of the mural, a construction worker is shown in front of what appears to be a red water tank with a tall grain storage tower in the background. The right-hand section of the mural shows a ship moored to a dock, a large crane, a car and a tractor. These objects are being observed by someone in casual dress.⁵³ Separated from the vessel by a grove of birch trees, a traditional village and a country road are the backdrop for a jockey on horseback flanked by cattle.

Various references are included in this mural, with the aim of showing Ireland's economic development. The ship in the dock to the right is a reference to Irish Shipping Ltd., a company majority owned by the state and formed in March 1941 to ensure the supply of food and other cargo during wartime. On the ship's hull the name Arch is visible, which may refer to the *Irish Larch* dry cargo vessel owned by Irish Shipping from 1956 to 1968.⁵⁴

The jockey on the thoroughbred horse is a reference to Ireland's horse racing industry, and in particular the Irish Hospitals' Sweepstake,



which ran a lottery linked to major horse races. Winners were determined according to the results of various races, including the Derby, the Cambridgeshire and the Grand National. The “Sweep” in Ireland became an important source of financial revenue, providing funding to build many of the country’s hospitals between 1930 and 1986. A significant amount of the funding was raised from Irish immigrants in the United Kingdom and the United States, where lotteries were generally illegal.

The group of four men working with cables relates to Keating’s interest in electricity. His artistic work regarding the Ardnacrusha hydroelectric power station, originally referred to as the Shannon Scheme, is an evocative and colourful record of the most significant industrial development of the early years in the history of the Irish Free State.

The three scientists with white laboratory coats in the foreground of the mural are, according to Éimear O’Connor, working on a computer. It is unlikely that the artist or his patrons could have guessed that 50 years later Ireland would become one of the most important exporters of computers and software in the world.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the scene may be viewed as a farsighted vision of the country’s economic development in the twenty-first century. ■



Seán Keating (1889-1977) ■

Seán Keating was born in Limerick, the eldest son of 11 children of a middle-class ledger clerk and his wife. After secondary school, he left Limerick: “We were very poor. I left because I hated it. ... I knew I wanted to be a painter.”⁵⁶ Keating was awarded a scholarship to the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art and trained as an artist and art teacher. He was an advocate of nationalism, which was reflected in his paintings during the First World War. Keating produced idealistic images of the West of Ireland, which would gradually evolve into allegorical and

realistic representations of the landscape and people of that region. He documented iconic images of the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War. In the late 1930s and 1940s, his disenchantment with political and economic conditions was evident in his work. He was accepted at the Royal Hibernian Academy, which would elect him as its president from 1949 to 1962. He was very active in lobbying support from the government for the artistic community. He published numerous articles and was involved in broadcasting. Seán Keating died on 21 December 1977, aged 88. ●

- ▲ Detail showing public works.
- ◀ Jack Lynch (left) and ILO Director-General David A. Morse (right) during the presentation of “Irish Industrial Development”, 19 June 1961.

